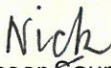11 December 2014

Professor Nick Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner
GPO Box 1672
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

chief.commissioner@teqsa.gov.au

Dear Professor Saunders,

Thank you for your letter of 24 November outlining the concerns of the Minister about allegations of cheating and the potential impact of this matter on the academic integrity of higher education providers and the international reputation of the Australian higher education sector.

You are correct in your anticipation that Federation University Australia has strong institutional policies and processes in place to promote academic integrity among our students and to detect academic misconduct when it occurs. You are also correct that our academic leaders and staff are aware of, and use, effective practices in course design and assessment that minimise the opportunity for fraudulent conduct by students.

As requested, below is a brief report of the action we have taken to investigate the allegations made in the Fairfax press about a small number of students allegedly enrolled at Federation University Australia. Reference is also made to the policies and procedures we have in place.

Immediately following the media reports, we launched an internal investigation via our ICT Security Office. This confirmed that a very small number of our students had accessed the MyMaster site. However, there is insufficient evidence to determine whether these students had used the services of the site or had simply visited the webpage. A meeting of the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellors determined that we would take no direct action against these students but would maintain a watching brief on the matter. An online advisory about plagiarism has been put in place for students when accessing the MyMaster site.

Federation University Australia takes student academic integrity very seriously and also focuses heavily on transition and support of students. The importance of academic integrity is a key part of our preparatory program, FedReady, (http://federation.edu.au/students/learning-and-study/get-help-on-campus/fedready), and of our student digital academic learning resources (http://federation.edu.au/students#Learning_and_study).

Our large team of student mentors (allocated to all commencing students) is trained in academic integrity and advise new students about this matter as they settle into university life (http://federation.edu.au/students/learning-and-study/get-help-on-campus/mentor-program). Ongoing support in the form of Learning Skills Advisors, English language support and student-produced videos about common study-related matters, is available to all students free of charge.

We include a statement concerning academic honesty in Course/Unit Descriptions, which also contains links to the University's policy and legislation on plagiarism and student conduct, and provides advice to students on protecting their own work from theft or copying.

The plagiarism software, Turnitin, is made available to students as an educative tool to pre-check their written work for signs of inadvertent plagiarism and it also provides assessors with information for plagiarism detection.

Office of the Vice-Chancellor and President

107 Lydiard Street South Ballarat | POST PO Box 663 Ballarat VIC 3353 | EMAIL vc@federation.edu.au | WEB federation.edu.au
CALL +61 3 **5327 9500** | FAX +61 3 **5327 8001** | ABN 51 818 692 256 | CRICOS Provider Number 00103D

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Our staff use very innovative curriculum development and assessment practices that preclude or minimise opportunities for plagiarism – some examples can be found in short videos here: http://federation.edu.au/staff/learning-and-teaching/clipp/events/elearning-showcases. To encourage this sort of vigilance, we run regular professional development around curriculum and assessment design and we are just finalising an eight month process to renew and update our assessment policies which will further guide staff towards innovative, fair, flexible, reliable and valid assessment of student learning and the minimisation of plagiarism and cheating.

The University is also just completing a peer review process that has been in operation during 2013 and 2014 as part of the AQF preparation to constructively align Course Learning Outcomes and Assessment types.

Advice on preventing plagiarism is routinely made available to staff and students through our learning management system and our eLearning Hub. In addition, over the past few months, we have reviewed and updated our Student Plagiarism Procedure to focus primarily on the education of students about academic integrity as a form of prevention. The new procedure now includes a student-friendly resource sheet, as well as pro-forma letters to students, who are suspected of plagiarism, providing guidance on their rights and responsibilities.

Where a plagiarism charge is upheld, reports are carefully managed. The School forwards the original report to Records Management Services. The report is scanned into the electronic document management system where the student's name, identification number and Course Code are captured to assist with searching. When plagiarism is suspected, Schools contact Record Management Services to confirm if a student has had any prior offences of plagiarism as any repeat offences are treated differently to first offences.

It is University policy for the first assessment task to be completed and graded within the first four weeks of a course to allow advisement of at risk students prior to the HECS census date. At the end of a course and coincident with the grade ratification process, the progress of students in a program is assessed and students at risk are notified according to procedure.

Where programs are offered in more than one location, moderation procedures are in place according to the policies and procedures of the University. The moderation model used by Federation University requires a randomly selected sample of each assessment task from each delivery location to be graded by a central academic coordinator with overall responsibility for the course or program, with grade adjustments performed where required.

I hope this goes some way to assuring you of the seriousness with which Federation University Australia treats the matters of academic integrity, how we work to minimise opportunities for plagiarism and cheating, including through appropriate policies, procedures and practices, and how we proactively provide academic support to all students, and particularly those who are at risk of not progressing satisfactorily.

Yours sincerely,

David Battersby
Vice-Chancellor

Office of the Vice-Chancellor and President

107 Lydiard Street South Ballarat | POST PO Box 663 Ballarat VIC 3353 | EMAIL vc@federation.edu.au | WEB federation.edu.au
CALL +61 3 5327 9500 | FAX +61 3 5327 8001 | ABN 51 818 692 256 | CRICOS Provider Number 00103D

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Professor Adam Shoemaker
Academic Provost

Nathan Campus, Griffith University
Nathan,
Queensland 4111 Australia

Telephone   +61 (0) 7 3735 5447
Facsimile   +61 (0) 7 3735 7507

www.griffith.edu.au

11 December 2014

Professor Nick Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner
TEQSA
Level 14, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Nick,

Dear Professor Saunders,

With reference to your letter of 24 November 2014, in which you indicate The Honorable Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education has referred recent concerns in relation to academic integrity breaches to TEQSA and in which you seek confirmation of the University's policies and practices, I attach a detailed document outlining Griffith's commitment to academic integrity.

Griffith University is aware of recent media reports alleging cheating by university students through the purchase of assignments written by others by services such as MyMaster. Griffith University takes such concerns very seriously and has in place rigorous institutional policies and processes to promote academic integrity among students, to minimise the risk of academic integrity breaches occurring and detect academic misconduct when it occurs.

I note TEQSA's request that the University review the policies and practices in place to minimise the opportunity for cheating through the purchase or sharing of assignments and other fraudulent assessment practice by students. On the date of your correspondence, the University's Learning and Teaching Committee was considering amendments to its *Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity among Students* (the Institutional Framework) to include 'solicitation' within its definition of student academic misconduct. Solicitation is defined as follows:

> *Solicitation occurs when a student requests, offers, encourages, induces or advertises for another individual/student to contract, commission, pay, procure, or complete on their behalf, assessment tasks and items (e.g. exam papers, model exam answers, exam questions, exam scripts, on-line quizzes, and other types of assessment as described in Assessment Types in Use at Griffith University) that are likely to result in their use for the purpose of cheating, misrepresentation and/or plagiarism.*

This definition further strengthens the existing definition of Plagiarism in the Institutional Framework which includes:

> *acquiring or commissioning a piece of work, which is not his/her own and representing it as if it were, by:*
>
> > a. *purchasing a paper from a commercial service, including internet sites, whether pre-written or specially prepared for the student concerned;*
> >
> > b. *submitting a paper written by another person, either by a fellow student or a person who is not a member of the University;*

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Amendments to University's Institutional Framework and Student Academic Misconduct policy which were considered by the Academic Committee on 27 November 2014 will be considered at the first meeting of the University Council in the New Year.

If our TEQSA Case Manager wishes to seek further information of Griffith's processes for promoting academic integrity, preventing academic integrity breaches and managing academic misconduct please contact Ms Karen van Haeringen, the Deputy Academic Registrar.

Yours sincerely and with best wishes for the Christmas season,

Professor Adam Shoemaker
Academic Provost

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STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, PREVENT BREACHES OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND MANAGE ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT AT GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

Griffith University wishes to highlight the following strategies to TEQSA which it has adopted to minimise student misconduct in assessment and promote academic integrity among students that have been particularly successful:

- An institutional culture of student academic integrity
- Exemplary policy and procedures
- Academic integrity education for all
- Academic integrity champions
- Student engagement
- Design and security of assessment
- Robust decision-making systems
- Record keeping for evaluation.

These strategies are outlined in the *Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic among Students* and explained further below.

An institutional culture of student academic integrity

Fundamental to the success of Griffith University's approach is the commitment to fostering an institutional culture of student academic integrity. To achieve this, Griffith has implemented a University-wide framework for promoting academic integrity and preventing student academic misconduct by implementing consistent strategies across all academic areas. These strategies include:

- **Primary prevention strategies** that develop the necessary skills of all students to ensure they succeed at university, including online referencing tools, workshops and providing text-matching software as a formative tool.

- **Secondary prevention/structural strategies** that reduce students' opportunities for academic misconduct such as the design of assessment and the online submission of assignments. In addition, the number of cases and consequences associated with detection are published to deter students from engaging in such behavior.

- **Tertiary strategies** are implemented to ensure students who are detected in breaching the policy are dealt with swiftly with proportional, escalating and transparent responses.

Under the Institutional Framework, everyone at the University is responsible for promoting the University's core values of academic integrity, demonstrating best practice, and detecting and reporting academic misconduct when it occurs. This has facilitated the reporting of concerns about possible academic integrity breaches in relation to Griffith students by University staff, students and external agencies. The University recognises that breaches of academic integrity are likely to occur when students are learning the practices of academic literacy and scholarship; therefore regardless of the prevention strategies in place a process for reporting and managing breaches is required.

An overview of Griffith's institutional commitment to academic integrity and associated strategies is illustrated in Figure 1.

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Figure 1 Griffith University's Strategies for Achieving an Institutional Culture of Academic Integrity

Extracted from the *Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity among Students*

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Exemplary policies and processes

The University's policies and processes for promoting academic integrity among students, preventing academic integrity breaches and detecting and managing academic misconduct have been identified as exemplary by the Office for Learning & Teaching (OLT). Griffith's *Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity among Students* was identified by the OLT's 2011 Academic Integrity Standards Project as one of 5 exemplary academic integrity policies in the Australian higher education sector and formed the basis for the online academic integrity policy toolkit developed in the 2013 OLT Exemplary Academic Integrity Project. Griffith staff members Professor Anna Stewart, Director of the Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance and Ms Karen van Haeringen, the Deputy Academic Registrar were members of the 2013 OLT Exemplary Academic Integrity Project.
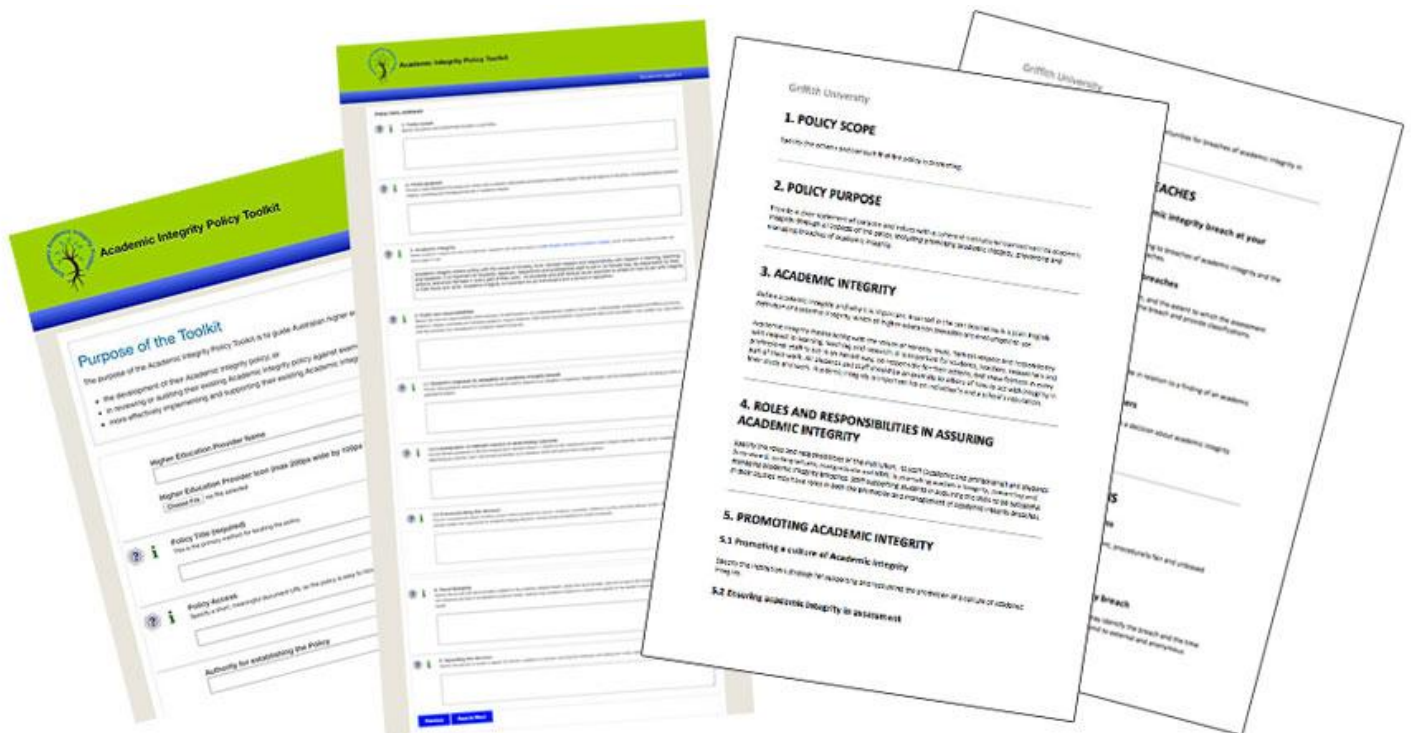
In 2009 Professor Anna Stewart, was awarded an OLT Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning for leadership in the development and implementation of a university-wide evidence-based response for the prevention and management of student academic misconduct.

