



29 November 2018

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Dear Ms Wojcicki

The [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education](#) (QAA) is the UK's independent quality body for higher education. We work with universities and colleges, parliamentarians and anti-plagiarism experts to campaign against cheating and fraud in UK higher education.

We need your help to prevent influential YouTube stars promoting the essay writing companies that encourage students to cheat.

In May this year, you responded to a BBC investigation into Ukrainian-based EduBirdie, an essay company being promoted by YouTube stars on over 250 channels.

At the time, you said: "[We do not allow ads for essay writing and so paid promotions of these services will be removed when we discover them](#)".

However, we are concerned that video promotions for companies like EduBirdie and Edusson, among many others, are rife again on YouTube. We want to see these kinds of endorsement permanently removed and disallowed from YouTube.

We have also written to your sister company Google, whose [Enabling dishonest behaviour advertising policy](#) includes paper-writing or exam-taking services as examples of dishonest behaviour. We have asked Google to refuse to accept advertising from essay writing companies.

Our UK universities are internationally recognised for their high academic standards. Students from across the globe seek out a UK education for the potential it offers to improve their lives and career prospects.

However, our academic integrity is being threatened by the growing number of companies that prey on vulnerable students by selling customised essays, which can then be submitted as the student's own work. As the essays are written to order, they can often evade plagiarism software.

Essay mills are a scourge on the reputation of the higher education sector. They impact on the academic experience of students, and the trust that employers place in UK graduates.

YouTube and other employers risk taking on graduates who lack the skills, knowledge and competencies which they rightly believe higher education qualifications ought to provide.



Students committing fraud by passing off purchased essays as their own work are liable to significant penalties if caught, including being disqualified from practising in particular professions.

Hundreds of essay mills across the world use platforms like YouTube to promote their services to students, paying YouTube stars to promote their services in order to stand out in an increasingly competitive market.

While it is impossible to accurately assess the exact extent of cheating, recent research by Professor Phil Newton at Swansea University estimates that, from 2014 to the present, the percentage of students admitting to paying someone else to undertake their work was 15.7 per cent, or 31 million students around the globe.

In 2016, the Department for Education asked QAA to investigate ways of tackling essay mill abuses. Universities Minister Sam Gyimah MP describes this form of cheating as 'shocking and pernicious', and 'corrosive to education'.

Will you join our campaign to end the opportunities available to these companies to promote their services? By refusing to allow video endorsements of essay writing companies, you will make it more difficult for them to find an audience for the unscrupulous services that damage reputations and lives.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Blackstock'.

Douglas Blackstock  
Chief Executive  
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education