

Know the signs of contract cheating

Never Stand Still

Faculty of Arts
& Social Sciences



UNSW
A U S T R A L I A

1 Writing style

- Very clean and clear grammar and punctuation. They are usually almost or completely error free which is unusual in genuine undergraduate essays. Although increasingly they are being written by people whose second language is English, so odd turns of phrase are often apparent.
- A USA-type rhetorical and composition style, often beginning with a 'hook' sentence.
- USA idiom or spelling, and a USA-take on the discipline or content.
- Sophisticated academic vocabulary.
- A 'voice' that is markedly different from previous written work submitted in your course or in other courses by the same student.
- Lots of use of phrases designed to soak up the word count.

2 Structure

- A formulaic structure, including paragraphs with topic sentences; they can have a colour-by-numbers feel to them.
- Bits that feel like they've been cobbled together from previous essays; they can have a Frankenstein's-Monster feel to them.
- A 'shopping list' approach, paragraph by paragraph, with a conclusion that simply restates the points in the list.

3 Content

- Very shallow and full of waffle. There is usually a marked contrast between the clarity and confidence of the written expression and the depth of the content.
- Little or no reference to things actually addressed in classes.
- Little or no direct address to the question or topic, except in the introduction and conclusions.

4 References

- Resources not available through our library or only available through our library via a different database or a different version of a database. The library can help with the analysis of bibliographies for suspicious essays.
- Resources that come from a single or limited range of databases (eg they all or mostly come from EBSCOhost).
- Resources that don't exist at all or have incorrect dates, page numbers etc.
- Resources only available in a language that the student doesn't speak.
- Quotations taken only from the (freely-available) abstracts of journal articles (otherwise hidden behind paywalls), or from the available sections of Google Books.
- Perfect referencing, but not always in the style you have required or requested.
- A referencing style that is different from this student's previous written submission.

5 Formatting

- A separate cover sheet with the title of the paper, the name of the student, the institution, the course code.
- A title for the paper at the top of the first page.
- A running header with the topic at the top of each page, particularly if it has 'running head' written before the first one on the first page, especially if you've not asked for APA style.
- Times New Roman or Arial font, with double-spaced lines and indented first lines of paragraphs.
- Check the document properties for anything that looks odd – particularly someone else's name as author.

6 The Student

- Someone that is struggling or has low grades in the subject so far.
- May have submitted the work well before the due date.
- May be domestic or international.

7 Your instinct

- If something doesn't fit or feel right in relation to the written piece and the student or their previous work, it may warrant further investigation.

Contract cheating is a serious breach of UNSW Policy and Procedures.

If you find writing that raises your concerns or you have any further questions, contact your School's Student Ethics Officer.