In 2010 Ms Karen van Haeringen, Deputy Academic Registrar and Ms Jennifer Martin, (previously the Student Academic Integrity Coordinator at Griffith University) were awarded the OLT Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning for the strategic development and implementation of institutional policy, systems and services that support a sustainable and holistic approach to promoting academic integrity among students.

Professor Anna Stewart, Ms Jennifer Martin and Ms Karen van Haeringen have had their work in relation to the *Institutional Framework for Promoting Academic Integrity among Students* published in International and national journals and conference proceedings.

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Academic integrity education for all

To encourage and promote an organisational culture of academic integrity, the University ensures the ongoing education of students and professional development of staff. This is achieved through transparency and dissemination of the University's policies, which are widely publicised within the institution to all staff and students.

An academic misconduct statement is included in every course profile and Course Convenors are provided with an Academic Integrity Presentation for Students and a range of other educational resources to incorporate as part of the Week 1 introduction to their course. Students are educated about best practice in academic writing through the provision of discipline-specific annotated examples of work that is clearly plagiarised, work which is acceptably paraphrased and work which is correctly referenced.

The University has a comprehensive Academic Integrity website which includes information for students and researchers, University policy and governance and substantial academic integrity resources for students and staff. The website aims to educate staff and students about the importance of academic integrity and acting with honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in learning, teaching and research. Resources include the University's Academic Integrity Student Tutorial, referencing tools, tips for managing study and effective group strategies, and critical thinking skills.

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The Office for Research works closely with the Griffith Graduate Research School to provide research ethics and integrity advice and workshops tailored to the needs of HDR candidates. The workshops are offered either centrally for all HDR candidates or at the academic element level upon request covering issues including ethics application procedures, research integrity, publication ethics, and research misconduct. Several dozen such courses are offered annually to more than 500 HDR students ensuring wide dissemination of information about the obligations and responsibilities of supervisors and students under the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and the aligned Griffith Code.

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Statistics on the number of academic misconduct breaches identified and the outcomes are published on the University's Griffith Portal intranet sites for staff and students (individuals are not identified) to deter students from engaging in such behavior. Data on the number of breaches specific to assessment types is also provided to School Assessment Boards to inform course assessment plans.

Academic integrity champions

The University requires students, teachers, researchers and all staff to act in an honest way, be responsible for their actions, and report students they believe to be breaching the core values of academic integrity. Griffith encourages all of its students to be academic integrity champions demonstrating the core values of academic integrity (honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility); encouraging others to do the same and to feel comfortable reporting instances where the behaviour of another student undermines these values. The University regularly receives reports from students who believe their fellow students are breaching the core values of academic integrity.

The Deans (Learning & Teaching) provide leadership in assessment and are the University's most critical academic integrity champions in encouraging Course Convenors to design and manage assessment in ways that the integrity of a course's learning outcomes cannot be undermined or circumvented.

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Course Convenors are empowered to report and manage academic breaches where the student's experience of University study is limited and they are still learning the practices of academic literacy and scholarship. In such cases the Course Convenor has the authority to provide a range of educational (Tier 1) responses as specified in the University's *Student Academic Misconduct Policy.* The Deans (Learning & Teaching) are the decision makers for serious (Tier 2) academic misconduct breaches under the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* and are responsible for managing systems, security of assessment and compliance with assessment policies. The Deans (Learning & Teaching) have extensive experience in deciding academic misconduct cases; enabling consistency and comparability in decision making and uniformity in practice across Academic Groups. The Deans also give advice to Course Convenors, who deal with less serious (Tier 1) academic integrity concerns.

Student engagement

The University's Academic Integrity website and resources are promoted and marketed to all students. During Orientation week, week 1 and week 3 in Semester 1, 2014 the University sponsored a student engagement campaign focusing on educating commencing and continuing students about 'what is academic integrity' and how to avoid breaches. The *Be Original, use your own ideas or quote your sources* campaign was promoted to new students in Orientation and to continuing students in week 1, inviting them to attend a campus-based workshop run by the Student Academic Integrity Coordinator. The promotion included 'Integrity Matters' and 'I do it with Integrity' pens, stress balls and wrist bands.

The Google Analytics results for the Griffith University Academic Integrity website were used to measure the success of the campaign. The data showed a significant increase in visits to the page and Ask Us site for TurnItIn, showing increased interest in the online plagiarism checker.

The following infographics provide some information about how Griffith students responded to the campaign. A modified version of the campaign was also run for semester 2, 2014. Similar strategies are planned for 2015.

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2655

Hits on the Academic Integrity web site.
From Dec 2013 - April 2014

788 Hits

Hits on the web page: What is
Academic Integrity
From Dec 2013 - April 2014

5830

ask Us!

Hits on the Ask Us site for
the TurnItIn for the question:
**How long does it take to
generate the originality
report in TurnItIn?**

From Dec 2013 - April 2014

648 Hits

Hits on the web page:
Resources for Academic
Integrity?
From Dec 2013 - April 2014

1500

turnitin

TurnItIn Flyers were distributed
to International students in their
Orientation Packs for Sem 1 2014

2000 Flyers

Handed out to students and
staff across campuses with
information on Academic
Integrity and workshop avail-
ability.

365 Hits

Brisbane

Academic
Integrity Workshops
web page hits

41 Hits

Gold Coast

From Dec 2013 - April 2014

59%

Increase in hits on the Academic Integrity web site from
Dec 2013 - April 2014 Compared to Dec 2012 - April 2013

In addition to these promotional activities, students are engaged in academic integrity education through their Course Convenors and via communications from the Academic Provost. At the commencement of each year Course Convenors are provided with an Academic Integrity Presentation for Students which they are invited to utilise as part of the introduction to their course. Course Convenors also alert students to the range of resources available on the Academic Integrity website and require them to complete the Academic Integrity Student Tutorial in the context of a formative piece of assessment, particularly in first year courses.

The Academic Provost sends regular email communications to engage commencing and continuing students throughout the academic year. Communications are sent prior to mid-semester and end of year assessment periods and provide students with tips and guidance on how to 'organise not agonise' in approaching their studies. The email also contains links to academic skills and writing workshops and refers students to sources of study assistance and help with assignments. The University monitors the opening rate of these emails. In Semester 2, 2014 between 33% and 53% of recipients opened these communications; with higher opening rates recorded toward the end of semester examination period.

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Design and security of assessment

To minimise opportunity for academic misconduct the University implements strategies around the design of assessment and the online submission of assignments. Approaches include the use of local or specialised case materials for analysis, avoiding widely available case material, requiring multiple case studies or material from multiple sources to be included in student work and varying assignment tasks from year to year. Text matching software such as TurnItIn and SafeAssign is utilised as an educational tool and to assist academic staff in the detection of breaches of academic integrity. In addition, eeach student is required to sign an academic declaration on every assessment item they submit, including students undertaking a dissertation in Bachelor Honours and Masters Degree Coursework and Extended programs.

The University's *End of Semester Centrally Administration Examination Policy* was recently amended to strengthen provisions around security of examination questions, answers and papers. Changes were also made in 2014 to the University's *Assessment Submission and Return Procedures*, specifically the section on Responsibility for Assessment Items.

Each semester the Student Academic Integrity Coordinator produces a report on the extent to which each assessment type as classified in *Assessment Types in Use at Griffith University* has been breached.
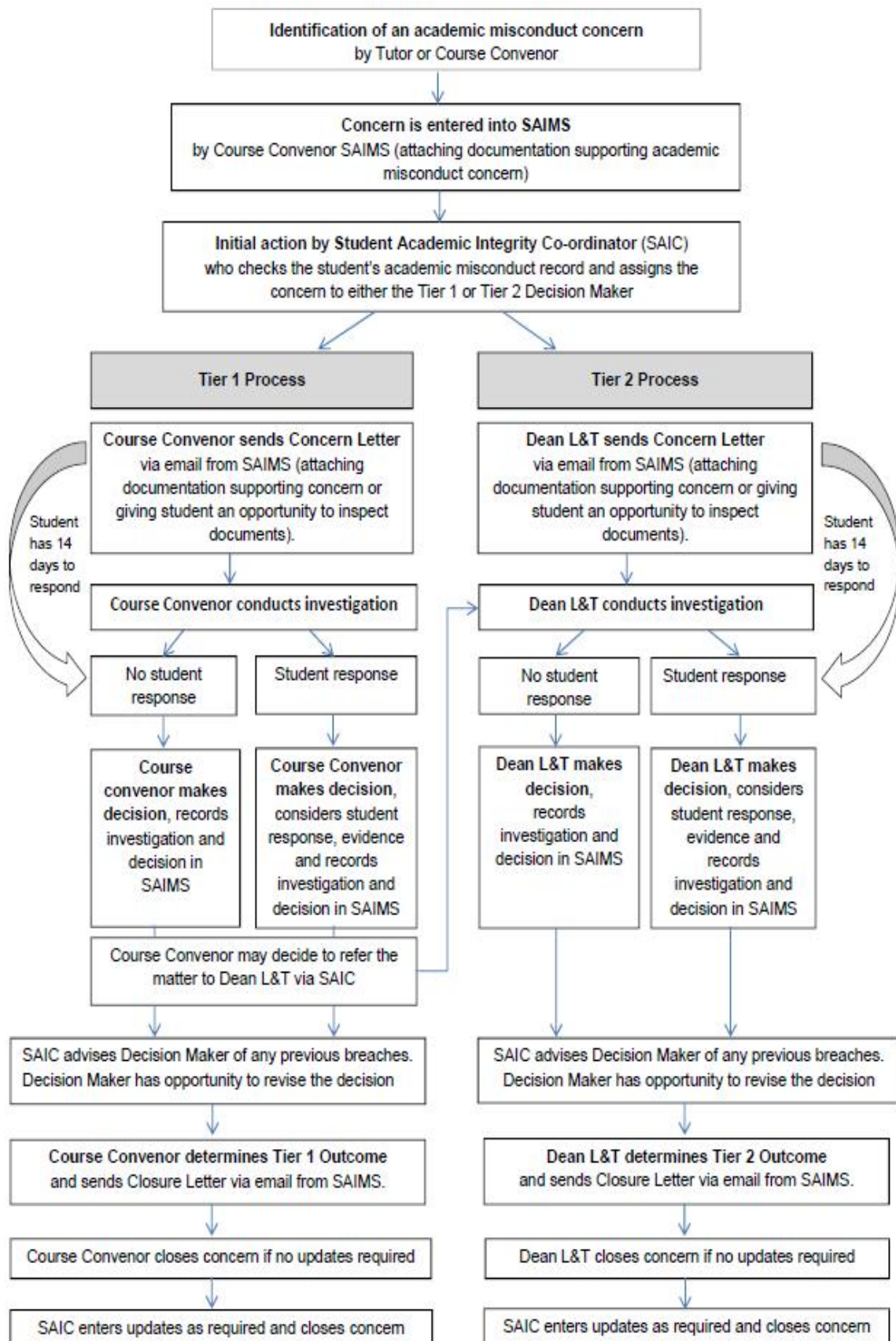
At the end of semester 1, 2014 the following was reported:

- Written assignments continue to attract the highest number of AI breaches accounting for approximately 71% of total breaches The most common types of breaches for this assessment type relate to referencing and copying from the internet, followed by copying from text, artwork and diagrams and unacknowledged copying.

