



Copy of letter to Vice-Chancellors and CEOs of registered higher education institutions

11 March 2022

Protecting academic integrity: Continuing efforts to combat academic cheating services

With the 2022 academic year underway, I wanted to update you on TEQSA's continuing work to address the ongoing risk that commercial academic cheating services pose to the integrity of Australian higher education. In doing so, we also wish to recognise the great efforts in this space of both researchers and many institutions.

During 2021 TEQSA, through our Higher Education Integrity Unit (HEIU), successfully obtained Federal Court injunctions, commenced intelligence-gathering and sharing with the sector, developed additional resources for academics, institutions and students and continued developing relationships across Government to enable TEQSA to implement the anti-cheating legislation that came into effect in late 2020. We also have been working with similar international bodies to ourselves, in intelligence-gathering and seeking to coordinate efforts.

Another key part of TEQSA's work has been to build productive relationships with major social media platforms and online marketplaces. This is because many students are being aggressively targeted through online promotion of cheating services; social media is a key channel for the operators of cheating services to reach students.

This approach is yielding results, with platforms including Meta (owners of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp), LinkedIn and Gumtree all taking action to remove pages and promotions for commercial academic cheating services. So far, TEQSA's work with these companies has resulted in more than 300 posts being removed.

While we are very pleased to have these companies working with us and taking action, we know these posts and accounts represent just the tip of the iceberg. TEQSA is committed to working constructively with the sector and social media platforms to take down more posts, pages and accounts in the coming months as we broaden our efforts to disrupt those operators insidiously promoting or providing illegal cheating services to students at Australian higher education institutions.

TEQSA is greatly appreciative of the partnership that institutions are providing in combatting the risk posed by commercial cheating services. Institutions and individuals can continue to support TEQSA in this work by reporting social media posts, groups or sites that are providing or promoting cheating services to students at Australian higher education institutions [via our online form](#).

As a sector we need to continue our efforts to ensure that higher education students have a strong and current understanding of academic integrity that recognises the fast-moving pace of activities being leveraged by individuals and companies that seek to profit from academic misconduct. Increasingly, this includes file-sharing sites and written works that are produced by artificial intelligence paraphrasing and text-generating tools.

I encourage your institution to ensure that academic integrity policies are up-to-date and include the types of academic misconduct facilitated by such sites and technologies. Additionally, ensuring that these policies are clearly and regularly communicated to students and staff will help build ongoing awareness

about the risks posed by academic cheating services and ensure that staff and students have a thorough understanding of their obligations.

To support institutions, TEQSA's website now has a range of [academic integrity information for students](#) translated into other languages, as well as updated resources that institutions can download and use to support engagement with students. Our [Good Practice Guide](#) and [Academic Integrity Toolkit](#) also provide useful advice for staff and institutions. Meanwhile, further training resources are in development.

It is almost impossible to overstate the potential threat to the integrity of the higher education sector which is posed by industrial-scale cheating targeting students and, indeed, staff. As such, the matter is one which goes to the core of good governance. And while we know that in some institutions CEOs and Vice-Chancellors are sharing the challenge with their governing bodies, this is not the case in all places. It needs to be.

If you would like to know more or wish to discuss academic integrity issues with TEQSA, please contact Dr Helen Gniel, Director, Higher Education Integrity Unit by emailing integrityunit@teqsa.gov.au.

We look forward to our continuing partnership efforts in this difficult space.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Coaldrake', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Peter Coaldrake AO
Chief Commissioner