- Poor referencing comprises approximately 29% of all breaches

- Collusion was the next highest breach type comprising approximately 14% of all breaches

- There were less instances of breaches in the Observation or Record of Practice assessment type in semester 1, 2014 than semester 1, 2013; however the reported breaches were for misrepresentation where previously they had been for referencing or copying.

- Breaches reported for examinations – there was a slight decrease from semester 1, 2013 to semester 1, 2014

- Breaches involving acquiring or commissioning a piece of work which is not his/her own for assessment purposes only occurred with written assignments.

- Breaches for the assessment type other – Test or Quiz remained fairly steady from semester 1, 2013 to semester 1, 2014.

- In semester 1 2014, the breach type in which the University was experiencing an increase was collusion where it had previously been copying from the internet. This has been supported by anecdotal reports of students arranging to meet and undertake online tests or quizzes.

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Robust decision making systems

The University has a *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* and *Academic Misconduct Policy – Higher Degree Research Students* which set out the principles and procedures for dealing with student academic misconduct. The *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* recognises that the seriousness of academic misconduct varies, and sets out a two-tiered approach to dealing with academic misconduct depending on the seriousness of the conduct. The Institutional Framework complements this policy; explaining the roles and responsibilities of various officers and of students and providing a matrix to assist staff to assess the seriousness of an act of student academic misconduct.

The University's robust student academic misconduct process ensures fair and consistent decision making and reduces the opportunity for error. Decision makers are also supported through the use of the Seriousness Matrix in the Institutional Framework, the support of the University's Student Academic Integrity Coordinator (SAIC), the Student Academic Integrity Management System (SAIMS) the *Staff Guidelines on Decision-Making in Student Cases,* and the provision of decision making training.

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Diagram 1 Student Academic Misconduct Process

Identification of an academic misconduct concern
by Tutor or Course Convenor

↓

Concern is entered into SAIMS
by Course Convenor SAIMS (attaching documentation supporting academic misconduct concern)

↓

Initial action by Student Academic Integrity Co-ordinator (SAIC)
who checks the student's academic misconduct record and assigns the concern to either the Tier 1 or Tier 2 Decision Maker

---

Tier 1 Process

Course Convenor sends Concern Letter
via email from SAIMS (attaching documentation supporting concern or giving student an opportunity to inspect documents).

Student has 14 days to respond

↓

Course Convenor conducts investigation

No student response	Student response
Course convenor makes decision, records investigation and decision in SAIMS	Course Convenor makes decision, considers student response, evidence and records investigation and decision in SAIMS

Course Convenor may decide to refer the matter to Dean L&T via SAIC

↓

SAIC advises Decision Maker of any previous breaches. Decision Maker has opportunity to revise the decision

↓

Course Convenor determines Tier 1 Outcome
and sends Closure Letter via email from SAIMS.

↓

Course Convenor closes concern if no updates required

↓

SAIC enters updates as required and closes concern

Tier 2 Process

Dean L&T sends Concern Letter
via email from SAIMS (attaching documentation supporting concern or giving student an opportunity to inspect documents).

Student has 14 days to respond

↓

Dean L&T conducts investigation

No student response	Student response
Dean L&T makes decision, records investigation and decision in SAIMS	Dean L&T makes decision, considers student response, evidence and records investigation and decision in SAIMS

SAIC advises Decision Maker of any previous breaches. Decision Maker has opportunity to revise the decision

↓

Dean L&T determines Tier 2 Outcome
and sends Closure Letter via email from SAIMS.

↓

Dean L&T closes concern if no updates required

↓

SAIC enters updates as required and closes concern

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Griffith's policies are subject to regular review to ensure they remain current and effective. Recent changes to the Institutional Framework, *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* and *Academic Misconduct Policy – Higher Degree Research Students* were considered by Academic Committee on 27 November and will be considered by University Council in early 2015.

Record keeping for evaluation

The Institutional Framework is supported by a Student Academic Integrity Coordinator (SAIC) and the Student Academic Integrity Management System (SAIMS) to ensure fair, efficient and consistent decision making in relation to academic breaches across the University. The SAIMS supports academic staff in dealing with sustained academic misconduct by recording concerns and monitoring actions taken in response to breaches. The system is managed by the Student Academic Integrity Coordinator, who refers concerns to the appropriate decision maker. Once a finding of academic misconduct has been determined, the SAIC advises the decision maker of previous breaches to assist them in determining the appropriate Educational Response and/or Penalty to be applied.

The SAIMS facilitates the centralised tracking of allegations made against students and enables the University to produce reports detailing the number and types of academic misconduct cases. This has proved valuable in identifying trends in academic misconduct, implementing appropriate educational responses and publishing the data as a deterrent for students. The number of cases of academic misconduct as illustrated in the following graph spiked in 2010, otherwise cases have remained fairly constant over the last 5 years, which is an indicator of the effectiveness of the University's *Academic Integrity Framework* and educational strategies.

The first phase of the trial of the *Academic Integrity Framework* commenced in the Arts, Education and Law (AEL) Group and Griffith Sciences (SCG) on 8 October 2007 and continued up until the end of semester 1, 2008. The second university-wide phase commenced at the beginning of Semester 2, 2008 and continued to the end of the 2009 academic year. The third implementation phase began at the beginning of the 2010 academic year which may account for the spike in cases that year.

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Although the number of cases of academic misconduct has risen over the years, there has generally been a decrease in the number of student appeals against findings of academic misconduct, and a reduction in the number of appeals that are upheld. Finally, the relatively stable reporting rate for the 2012 – 2014 period indicates a mature awareness of both policy and practice on the part of all University staff and students.

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12 December 2014

Professor Nick Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
GPO Box 1672
Melbourne, Victoria 3001

chief.commissioner@teqsa.gov.au

Dear Professor Saunders

Thank you for your letter of 24 November requesting Macquarie University's response to media reports of alleged student cheating via the MyMaster website specifically, and – more broadly – an understanding of how we at Macquarie are addressing the global issue of academic dishonesty.

As perhaps Australia's most internationalised university, Macquarie University keenly appreciates the importance of maintaining the Australian higher education system's worldwide reputation for the highest standards of academic integrity.

We are deeply concerned by reports of students cheating, treat them very seriously when they arise, and are committed to not only meeting, but exceeding our obligations outlined in the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011 and being an exemplar institution in the Australian setting.

MyMaster investigation

Macquarie University electronically received data allegedly pertaining to cheating by a small number of its students from Fairfax on Friday 28 November.

The University then engaged an independent forensic investigator to review the data and make an initial assessment. This investigator had led an investigation into a similar incident for the University in 2011, which was viewed by ICAC as a case study in best practice.

Concurrent to the investigator's ongoing work, the University is seeking legal counsel regarding the status of the data, how it was obtained by Fairfax, and whether it can be properly used by the University to pursue disciplinary action against students.

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Providing any legal concerns are resolved, and assuming that the data provided by Fairfax allows the University to sufficiently identify that cheating by current students has occurred, the University is well placed to deal with the matter in a timely and comprehensive manner.

If a student at Macquarie purchases an assignment online and submits it as their own work, this would be a clear breach of both the University's Academic Honesty Policy and its Student Code of Conduct.

All serious cases of academic misconduct at Macquarie are referred to a central University Discipline Committee. At their meetings, the Committee members – including representatives of the University's Council and Executive – review documentation provided and allow students the opportunity to respond to the alleged misconduct and answer questions. The Committee then determines if misconduct is proven, and if so, what penalty is appropriate.

Penalties imposed by the University Discipline Committee in relation to academic misconduct may include one or more of the following: applying a fail grade for an examination; assessment task or unit of study; suspension or exclusion from studies; and issuing a reprimand and/or applying a period of disciplinary probation.

As an indicator of a possible outcome, a student who was previously found to have purchased and submitted a completed essay from a ghost-writer was awarded a Fail (0) for that unit and was additionally excluded from enrolment for two sessions (semesters).

We expect to be able to update the Chief Commissioner on the outcomes of this investigation early in the New Year.

Sites similar to MyMaster

While the number of Macquarie University students identified as using MyMaster may be quite small – perhaps as few as a dozen according to early estimates by our investigator – the University is aware that there are other international and domestic websites providing similar services, and has had some success in the past in confronting this aspect of cheating.

Believing that it is better to prevent instances of academic dishonesty if possible, Macquarie not only seeks to dissuade students from cheating through education campaigns, but also actively works to prevent advertising of sites similar to MyMaster on campus. Security Services routinely inspect toilets and other notice spaces and remove material that they believe advertises services providing fraudulent assessments. These are investigated by the University and in some cases, 'sting operations' attempt to expose and shut down their operations.

Students who have purchased fraudulent assessments have been brought before the University Disciplinary Committee, proving that this method of cheating is detectable. We tend to identify cheats mainly because:

- the work is of a very different quality to previous work, particularly with students from overseas
- the assessments can be quite generic – they are seldom as "original" as they claim to the purchaser

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- many of these sites are well known and are actively monitored by University staff to identify when Macquarie assignments are posted
- whistleblowers come forward to report students they believe have submitted or will submit fraudulent work. These are noted and investigated once the assessment has been submitted.

Academic integrity at Macquarie University

Macquarie University's current Academic Honesty Policy was introduced in January 2012. Recent improvements in combating academic misconduct include:

1. Establishing frameworks for managing misconduct
   A significant body of work has taken place, which defines expectations for student behaviour and strengthens the framework for managing misconduct. The Student Code of Conduct communicates expectations for current students and alumni to accept shared responsibility and improves the capacity of the institution to respond appropriately to student misconduct while protecting the University's reputation. The revised Academic Honesty Policy and associated schedule of penalties ensures consistency and transparency in the University's approach to managing academic misconduct and the escalation of misconduct as appropriate. The governance supporting student conduct will be further strengthened by the Student Discipline Rules and associated procedures, which have been developed in close consultation with Academic Senate and Faculties.

2. Restructuring of the disciplinary committees and processes
   Over the past two years, the structure of discipline committees with oversight of student misconduct has been reformulated with a new triage system. Each Faculty has established a Faculty Discipline Committee, with consistent Terms of Reference, procedures and processes, with responsibility for managing less serious cases of academic misconduct, such as "petty cheating" more quickly than before. This delegation has allowed for more effective and immediate implementation of mitigations to reduce academic misconduct at the unit and departmental level and remediating students who are cheating by providing more academic support where appropriate. The University Disciplinary Committee therefore deals with more serious cases of academic misconduct resulting in a more efficient and fairer system.

3. Improved management of final examinations
   The management of Final Examinations now includes validation of student identity; confirming an individual's identity with the University Campus Card when attending examinations. Examination supervisors are also provided with training in detecting cheating.

4. Modifying assessment design: 'Designing out' cheating
   There is an ongoing program of review and modification to the design of the assessment regime across the University, particularly around examinations, which is 'designing out' many opportunities for cheating. This includes changes to examinations to prevent cheating; limiting the academic weighting of examinations and assessments to reduce the risk of a student passing a unit with fraudulent submissions; including a question in the Final Examination about the assignment, or including a presentation on the assignment as part of a unit's assessment. A number of assessment tasks are invigilated to mitigate opportunities for cheating in assignments.

5. Increased use of online tools to detect cheating
Online assessment through TurnItIn is almost universal. This is an effective mechanism to identify plagiarism and copying, particularly for students resubmitting work from previous Macquarie students, which remains the most likely form of plagiarism, accidental or otherwise.

Promotion of academic integrity to students

A number of innovative strategies have been implemented at Macquarie University to promote academic integrity to students, including:

- 'Academic Integrity Module for Students', a Learning Skills iLearn resource specifically designed to help students understand what academic integrity is and why it's important; acceptable and unacceptable academic behaviours at university; what plagiarism is and key strategies to avoid it; responsibilities in relation to academic integrity and rights under the Macquarie University Academic Honesty Policy. This module can be easily included in any unit of study across any faculty in the University
- an 'Engaging your Students in Academic Integrity' developmental workshop for teaching staff, including strategies for exploring academic integrity within a unit of study, as well as effective assessment design for risk reduction around academic misconduct and student plagiarism in connection to assignments
- improved engagement with students prior to the commencement of a final examination to ensure that students are aware of the serious nature of exam misconduct and the penalties it carries, as well as the display of promotional materials around examination venues
- online publication of academic integrity resources drawn from Australian and international universities, and
- the Academic Integrity Matters Ambassadors (AIMA) society which aims to improve academic integrity culture among students through various activities such as seminars, competitions and surveys. It was founded in February 2014 and is run by students who are passionate about the topic of academic integrity.

Academic support for those at risk of not progressing satisfactorily

Macquarie University has recently reviewed the failure rate of students across the University and its seemingly course/unit specific nature and cohort biases.

As a result of this audit a strategy was developed to specifically deal with attrition, retention, and progression at Macquarie, and a Student Success Workgroup established.

In this past year a range of interventions have been underway to:
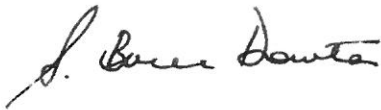
a) identify students at risk (including the use of more automated processes)
b) refer them to appropriate sources of support (eg academic advisors, advocacy, wellbeing staffing)
c) improving support at both department/faculty level and by central services
d) improved staff training
e) review of assessment policy/procedures
f) enhanced on-boarding.

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Thank you for this opportunity to update you on our efforts to respond to the claims of cheating by a small number of students in the MyMaster case, but also on how we at Macquarie are very comprehensively working to eliminate academic dishonesty in all its forms.

Given the shared reputational effects of cases of student cheating, and the national interest in protecting Australian higher education's good name, Macquarie University would be keen to collaborate with other universities to share information, and help raise standards across the board. Additionally, a sector-based lobby might more effectively work with police and other authorities (eg ICAC in NSW have been looking at the issue of academic dishonesty), as, despite our efforts to date, we have not been successful in attracting interest from authorities in pursuing criminal charges against those operating such sites.

If you require further clarification about any of these matters, I would be more than happy to provide it. I look forward to keeping you updated on these matters as our investigation progresses.

Sincerely

S. Bruce Dowton

Professor Nick Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
Level 14, 530 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC3000

chief.commissioner@teqsa.gov.au

12 December 2014

Dear Professor Saunders,

Re: Report on Media Allegations concerning Website 'MyMaster' – Updated

Thank you again for your attention to my brief Report dated 1 December 2014, in relation your request for information concerning the media article regarding the MyMaster website in relation to Top Education Institute (TOP).

I wish now to provide you with an updated report on the matter.

The Legal Counsel at TOP, Anurag Kanwar, emailed the Sydney Morning Herald on 26 November 2014 seeking information but received no immediate response. On 9 December 2014, she again emailed the SMH, requesting their assistance. Please see **Attachmen**t **1.**

This time, the SMH journalists have cooperatively replied to TOP on 10 December 2014 as at **Attachment 2.**

According to that information as provided, TOP's Legal Counsel conducted an immediate analysis and provided a report to me as at **Attachment 3.**

Accordingly, we learn that:
- Two TOP student names appeared on transaction records maintained by MyMaster,
- Three transactions were triggered by two students who went unnamed
- One assignment completed by MyMaster related to a TOP subject but without transaction record
- Two unit outlines from Top were held by MyMaster but without record of written assignment and transaction occurring

This suggests that no more than four or five TOP students have dealt with MyMaster, according to currently available information, and a smaller number actually proceeded to have work completed by MyMaster.

As Principal of TOP Education I have immediately investigated the two named students. One, s 47F s 47F   has already withdrawn from TOP. I have instructed TOP's student records section to keep this record for any future possible actions.

is enrolled in the TOP undergraduate program, Bachelor of International Business. According to information provided by the journalists, he purchased an assignment for a Year 2 unit, TCMU201.

My delegated staff member has now contacted him by telephone and by email as at **Attachment 4.** An appropriate team from TOP, including myself, will interview him. A revisitation of his assessment marks will follow, as will any necessary disciplinary steps in line with TOP's relevant policies and procedures.

As to unnamed possible transactions between MyMaster and TOP students, I have asked the Head of the Business School to conduct further investigations on the basis of information provided by the SMH journalists, so as to seek possible identification of the involved students, as at **Attachment 5.** Professor Peter Eddey also provided me with his prompt reaction as at **Attachment 6**.

Any students found to have purchased "ghost written assignments" from MyMaster will be disciplined severely under the relevant policies, including possible or even probable dismissal. Incoming TOP students will be given additional warnings, including at Orientation.

Following up on my last report dated 1 December 2014, the review of TOP's course assessment structure by an external expert will be conducted in early 2015, and TOP is looking towards an even stronger assignment methodology.

TOP's Council fully supports all actions taken by management and Academic Board in relation to this matter. At the Council meeting on 2 December, the Chair and the external Members, as former senior university executives, discussed the matter as an urgent key agenda item. Their valuable experience in dealing with such cheating and possible preventative measures have been incorporated in TOP's overall and on-going response. The Council considered this as a serious issue for the Institute's risk management, and has instructed me to (i) keep the Chair fully advised in a timely manner, and (ii) to report fully on implementation as part of my Principal's Report to the next Council meeting.

TOP is confident that this procedure and these steps align its policies/procedures strongly with TEQSA's regulatory framework to help prevent and minimise cheating.

Your further advice on the matter would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Dr Minshen Zhu
Principal and CEO
Top Education Group trading as
Top Eudcation Institute

12 December 2014

Professor Nick Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner
TEQSA
GPO Box 1672
Melbourne, Victoria 3001

chief.commissioner@teqsa.gov.au

Professor Attila Brungs
Vice-Chancellor & President
City Campus
PO Box 123 Broadway
NSW 2007 Australia
T: +61 2 9514 1333
attila.brungs@uts.edu.au
www.uts.edu.au
UTS CRICOS PROVIDER CODE: 00099F

Dear Professor Saunders

Thank you for your letter and the opportunity to provide greater detail on the efforts UTS is undertaking to respond to the recent media reports in relation to student cheating through MyMaster. We are pleased that you have acknowledged TEQSA's confidence in UTS' use of best practice in course and assessment design to minimise the potential of fraudulent conduct by students. As a relatively new Vice-Chancellor, I would like to personally reiterate to you UTS' unremitting focus on learning excellence and academic integrity in the student body.

I am also pleased at your request to expand on the UTS' new and innovative approaches to ensure academic integrity. UTS deliberately employs a holistic approach across four related areas to ensure rigour and reduce fraudulent behavior.

1. Providing inspiring and engaging learning environment
2. Sophisticated course and assessment design intended to improve learning outcomes and reduce possibilities for misconduct
3. Clear, well communicated and rigorous policies, procedures and processes in relation to student misconduct
4. Tackling the drivers of fraud through three related programs:
   a. Promotion of academic integrity amongst students
   b. Instilling in students the mindset that they are "professionals" from the start of their studies
   c. A plethora of proactive intervention and student support initiatives, deliberately aimed at reducing the stress and anxiety that may lead to fraud.

Please find attached material prepared by Professor Shirley Alexander, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education and Students). This includes a summary of the current activity in relation to the specific media allegations and further details on points 2 and 4 above.

I would be very happy to provide further information in relation to any of these matters, if required.

Yours sincerely

Professor Attila Brungs
Vice-Chancellor and President

Allegations made in the Fairfax Press

In relation to the allegations made in the Fairfax press, on Friday 28 November Fairfax provided approximately 130 electronic folders, each of which was purported to contain evidence of UTS students purchasing assignments. An initial review of those folders revealed that many contain only a subject outline and, on preliminary assessment, no evidence of cheating. Other folders do include the assignment that is purported to have been completed for a price and in a smaller number of cases, there is also a bank receipt, however they appear to contain false names in the majority of cases.

We take this situation very seriously, and have engaged a recently retired senior education academic to undertake a systematic review of every one of the cases, and to provide a report, which we will use as a basis for initiating academic misconduct where it is possible to identify the student, and there is evidence of cheating.

We have also sought and received advice on the legal status of the information provided by Fairfax. Under section 9 of the NSW PPIP Act 9 UTS must, when collecting personal information, collect the information directly from the individual to whom the information relates unless:

    (a) the individual has authorised collection of the information from someone else, or

    (b) in the case of information relating to a person who is under the age of 16 years, the information has been provided by a parent or guardian of the person.

UTS would breach student privacy if UTS uses the information provided by Fairfax to identify students in this way. There are a number of exemptions under the NSW PPIP act; however these are not applicable to the current circumstances.

but none of them fit this situation clearly enough to say that UTS has the benefit of an exemption under the PPIP Act. However, since this situation could be deemed 'in the public interest', we intend to seek an exemption from the Privacy Commissioner. It may be that TEQSA would consider making representations on behalf of all universities.

Further, it would appear that in New Zealand the practice of providing assignments has been made illegal. Perhaps TEQSA could investigate this. If found effective, TEQSA's support of government to implement such measures in Australia could greatly strengthen the Australian system.

UTS approaches to ensure academic rigour

Innovative approaches to student assessment (to minimise student misconduct)

UTS is innovating in this space and moving away from traditional forms of assessment, such as written exams and assignments, by involving stakeholders in the design and implementation of assessment processes, including building in real-world tasks that are assessed on an ongoing basis, examples include:

- Students in health are engaged in caring for patients as early as first year under the supervision of trained clinicians;
- Architecture students work with real clients to develop plans, costings and council submissions;
- Engineering students design and build for real projects;
- Journalism students investigate, report and deliver stories across a range of platforms and external partners then publish those same stories; and
- Law students enter moots and volunteer in non-profit organisations.

Faculty specific approaches have also been developed, the Faculty of Law's approach to minimising cheating is to embed the development of students understanding of academic and professional communication and scholarship explicitly across the subjects that focus on communication and to encourage the widespread use of Turnitin software to identify plagiarism.

An example of this in first year is in Foundations of Law where students:

- Participate in class discussion on the substantive section about plagiarism that is in the Foundations of Law Subject Outline;
- Discuss examples and resources that are integrated at many points in the Subject Learning Guide;
- Discuss the 2014 Law Subject Information Booklet which contains a range of information including a section on writing, referencing, plagiarism, University Rules, assignments, etc. (used in most subjects);
- Are introduced to the recommended citation guide and the faculty's guide to the UTS:Law Guide to Written Communication, which has a section introducing referencing, is referred to throughout the subject (used in most subjects);
- Engage in a second small group seminar class named Legal Academic Writing and Integrity which involves discussion on types of legal writing (essays, case notes and problem questions), developing an argument, using authority, referencing, citation style.
- Participate in writing workshops that help students with their essay writing assessment and discuss good academic writing, understanding citation and plagiarism in the context of that particular task, explicitly covering proper referencing, acknowledging the work of others and plagiarism. These are voluntary but these repeat workshops each semester are well attended;
- Undertake a formative Referencing Quiz in UTSOnline that gives them an opportunity to test their skills;
- Learn to use Turnitin for the two written assessments - students are able to read their own Originality Reports, improve their work and resubmit up until the due date (used in most subjects);
- Are reminded of the warning about plagiarism in the context of the final exam (the Announcement about the exam contains a paragraph about referencing and plagiarism).

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UTS Policies and Processes to minimise cheating

We have the following policies and procedures in place which very clearly specify what constitutes cheating and the penalties for doing so:

1. The **Student Charter**[1] stipulates that students have a responsibility to display an ethical approach to study including refraining from:

   - cheating and plagiarism
   - making up or falsification of data

2. The **Student Rules**[2] – *Section 16: Student misconduct and appeals* provides a definition of student misconduct as follows:

   Student misconduct includes but is not limited to:

   (1)   (a) cheating or acting dishonestly in any way; or

   (b)   assisting any other student to cheat or act dishonestly in any way; or

   (c)   seeking assistance from others in order to cheat or act dishonestly; or

   (d)   attempting (a) or (b) or (c) in an examination, test, assignment, essay, thesis or any other assessment task that a student undertakes as part of the educational requirements of the course in which the student is enrolled;

   (2)   accessing or using another person's work by theft or other unauthorised means;

   (4)   plagiarising, i.e. taking and using someone else's ideas or manner of expressing them and passing them off as his or her own by failing to give appropriate acknowledgement of the source to seek to gain an advantage by unfair means;

   The rules also specify the penalties for student misconduct.

Promotion of academic integrity among UTS students

Promotion of academic integrity begins during our Orientation program and continues at multiple levels of students' experience of UTS. This section outlines the range of resources available to all students, as well as a description of exemplar faculty and subject specific activities.

Orientation

Incoming students are encouraged to participate in Study Success sessions during orientation, where they are prepared for independent learning, and cover issues of plagiarism and cheating.

Central unit support

UTS has a central Higher Education Language and Presentation Skills (HELPS) unit[3] which promotes academic integrity by offering student support for a range of academic literacies. Specifically, HELPS offer 15-minute drop-in advice sessions where students can ask questions about their studies and assessments (except for any subject content matter) without having to make an appointment.

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[1] http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/policies/studentcharter.html

[2] http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/rules/student/section-16.html#r16.2

[3] http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/about-helps

A drop-in advice session may cover:

- understanding an assignment question and the assessment criteria

- clarifying an assignment type (e.g. what's a literature review?)

- planning an assignment

- offering strategies for effective reading/note-making/presentation

- obtaining information on self-study resources

During these sessions students are shown online resources[4] supporting academic integrity.

HELPS offers intensive workshops during semester breaks which also cover academic integrity. The HELPS website also contains links to resources to support good academic practice:

- specific instructions[5] on avoiding plagiarism, with examples of unacceptable behavior

- an online self-paced plagiarism quiz[6]

- animated video "Why do we reference?"[7]

The University also has academic staff in an Academic Language and Learning group, which is part of the Institute for Interactive Media and Learning. Staff in this group work with academics in the Faculties to design assessment tasks that promote good academic practice and are resistant to plagiarism. They also work with academics on improving students' academic literacies and understandings of academic conventions in the curriculum, particularly in first year.

Other online assistance and support

The 'Current Students' section of the UTS website[8] provides clear information about student misconduct and includes the following statement:

"Examples of misconduct include but are not limited to:

- cheating, including purchasing an assignment via the internet or sharing work with another person, and submitting as your own work…"

A range of online resources is available and promoted to all students which foster academic integrity including:

- an online 'avoiding plagiarism tutorial'[9], that includes examples and a self-test quiz;

- the Higher Education Language and Presentation Skills (HELPS) site[10] containing information and help on avoiding plagiarism; and

- the Library website[11] has resources to support students in writing assignments.

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[4] https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/referencing-and-plagiarism

[5] http://cfsites1.uts.edu.au/uts/avoidingplagiarism/tutorial/acam_honesty.cfm

[6] http://cfsites1.uts.edu.au/uts/avoidingplagiarism/quiz/general_quiz.cfm

[7] https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL33E43721BA8C2529&feature=view_all

[8] https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/when-things-go-wrong/student-misconduct

[9] http://web.uts.edu.au/teachlearn/avoidingplagiarism/

[10] http://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/self-help-resources/referencing-and-plagiarism/avoiding-plagiarism

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Faculty specific initiatives

All Faculties provide study guides or the equivalent and these are made available to all students. These include information about academic misconduct and plagiarism. An example is the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences study guide[12] and the Business School subject outlines (see Appendix 1). The Faculty of Health has an "Essential Information for Students" booklet that is added as a resource for all students via UTSOnline (the learning management system) (see Appendix 2).

Faculty specific initiatives include the Business School assignment writing guide[13] an excellent in-house publication that promotes academic integrity and supports students to write good assignments.

Within faculties there are some specific examples from individual subjects including:

- the 'Ideas in History' subject within the BA(Comm) which includes tutorial material around correct referencing and plagiarism, developed for all tutors and required to be used in all tutorials;

- 'Language and Discourse' has workshops with information on referencing and plagiarism;

- 'Integrating Business Perspectives' has a set of online resources in UTSOnline on referencing and avoiding plagiarism;

- 'Sociocultural Foundations' is a core first year subject with 350 students. Students are informed about and given examples of plagiarism in the first lecture. They submit their first assessment week 2 and need to do that through Turnitin so are very aware. They are able to check their Turnitin submission before finally submitting;

- 'Engineering Communication' and 'Communication for IT Professionals' specifically incorporate academic integrity into the subject materials and learning activities and provides access to an online personalised academic literacy module on referencing/academic integrity;

- 'Advanced Communication Skills in Science' educates students about plagiarism in lectures by asking them to engage in exercises on paraphrasing, citing etc.

Academic Support provided to those at risk of not progressing satisfactorily.

Students who enter the University through an Educational Access Scheme (rather than depending solely on their ATAR) are provided with an additional Orientation session, and linked to academic support resources.

An Outreach Program attempts to contact all first year students by phone and email, surveying them about their knowledge of the census date by which they should withdraw if they are concerned they may be insufficiently prepared for the subject. Students are advised of the English language, academic and welfare services available, and direct referrals are made.

A number of first year subjects use diagnostic testing to identify and provide support for students who may be at risk. For example, in the Faculties of Health, Science and Engineering and IT, students undertake a post-enrolment language assessment and those who are identified as needing extra support are streamed into tutorials or subjects that include additional language development. Science

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[11] http://www.lib.uts.edu.au/help/study-skills/writing-reading-speaking
[12] https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/fass-study-guide.pdf

[13] http://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/business-writing-guide-2014.pdf

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and Engineering and IT also use a Mathematics diagnostic test and stream students into different subjects, depending on their needs.

UTS has been in the forefront of developments in the use of data analytics to identify factors that relate to students being at risk.

A recent upgrade to the university's learning management system (Blackboard) provides lecturers with a simple dashboard to allow them to identify and notify students who, for example, have not logged in within a certain period or who have missed deadlines.

There are a range of measures and support in place for any students identified of being at risk to support and help them progress which are also outlined in Rule 10.7 (below).

There is an Early Intervention Scheme for international students who pass only half their subjects, and an Academic Caution system for all students who pass less than half their subjects. The requirements are explained in Rule 10.7:

10.7   Academic caution

10.7.1 A student will be placed on academic caution if:

(1)   at the end of any half year of study in any year of the student's enrolment in a course, the student gains less than 50 per cent of the credit points for which he or she was enrolled in that half year; and/or

(2)   the student has been excluded for failure to meet the minimum rate of progress as set out in Rule 10.4.1 and he or she has appealed against the exclusion and that appeal has been upheld, unless the appeal was upheld on the basis that the original decision to exclude was invalid as a result of factual errors, pursuant to Rule 10.8.4(3).

10.7.2 The period of academic caution will normally have a duration of one half year and shall occur in the next half year of study following the decision to place the student on academic caution.

10.7.3. A student who is placed on academic caution will be advised in writing of the arrangements and requirements for academic caution.

10.7.4 During a first period of academic caution the student must:

(1)   consult with the designated academic course advisers from the relevant faculty for advice on the student's study plan;

(2)   attend a study skills workshop program organised by the Student Services Unit;

(3)   enrol in no more than 24 credit points for the half year of study to which the period of academic caution applies, and/or no more than six credit points for the immediately following summer or July teaching period. The maximum number of credit points in which a student may enrol may be reduced to 18 credit points by the relevant Responsible Academic Officer. Students attempting to enrol in credit points above the permitted maximum may be withdrawn from the subject(s) in accordance with Rule 7.5.6;

(4)   attend a HELPS English language workshop if directed to do so by the relevant Responsible Academic Officer.

10.7.5 During any further period of academic caution the student must consult with the designated academic course advisers from the relevant faculty to determine a plan for study success.

APPENDIX 1

Business School statement on plagiarism

Plagiarism is a broad term referring to the practice of appropriating someone else's ideas or work and presenting them as your own without acknowledgment. Plagiarism is literary or intellectual theft. It can take a number of forms, including:

copying the work of another student, whether that student is in the same class, from an earlier year of the same course, or from another tertiary institution altogether copying any section, no matter how brief, from a book, journal, article or other written source, without duly acknowledging it as a quotation

copying any map, diagram or table of figures without duly acknowledging the source paraphrasing or otherwise using the ideas of another author without duly acknowledging the source.

Whatever the form, plagiarism is unacceptable both academically and professionally. By plagiarising you are both stealing the work of another person and cheating by representing it as your own. **Any instances of plagiarism can therefore be expected to draw severe penalties and may be referred to the Faculty Student Conduct Committee.**

Cheating means to defraud or swindle. Students who seek to gain an advantage by unfair means such as copying another student's work, or in any other way misleading a lecturer about their knowledge or ability or the amount of work they have done, are guilty of cheating.

Students who condone plagiarism by allowing their work to be copied will also be subject to severe disciplinary action.

Avoiding plagiarism is one of the main reasons why the UTS Business School is insistent on the thorough and appropriate referencing of all written work.

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APPENDIX 2

Statement provided to all Faculty of Health students

Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the most common issue of academic misconduct to arise in this Faculty. It is in your best interests to become familiar with what it means to plagiarise so that you can avoid any possible breaches of the rules.

See the following links:

http://www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/resources/plagiarism/
http://www.iml.uts.edu.au/assessment/plagiarism/
http://web.uts.edu.au/teachlearn/avoidingplagiarism/

Avoiding plagiarism

For a full explanation of plagiarism using examples of correct and incorrect references to the work of others, follow the link http://web.uts.edu.au/teachlearn/avoidingplagiarism/

We suggest you complete the quiz to review your understanding of how you can avoid plagiarism in your academic writing.

For further details about the university-wide penalties for plagiarism go to:

http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/rules/16-3.html

12 December 2014

UNSW

Professor Nick Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner
TEQSA
GPO Box 1672
Melbourne VIC 3000

chief.commissioner@teqsa.gov.au

Dear Professor Saunders,

I write in response to your letter of 24 November 2014 regarding media reports alleging cheating by university students through the purchase of assignments written by others.

UNSW has an ongoing commitment to foster a culture of learning informed by academic integrity, and as such is committed to a preventative and educative approach for our students and staff to highlight the importance of academic integrity and the raise awareness of the University's response to misconduct in this area.

I can confirm that we have been provided with information relating to the allegations made by Fairfax press about students enrolled at UNSW. Preliminary investigations have commenced in accordance with UNSW's policies and procedures regarding academic integrity, and will continue into the new year. Such 'contract cheating' constitutes significant plagiarism and serious student misconduct under UNSW's policies and, if proven, typically carries a minimum penalty of 0% grade for the course.

Our expectations of student and staff behaviour in this regard are clearly articulated in the policy framework outlined below, which enhances UNSW's institutional and academic integrity through the promotion of ethical academic practice, identification of poor academic practice and disciplinary responses to instances of academic and research misconduct.

The *Student Code Policy* describes the relationship between UNSW and our students. It sets out what students can expect from UNSW and details the conduct (academic and non-academic) that UNSW expects from all students.

The *Research Code of Conduct* sets out the obligations on staff and student researchers at UNSW, including the expectation of high standards of professional conduct.

The *Student Misconduct Procedure* specifies the process by which UNSW manages allegations of academic and non-academic student misconduct, and is a companion to the Student Code Policy.

UNSW's *Plagiarism Policy* is a source document for definitions of plagiarism and clearly states that such academic misconduct is not tolerated at the University. The companion procedure, *Managing Plagiarism for Students Enrolled in Coursework Programs,* details the process by which UNSW proactively works to prevent and manage plagiarism by coursework students.

Professor Iain Martin | Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES | UNSW SYDNEY NSW 2052 AUSTRALIA
T +61 (2) 9385 2800 | F +61 (2) 9385 1385 | E iain.martin@unsw.edu.au
ABN 57 195 873 179 | CRICOS Provider Code 00098G
SYDNEY | CANBERRA | AUSTRALIA

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In addition to these well-established policies and procedures, UNSW actively promotes an educative approach to understanding academic integrity across all Faculties. Elements of this approach include:

- *The dissemination of information and resources to students on academic integrity and plagiarism* – https://student.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism outlines the key principles and how they are to be addressed in academic research and writing. It includes information and educational activities explaining what plagiarism is and how to develop the reading, writing and research skills to avoid it.

- *A mandatory online tutorial* (ELISE) *for all newly enrolled undergraduate students* - http://subjectguides.library.unsw.edu.au/content.php?pid=317434&sid=2730492 - teaches information literacy skills and contains information on plagiarism, ethics, scholarly values and copyright. Failure to achieve a minimum score of 80% by week 5 restricts the student's ability to enrol in future semesters.

- *The inclusion of information on academic integrity and plagiarism in all course outlines*

- *The integration of learning activities on academic integrity and plagiarism within first year courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels*

- *The provision of "similarity detection reports" via Turnitin* - based on the electronic submission of students' work. These reports enable teaching staff to raise students' awareness of the significance of the plagiarism in their own work, and thus explore ways in which it might be avoided. It also allows staff to identify and further investigate potential instances of academic misconduct.

- *The provision of feedback to students on academic integrity and plagiarism as part of the feedback that they receive on assessment tasks in all courses* - often in the form of corrections to students' approach to citing and referencing their sources.

- *Support from the Learning and Teaching Unit* – UNSW has long recognised that it is vital that staff develop the capabilities to prepare and enable students to engage in scholarly work in accordance with accepted academic standards. Information concerning how to address the issues of academic integrity and plagiarism as part of one's teaching responsibilities is provided on the Teaching Gateway, including an Assessment as Learning Toolkit. This topic also forms part of the Learning and Teaching Unit's formal development programs for academic staff, and specific resources are provided to aid academic staff in designing assessments in order to assist students in avoiding plagiarism.

UNSW has a multifaceted structure in place to identify and support students at risk of not achieving satisfactory academic progress. Students who may be struggling are assigned an Academic Advisor, and are encouraged to utilise the support services provided by the University's counselling and Student Participation staff. In addition, the Learning Centre offers workshops in academic skills, academic orientation programs, individual consultations and a range of other resources online and in the Centre to assist students to develop the necessary academic skills and succeed in their studies.

In 2015, UNSW will further enhance its efforts in this area by developing and implementing an online academic integrity module which all commencing coursework

students will be required to complete.   This module will be integrated into our Learning Management System and will enable Faculties and School to add tailored components and assessment items where appropriate. A complementary mandatory staff module is also under development to ensure that teaching staff are aware of UNSW's expectations and approach to ensuring academic integrity and the relevant policies and procedures.   This will also provide resources on developing assessments that discourage plagiarism.

UNSW will also be hosting it's first "Integrity Week" during 2015, comprising of a range of different activities to engage students and staff from all faculties with issues relating to academic integrity, their nature and significance.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further detail on any of the initiatives described above, and I will be happy to provide updates on our investigations into the information provided by Fairfax should you so wish.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Iain Martin
Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

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15 December 2014

Professor Peter Coaldrake AO, Vice-Chancellor

Professor Nick Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner
Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
GPO Box 1672
Melbourne
Victoria 3001

Dear Professor Saunders

I am writing in response to your letter dated 24 November 2014, regarding recent media reports alleging cheating by university students through the purchase of assignments written by others. You requested a brief report of the action being taken by QUT to investigate the allegations made in the Fairfax press about some students enrolled at the University and action taken to remedy the situation, should that prove necessary.

The data reported by Fairfax indicated that QUT students had spent $1,392 purchasing completed essays/assignments from the MyMaster Chinese language website, in order to submit these as their own. QUT's Registrar has written to the author of the Fairfax article, seeking further information. Should allegations of substance come forward against individual students, we will investigate those allegations.

Please be assured that QUT takes very seriously the maintenance of academic integrity. Our approach involves robust policies and procedures, educating and supporting our students and utilising technology. We actively engage students to build skills, knowledge and dispositions that foster and facilitate academic integrity as part of their responsibility within an academic community, to ensure their employability and to protect the reputation of their qualifications.

We have policies in place to support our students with understanding and exercising academic integrity, including C/5.3 Academic Integrity (http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/C/C_05_03.jsp) and E/2.1 QUT Student Code of Conduct (http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/E/E_02_01.jsp). Where a suspicion of academic dishonesty by a student arises, the suspicion is investigated within a procedural framework supporting E/8.1 Management of Student Misconduct (http://www.mopp.qut.edu.au/E/E_08_01.jsp). Where allegations of substance exist, these allegations progress through formal disciplinary channels as set out in the policy; however, the University endeavors to take a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to academic integrity.

We have a range of services available to our students, to ensure that high standards of academic integrity are maintained, including:

- Study Solutions, one-on-one assistance with academic study, researching and writing skills (https://www.library.qut.edu.au/learn/studysolutions.jsp).

- Academic Skills Advisors, to whom students are referred by teaching staff, to receive specialist discipline-integrated advice and assistance in academic literacy (study skills) and information literacy (researching skills).
  (http://www.library.qut.edu.au/about/contact/academicskillsadvisers.jsp).

- University-wide Liaison Librarians who provide faculty cohorts with assistance in researching, referencing and citing skills
  (https://www.library.qut.edu.au/about/contact/liaisonlibrarians.jsp).

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- A formative draft review service, targeted at students in identified 'at risk' groups or high attrition undergraduate units, which provides advice on early assignment drafts.

- Academic Language and Learning Advisors, who provide language and learning assistance to students whose second language is English.

- Advanced Information Research Skills, which is a mandatory unit for enrolled doctoral students to address academic acknowledgement, copyright, intellectual property, data management and ethics at a postgraduate research level.

- Learning Resources in a range of forms, including:

  o QUT cite|write, the University's mandatory writing, referencing and citing guide (http://www.citewrite.qut.edu.au/).
  o Studywell, short guides, tips and guidance on writing, paraphrasing, synthesizing and researching (http://studywell.library.qut.edu.au/).
  o QUT YouTube video entitled 'Academic Integrity in the Real World' (released 2013) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQg1yuGHSRc).
  o Study Smart, an online tutorial which introduces effective research skills, including acknowledging sources, referencing and citing, and copyright and intellectual property (http://studysmart.library.qut.edu.au/).

Furthermore, QUT utilises two forms of content matching software, which assist with the detection of plagiarism:

- SafeAssign, which checks submitted files against information sources such as Google Scholar; ProQuest ABI/Inform database; QUT's institutional repository; and SafeAssign's Global Reference Database of documents voluntarily submitted by students from various institutions; and

- 'TurnItIn', which is an assignment submission tool within QUT's Blackboard site suitable for text-based assignments.
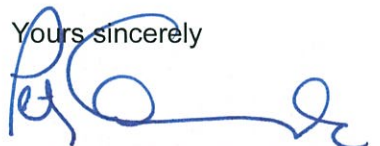
As QUT has numerous mechanisms to support the maintenance of academic integrity, senior management commissioned an Academic Integrity Project to develop a university-wide strategy to articulate our approach to supporting staff and educating students in this important area in early 2015. The Project aims to consolidate practice, guidelines and resources, and to provide best practice exemplars, FAQs for staff and students, consistent staff development opportunities, communication strategies and evaluation methods. Some aspects of policy are being reviewed to assist staff in detecting academic dishonesty, for example in regard to authenticating student learning if cheating is suspected, and course teams are being supported to develop authentic assessment instruments.

Pragmatically all educational institutions face new and emerging challenges to detect and assure the academic integrity of student work. This is a global issue for all education providers resulting from the interconnectedness of the global community and access to distributed information and services. Part of the future strategies to assure academic strategy will be for institutions to also collaborate and leverage networks and distributed information and services. Government could have an important role in facilitating and supporting this work internationally.

I am confident that QUT has a strong framework in place to manage the University's approach to academic integrity and that we will continue to improve policies, procedures and practices as issues arise.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Professor Peter Coaldrake AO
Vice-Chancellor

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16 December, 2014

Professor Nick Saunders
Acting Chief Commissioner
TEQSA
GPO Box 1672
MELBOURNE 3001

Dear Professor Saunders,

Re: Academic Integrity

Thank you for your letter of 24 November, 2014. The College has followed the recent media reports regarding facilitated cheating by some university students with concern and we have taken the opportunity provided by your letter to review our policies and practices relating to academic conduct and integrity.

Plagiarism where it occurs in the College's task-based curriculum tends to take the form of a student re-using answers to assigned tasks which have been shared with them by a past or current student, rather than students purchasing prepared answers via the internet.

The College treats any breach as both an academic and a professional issue. Academic integrity at the College needs to be understood within our particular context. Academically, we are committed to the principle of integrity (as adopted within our Principles of Research & Scholarship and Principles of Teaching & Learning), but, more particularly, we train lawyers (intending and already practising) who are bound by defined ethical standards which lie to the courts, the profession, their clients and the wider community. There are potentially serious consequences for students who fall short of the requisite standards, including refusal or removal of practising certificate.

We do not routinely use anti-plagiarism software due to the frequent use of pro forma precedent templates in our programs because copied material is not sourced on the internet but from material shared by other students. However, if suspicions are aroused we may use Viper to investigate a submission in particular cases and the 'Properties' of Word documents are regularly monitored to check authorship and editing details.

In its approach to academic integrity, the College emphasises prevention as much as detection. Every Applied Law subject has an online tutorial on plagiarism, where students can work though different examples of what constitutes paraphrasing, collaboration and so on. All PLT students are warned about the consequences (academic and career) of academic misconduct at the beginning of every course offering and all students are required to certify that every piece of assessment submitted online is their own work. Such certification is a particularly serious matter for prospective lawyers as any false certification would impact directly on good fame and character requirements for the purposes of admission, or retaining admission, as an Australian lawyer.
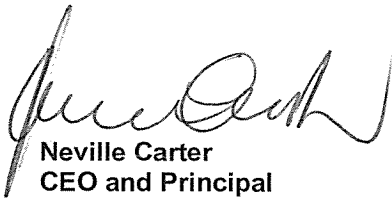
Establishing the link in the student's mind between academic conduct and the professional behaviour expected of a lawyer has been an important part of the College's strategy to minimise fraudulent academic conduct by our students.

Inevitably, breaches of the College's academic conduct policies do occasionally occur. Any suspicious submission is thoroughly investigated and dealt with according to the processes set out in our Program Manuals, which can be accessed on our website: www.collaw.edu.au (see Downloads).

The determinations made by the General Manager, Education and any relevant appeals are reported to the Academic Board. In the last year we have dealt with 17 students for a range of unsatisfactory academic conduct, but none of these have involved the purchase of prepared answers as has been recently reported in the newspapers.

Please feel free to contact me again at any time with regard to this or any other matter.

Yours faithfully

Neville Carter
CEO and Principal

cc Kate Jackson

UNSW

7 December 2015

Professor Nick Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner
TEQSA
GPO Box 1672
Melbourne VIC 3000

chief.commissioner@teqsa.gov.au

Dear Professor Saunders

I write in response to your request for an update on the University's investigations into allegations of cheating by certain UNSW students made by Fairfax press in November 2014.

Update

By way of background, Fairfax provided UNSW with information relating to transactions between certain UNSW students and MyMaster, an online essay-writing service, related to the completion of assessment tasks. This information enabled us to commence investigations in accordance with UNSW's policies and procedures regarding academic integrity.

I can confirm that UNSW finalised those investigations in June. 25 allegations were put to 19 students concerning breaches of UNSW's policies. The number of allegations correlates with the number of instances of alleged academic misconduct. Of those 25 allegations, 22 were substantiated. A total of 17 students were issued with fail grades and/or suspensions to enrolment. UNSW revoked the degree of one student whose degree had been conferred at the time of the investigations. The degree was revoked prior to a testamur being issued.

In July I sent communications to the UNSW community about the finalisation of the investigations, and stressed the importance of adhering to the highest levels of academic integrity. I reminded UNSW students and staff about the various University support services and resources that help students with their academic writing and advised staff of prevention and detection strategies concerning academic integrity.

UNSW's approach to academic integrity

UNSW continues to adhere to its commitment to foster a culture of learning informed by academic integrity. In my letter to you dated 12 December 2014, I advised you of the University's policy framework which enhances UNSW's institutional and academic integrity, and the University's educative approach to understanding academic integrity. I am pleased to report that UNSW is on track in developing the initiatives we advised would be scheduled for development in 2015, those being:

- the development of an online academic integrity module which has been successfully trialled in a number of large first year courses in 2015

- the hosting of UNSW's first 'Integrity Week', which comprised of a range of activities that engaged staff and students on issues related to academic integrity

- the development of staff training to assist teaching staff understand UNSW's expectations and approach to ensuring academic integrity.

Professor Iain Martin | Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
UNSW AUSTRALIA | UNSW SYDNEY NSW 2052 AUSTRALIA
T +61 (2) 9385 2800 | F +61 (2) 9385 1385 | E iain.martin@unsw.edu.au
ABN 57 195 873 179 | CRICOS Provider Code 00098G

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Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like further detail on UNSW's investigations described above, and the initiatives we are implementing.

Yours sincerely

Professor Iain Martin
Vice-President & Deputy Vic-Chancellor (Academic)

The Hon Christopher Pyne MP
Minister for Education
Leader of the House
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Student Academic Integrity and Contract Cheating through the MyMaster Website

I write in response to your letter of 17 November 2014 to provide you with a report of the outcome of my enquiries into recent Fairfax Media reports of contract cheating by university students.

On 24 November 2014 I wrote to each of the 174 Australian higher education providers about this matter: drawing their attention to the Higher Education Threshold Standards that relate to academic integrity; asking them to review their policies and practices to minimise the opportunity for cheating by students through the purchase or sharing of assignments and other fraudulent behavior; and requesting examples of "better practice" in assessment design and the promotion of a culture of academic integrity in the student body.

For the 17 higher education providers specifically mentioned in the Fairfax press over the MyMaster cheating allegations, I also requested a report of the action that each was taking to investigate the allegations and to remedy the situation should that prove necessary.

I received a detailed report from all the providers mentioned by Fairfax Media and comprehensive written responses from a large number of other universities and higher education providers. From these responses and my other enquiries I can assure you that Australia's higher education providers take academic integrity very seriously and have robust policies and procedures in place to promote an appropriate student culture and to deal with academic misconduct when it occurs. A number of providers have reviewed their policies and procedures in response to the Fairfax allegations with a view to making "contract cheating" a more explicit offence.

The attached report is drawn from provider responses and in addition, outlines the leadership that Australia is providing in the promotion of student academic integrity through organisations such as the Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity and the work of the Office for Learning and Teaching in your Department, which is funding a number of important national projects in this area. The report also makes a number of suggestions relating to possible legislative amendments and national actions that you might like to have explored by your Department.

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I would like to thank officers of the Department of Education, especially Ms Di Weddell of the Office for Learning and Teaching, for their assistance with my enquiries. I would also like to highlight the leadership being provided by academics such as Dr Tracey Bretag (University of South Australia) and Ms Ann Rogerson (University of Wollongong) in the area of academic integrity and to thank them for their advice and for providing me with very helpful information about "contract cheating".

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information or would wish to meet to discuss matters further.

Yours sincerely

Professor Nick Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner

19 December 2014

Confidential Report to the Minister for Education on Student Academic Integrity and Allegations of Contract Cheating by University Students

Response by providers to Fairfax Media allegations regarding the MyMaster website

Responses were received from all the higher education providers identified by Fairfax Media, including 15 public universities and two non-university private providers.

It appears that activities relating to the MyMaster website were focused on providers with Sydney CBD locations (including regional NSW and interstate universities, and pathway-to-university providers). At many of these locations, MyMaster "services" were promoted by the unauthorised distribution of leaflets and posters on campus. Many providers were aware of this activity and had taken action to destroy the promotional material and to warn their students not to contact MyMaster well before TEQSA wrote on 24 November 2014. At least one provider had also contacted the principal of MyMaster to threaten legal action if they persisted with this activity.

The majority of providers identified in the press have sought specific information about students enrolled at their institution from Fairfax Media. A couple have already taken action against identified students and others are planning to take action once legal issues have been clarified, including those relating to Fairfax's access to the information. One provider has reported using its IT security system to identify students who have accessed the MyMaster website and is keeping a watching brief in addition to placing a general warning on the system should attempts be made in the future to access the site.

It appears from providers' preliminary investigations that only a very small number of students have been involved in this fraud, even at providers where Fairfax reported the highest level of activity (eg Macquarie University). All affected providers reported taking specific action immediately they became aware of the MyMaster website to discourage contract cheating by students and heighten surveillance by academic staff during the forthcoming assessment period.

I am satisfied that all the higher education providers identified by Fairfax Media have appropriate policies and procedures in place to promote academic integrity and detect academic misconduct, and that they took appropriate action when they became aware of MyMaster's practices.

Contract cheating – the purchase of another person's work to present as your own – has a long history. Recently, the ready availability of sophisticated communication technology and

the rise of social media have increased the opportunity to access and/or repurpose another's work to present as your own. Availability of essay writing services is pervasive with both local and international websites advertising their services. A number of assessment strategies have been devised to minimise the opportunity for such fraudulent activity by students and to detect it when it occurs. However it should be noted that the efficacy of such strategies has not been established and the favoured way to combat such behavior is by the promotion of academic integrity in the student body. Approaches to assessment and promotion of good student conduct are discussed in the next section of this report.

Policies and procedures to promote academic integrity and deal with student academic misconduct in Australia's higher education sector

TEQSA pays particular attention to issues of academic integrity during provider registration and course accreditation. The Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011 has a number of standards relevant to academic integrity, including Provider Registration Standards 3.4, 3.8, 4.3 and 6.5 and Provider Course Accreditation Standards 3.1, 3.2, 4.4, 5.1 and 5.3.

I am confident that all providers that have been reviewed by TEQSA over the last three years have appropriate academic integrity policies and practices in place and meet the relevant Standards. It is noteworthy that all Australian public universities have their academic integrity policies and procedures available publically through their websites and through the website of the Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity (see below).

The responses received by TEQSA show that considerable effort has been spent by higher education providers in the last decade to promote academic integrity among students and staff.

(1) Strengthening corporate and academic governance of student academic integrity

All providers report regular consideration of academic misconduct matters by their Academic Board (or equivalent body), systematic analysis of findings and development of plans of action. Many providers report annually to their corporate governing body on student academic misconduct and on the outcome of strategies to promote a culture of academic integrity. A number of providers (eg University of Newcastle) enclosed a copy of their most recent academic integrity report to their governing body, which were exemplary.

(2) Appropriate policies and procedures

All providers report that they regularly review their policies and practices to: promote academic integrity; minimise opportunity for fraudulent assessment conduct by students; detect academic misconduct; and impose appropriate penalties. Many examples (eg University of Wollongong, La Trobe University) were provided to TEQSA which show thoughtful development of policies as teaching practices and

delivery methods have changed. Virtually all providers that responded with a written report to TEQSA report the use of plagiarism detection (text-matching) software in the assessment of student assignments.

A number of providers (eg Griffith University, University of Western Australia) have revised their policies recently to make specific reference to contract cheating.

(3) Staff development

The evidence collected by TEQSA shows that Australian higher education providers have invested significantly in increasing staff understanding of and capability in promoting and assuring student academic integrity (eg University of South Australia, University of Western Sydney). This includes: how to recognise and report suspected academic misconduct, including how to recognise non-original work such as purchased or repurposed work of others; being familiar with the provider's policies and procedures relating to student academic misconduct; the appointment and training of academic integrity officers at Faculty /School level to promote an appropriate student culture and to investigate and deal with cases of suspected misconduct; the use of plagiarism detection software for educational purposes as well as for misconduct surveillance; promoting an understanding of the learning needs of particular student cohorts, including academic learning support and English language needs; and the appropriate design of student assessment.

(4) Assessment design

Evidence was provided to show that many providers are making a concerted effort to improve the quality of student assessment, both to better assess the learning outcomes achieved by students and to minimise the opportunity for fraudulent activity and academic misconduct. Some of the recent emphasis on assessment redesign has been driven by the requirement for all providers to be compliant with the Australian Qualifications Framework by 2015.

Good assessment design features (eg University of Wollongong, Macquarie University, University of Technology Sydney) include:
- setting new assessment tasks each time the subject is taught
- requiring analysis and synthesis rather than simply factual recall and explanation
- using a variety of assessment tasks that are staged throughout the subject
- requiring group work on some assessment items
- requiring an invigilated component (or other form of face-to-face assessment) and, in the case of some providers (eg Melbourne Institute of Technology), requiring the student to pass this component in addition to passing the subject overall

- using learning analytics to assess student engagement with the provider's learning platform
- using early formative assessment and other mechanisms to identify students at risk of failure so that learning and language support can be offered
- directly assessing student performance in the workplace and other "authentic" assessment designs
- negotiating assessment tasks with students by encouraging them to participate with staff in the design of assessment tasks that are aligned with their specific learning experience and outcomes (eg RMIT, UTS)

With regard to the deterrence of "contract cheating", the following assessment principles have been advanced as good practice [1]

- "just in time" announcement of written assignments in order to limit the time available to purchase the work of others (although there seems to be significant redundancy in the essay mill business and turn-around times can be very fast)
- encoding or electronic watermarking of assignment submissions
- emphasis on face-to-face (physical or virtual) assessment, including in-class essay writing
- personalisation of assessment by building in requirements that are specific to the student's experience (eg linked to a guest speaker presentation)

It is often considered that essays purchased through essay mills are less likely to be detected by anti-plagiarism software because they are kept behind firewalls and are supposedly bespoke products. However, this is not the experience of all providers (eg University of Sydney). Purchased work is usually detected because the quality of the academic content and/or language is significantly superior to the student's usual performance in class or because the answer provided has a generic quality rather than addressing the specifics of the assignment task. It is widely regarded that the best way to detect and deter contract cheating is to "know your students".

(5) Student activities to promote academic integrity

Most providers include the promotion of a culture of student academic integrity as a key aspect of their policy. Approaches to achieve this include:

- enacting a Student Charter or Code of Conduct which sets out expectations of student behavior, including honesty and integrity. Many providers have such a document and in New South Wales this has been enacted at State level for international students, with the Council of International Students Australia being a signatory

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[1] Newton, PM and Lang, C: Custom essay writers, freelancers and other paid third parties (forthcoming), preview provided by Dr Tracey Bretag; and Rogerson, A (2014): Personal communication.

- requiring all undergraduate commencing students to successfully complete a module on academic integrity as a foundation requirement for progression in their degree program
- encouraging students to run their written assignments through plagiarism detection software (such as Turnitin) as an educational exercise before assignment submission
- students establishing Academic Integrity Societies (eg Macquarie University) to promote and support appropriate behavior in the student body.

Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity (APFEI)

The APFEI was established in 2001 to promote academic integrity and best practice among university staff and students. Australia has played a leading role in the establishment and ongoing activities of the APFEI. The current Chair is Dr Ruth Walker of the University of Wollongong and six Australian Universities are institutional members (Adelaide, Deakin, Macquarie, Newcastle, Tasmania and Wollongong).

The Forum has sponsored a well-attended conference on academic integrity every second year since 2003, covering areas such as plagiarism, culture and values, inclusive approaches and bridging the gap between policy and practice. The most recent conference was held at La Trobe University's Melbourne CBD campus just two weeks ago on the topic of Engaging Designs of Academic Integrity Modules. I am informed that the conference was fully subscribed within 24 hours of the call for registration.

The APFEI website provides links to a variety of helpful resources, including those held and funded by the Office for Teaching and Learning in the Department of Education.

The Academic Integrity Policies of all Australian universities are available on the APFEI website.

Office for Learning and Teaching funded projects (OLT)

The OLT (and its predecessor body the Australian Learning and Teaching Council) has been very active in funding projects to promote academic integrity. These projects have created broad engagement and collaboration across Australian universities and more recently have involved the private higher education sector. The nature of projects funded since 2010 runs from student responsibility to teaching and assessment to the design and implementation of policy. Recent project titles include:

- Academic integrity in Australia – understanding and changing culture and practice (led by Macquarie University, to be published in early 2015)
- Plagiarism and related issues in assessment not involving text (led by the University of Newcastle, to be published in early 2015)

- Working from the Centre: supporting unit and course coordinators to implement academic integrity policies, resources and scholarship (led by Victoria University, 2014)
- Web 2.0 authoring tools in higher education: new directions for assessment and academic integrity (led by the University of Melbourne, 2011)
- Investigating the efficacy of culturally specific academic literacy and academic honesty resources for Chinese students (led by Victoria University, 2010)
- Academic integrity standards: aligning policy and practice in Australian universities (led by the University of South Australia, 2013)
- Embedding and extending exemplary academic integrity policy and support frameworks across the higher education sector (led by the University of South Australia, 2014)

The last project in the list is notable for the involvement of the private sector through the Queensland Institute of Business and Technology, which is owned by the large private provider Navitas and is a pathway college for Griffith University. The project also has a relationship with another Navitas owned pathway college, La Trobe University International College.

Project reports and resources flowing from these projects are freely available from the OLT website and individual university websites with links across from the APFEI website.

Possible approach to contract cheating through legislation

Australia does not have specific legislation that addresses cheating on higher education assessment tasks. There are general provisions in the Commonwealth, State and Territory jurisdictions that deal with fraud, dishonesty and obtaining an advantage by deception which may apply to students and possibly to those who provide cheating services. I am not aware of any legislation that would directly relate to advertising or promoting cheating services.

New Zealand has specific legislation which addresses cheating in higher education. Section 292E of the *New Zealand Education Act 1989* makes it an offence to provide or advertise cheating services. Specifically under Section 292E it is an offence for a person to provide, advertise or publish an advertisement for any of the following services:

a. completing an assignment or any other work that a student is required to complete as part of a program or training scheme
b. providing or arranging the provision of an assignment that a student is required to complete as part of a program or training scheme
c. providing or arranging the provision of answers for an examination that a student is required to sit as part of a program or training scheme
d. sitting an examination that a student is required to sit as part of a program or training scheme or providing another person to sit the exam in place of the student.

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I am advised that a number of states in the USA also have laws that prohibit the provision of contract cheating services.

The Minister for Education may wish to refer this matter to the Department of Education for consideration of future legislative amendments.

Other considerations

Two other suggestions were made by providers during the course of my enquiries.

Macquarie University expressed concern that to date it had not been successful in attracting interest from the police in pursuing criminal charges against those operating contract cheating websites. Macquarie suggests that a national effort might be required to ensure that existing Commonwealth, State and Territory law relating to fraud, dishonesty and deceptive practice is prosecuted in cases like this. Such a national effort might be promoted through your Department and relevant joint Ministerial Councils.

Contract cheating providers are increasingly using the internet and social media outlets to promote their services domestically and internationally. In light of this, both Deakin University and Queensland University of Technology suggested in their responses that a national (possibly international) website/ social media surveillance network along with a register of contract cheating providers would be beneficial in early detection and as a deterrent. Again, this is a matter that the Minister might wish to refer to the Department of Education for consideration.

Professor Nicholas Saunders AO
Acting Chief Commissioner

19 December 2014

Report on Student Academic Integrity and Allegations of Contract Cheating by University Students

Background

On 12 November 2014 the Fairfax media reported allegations of cheating by students at a number of Australian higher education providers through the purchase of assignments, particularly through the MyMaster website. The Honorable Christopher Pyne MP, Minister for Education and Training, referred the matter to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) to investigate further.

TEQSA wrote to all registered Australian higher education providers. Those providers identified in the media were requested to report to TEQSA on action taken to investigate the allegations and remedy the matter should it prove necessary. All higher education providers were asked to share best practice approaches to minimising student misconduct in assessment and promoting academic integrity amongst students. This report is drawn from the responses received.

Response by providers to Media allegations regarding the MyMaster website

Responses were received from all the higher education providers identified in the Fairfax media, including 15 public universities and two non-university private providers.

It appears that activities relating to the MyMaster website were focused on providers with Sydney CBD locations (including regional New South Wales and interstate universities, and pathway-to-university providers). At many of these locations, MyMaster "services" were promoted by the unauthorised distribution of leaflets and posters on campus. Many providers were aware of this activity and had taken action to destroy the promotional material and to warn their students not to contact MyMaster well before TEQSA wrote on 24 November 2014. At least one provider had also contacted the principal of MyMaster to threaten legal action if they persisted with this activity.

The majority of providers identified in the press have sought specific information about students enrolled at their institution from Fairfax Media. A couple have already taken action against identified students and others are planning to take action once legal issues have been clarified, including those relating to Fairfax's access to the information. One provider has reported using its IT security system to identify students who have accessed the MyMaster website and is keeping a watching brief in addition to placing a general warning on the system should attempts be made in the future to access the site.

It appears from providers' preliminary investigations that only a very small number of students have been involved in this fraud, even at providers where Fairfax reported the highest level of activity. All affected providers reported taking specific action immediately they became aware of the MyMaster website to discourage contract cheating by students and heighten surveillance by academic staff during the forthcoming assessment period.

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Contract cheating – the purchase of another person's work to present as your own – has a long history. Recently, the ready availability of sophisticated communication technology and the rise of social media have increased the opportunity to access and/or repurpose another's work to present as your own. Availability of essay writing services is pervasive with both local and international websites advertising their services.   A number of assessment strategies have been devised to minimise the opportunity for such fraudulent activity by students and to detect it when it occurs. However it should be noted that the efficacy of such strategies has not been established and the favoured way to combat such behavior is by the promotion of academic integrity in the student body. Approaches to assessment and promotion of good student conduct are discussed in the next section of this report.

Policies and procedures to promote academic integrity and deal with student academic misconduct in Australia's higher education sector

TEQSA pays particular attention to issues of academic integrity during provider registration and course accreditation. The Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011 has a number of standards relevant to academic integrity, including Provider Registration Standards 3.4, 3.8, 4.3 and 6.5 and Provider Course Accreditation Standards 3.1, 3.2, 4.4, 5.1 and 5.3.

Among the providers identified by Fairfax Media, TEQSA is confident that all that have been reviewed by the Agency over the last three years have appropriate academic integrity policies and practices in place and meet the relevant Standards. It is noteworthy that all Australian public universities have their academic integrity policies and procedures available publically through their websites and through the website of the Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity (see below).

The responses received by TEQSA show that considerable effort has been spent by higher education providers in the last decade to promote academic integrity among students and staff.

1. **Strengthening corporate and academic governance of student academic integrity**

   All providers report regular consideration of academic misconduct matters by their Academic Board (or equivalent body), systematic analysis of findings and development of plans of action. Many providers report annually to their corporate governing body on student academic misconduct and on the outcome of strategies to promote a culture of academic integrity. A number of providers (eg University of Newcastle) enclosed a copy of their most recent academic integrity report to their governing body, which were exemplary.

2. **Appropriate policies and procedures**

   All providers report that they regularly review their policies and practices to: promote academic integrity; minimise opportunity for fraudulent assessment conduct by students; detect academic misconduct; and impose appropriate penalties. Many examples (eg University of Wollongong, La Trobe University) were provided to TEQSA which show thoughtful development of policies as teaching practices and delivery methods have changed. Virtually all providers that responded with a written report to TEQSA report the use of plagiarism detection (text-matching) software in the assessment of student assignments.

   A number of providers (eg Griffith University, University of Western Australia) have revised their policies recently to make specific reference to contract cheating.

3. **Staff development**

The evidence collected by TEQSA shows that Australian higher education providers have invested significantly in increasing staff understanding of and capability in promoting and assuring student academic integrity (eg University of South Australia, University of Western Sydney). This includes: how to recognise and report suspected academic misconduct, including how to recognise non-original work such as purchased or repurposed work of others; being familiar with the provider's policies and procedures relating to student academic misconduct; the appointment and training of academic integrity officers at Faculty /School level to promote an appropriate student culture and to investigate and deal with cases of suspected misconduct; the use of plagiarism detection software for educational purposes as well as for misconduct surveillance; promoting an understanding of the learning needs of particular student cohorts, including academic learning support and English language needs; and the appropriate design of student assessment.

4. **Assessment design**

Evidence was provided to show that many providers are making a concerted effort to improve the quality of student assessment, both to better assess the learning outcomes achieved by students and to minimise the opportunity for fraudulent activity and academic misconduct. Some of the recent emphasis on assessment redesign has been driven by the requirement for all providers to be compliant with the Australian Qualifications Framework by 2015.

Good assessment design features (eg University of Wollongong, Macquarie University, University of Technology Sydney) include:

▸ setting new assessment tasks each time the subject is taught

▸ requiring analysis and synthesis rather than simply factual recall and explanation

▸ using a variety of assessment tasks that are staged throughout the subject

▸ requiring group work on some assessment items

▸ requiring an invigilated component (or other form of face-to-face assessment) and, in the case of some providers (eg Melbourne Institute of Technology), requiring the student to pass this component in addition to passing the subject overall

▸ using learning analytics to assess student engagement with the provider's learning platform

▸ using early formative assessment and other mechanisms to identify students at risk of failure so that learning and language support can be offered

▸ directly assessing student performance in the workplace and other "authentic" assessment designs

▸ negotiating assessment tasks with students by encouraging them to participate with staff in the design of assessment tasks that are aligned with their specific learning experience and outcomes (eg RMIT, UTS)

With regard to the deterrence of "contract cheating", the following assessment principles have been advanced as good practice [1]

▸ "just in time" announcement of written assignments in order to limit the time available to purchase the work of others (although there seems to be significant redundancy in the essay mill business and turn-around times can be very fast)

▸ encoding or electronic watermarking of assignment submissions

▸ emphasis on face-to-face (physical or virtual) assessment, including in-class essay writing

▸ personalisation of assessment by building in requirements that are specific to the student's experience (eg linked to a guest speaker presentation)

It is often considered that essays purchased through essay mills are less likely to be detected by anti-plagiarism software because they are kept behind firewalls and are supposedly bespoke products. However, this is not the experience of all providers (eg University of Sydney). Purchased work is usually detected because the quality of the academic content and/or language is significantly superior to the student's usual performance in class or because the answer provided has a generic quality rather than addressing the specifics of the assignment task. It is widely regarded that the best way to detect and deter contract cheating is to "know your students".

5. **Student activities to promote academic integrity**

Most providers include the promotion of a culture of student academic integrity as a key aspect of their policy. Approaches to achieve this include:

▸ enacting a Student Charter or Code of Conduct which sets out expectations of student behavior, including honesty and integrity. Many providers have such a document and in New South Wales this has been enacted at State level for international students, with the Council of International Students Australia being a signatory

▸ requiring all undergraduate commencing students to successfully complete a module on academic integrity as a foundation requirement for progression in their degree program

▸ encouraging students to run their written assignments through plagiarism detection software (such as Turnitin) as an educational exercise before assignment submission

▸ students establishing Academic Integrity Societies (eg Macquarie University) to promote and support appropriate behavior in the student body.

Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity (APFEI)

The APFEI was established in 2001 to promote academic integrity and best practice among university staff and students. Australia has played a leading role in the establishment and ongoing activities of the APFEI. The current Chair is Dr Ruth Walker of the University of Wollongong and six Australian Universities are institutional members (Adelaide, Deakin, Macquarie, Newcastle, Tasmania and Wollongong).

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[1] Newton, PM and Lang, C: Custom essay writers, freelancers and other paid third parties (forthcoming), preview provided by Dr Tracey Bretag; and Rogerson, A (2014): Personal communication.

The Forum has sponsored a well-attended conference on academic integrity every second year since 2003, covering areas such as plagiarism, culture and values, inclusive approaches and bridging the gap between policy and practice. The most recent conference was held at La Trobe University's Melbourne CBD campus just two weeks ago on the topic of Engaging Designs of Academic Integrity Modules. TEQSA has been informed that the conference was fully subscribed within 24 hours of the call for registration.

The APFEI website provides links to a variety of helpful resources, including those held and funded by the Office for Teaching and Learning in the Department of Education.

The Academic Integrity Policies of all Australian universities are available on the APFEI website.

Office for Learning and Teaching funded projects (OLT)

▶ The OLT (and its predecessor body the Australian Learning and Teaching Council) has been very active in funding projects to promote academic integrity. These projects have created broad engagement and collaboration across Australian universities and more recently have involved the private higher education sector. The nature of projects funded since 2010 runs from student responsibility to teaching and assessment to the design and implementation of policy. Recent project titles include:

▶ Academic integrity in Australia – understanding and changing culture and practice (led by Macquarie University, to be published in early 2015)

▶ Plagiarism and related issues in assessment not involving text (led by the University of Newcastle, to be published in early 2015)

▶ Working from the Centre: supporting unit and course coordinators to implement academic integrity policies, resources and scholarship (led by Victoria University, 2014)

▶ Web 2.0 authoring tools in higher education: new directions for assessment and academic integrity (led by the University of Melbourne, 2011)

▶ Investigating the efficacy of culturally specific academic literacy and academic honesty resources for Chinese students (led by Victoria University, 2010)

▶ Academic integrity standards: aligning policy and practice in Australian universities (led by the University of South Australia, 2013)

▶ Embedding and extending exemplary academic integrity policy and support frameworks across the higher education sector (led by the University of South Australia, 2014)

The last project in the list is notable for the involvement of the private sector through the Queensland Institute of Business and Technology, which is owned by the large private provider Navitas and is a pathway college for Griffith University. The project also has a relationship with another Navitas owned pathway college, La Trobe University International College.

Project reports and resources flowing from these projects are freely available from the OLT website and individual university websites with links across from the APFEI website.