Finding the freelance cheats

May 8 2019, by David Bradley

"The modern contract cheating industry allows students and ghostwriters to connect to each other over the internet, often using through an essay mill, agency website or other third-party service," explains Thomas Lancaster Department of Computing, Imperial College London, UK, in the *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*.

He adds that such contract [cheating](#) sees students recruiting a third party to create original work on their behalf and then submitting that work, an essay or another assignment, in order to gain the requisite academic credit. This is an ethically questionable practice that compromises the validity of any course from the lower to the upper echelons of education and makes a mockery of the value of work carried out honestly by other students.

Little research has been done so far to learn more about the ghostwriters, where they are, and how they operate. Lancaster has now investigated the ghostwriters working in this cheating industry and specifically those working in India. His study is based on openly available data from freelancing websites that operate as so-called "[essay](#) mills". The information that can be gleaned from these sites reveals details of the projects ghostwriters have completed and the marketing techniques the ghostwriters themselves use to garner new customers for their services. Lancaster found that there are many prolific writers on one major freelancing website. These writers turn around one or more essays each day. Much of this work is entirely original and of reasonably high quality. By contrast, some of the ghostwriters provide low-quality essays with much of the content plagiarized from other sources.

"It is hoped that understanding the ghostwriters will aid instructors in taking preventative measures against contract cheating," Lancaster explains. Indeed, he suggests that preventative approaches to avoid validating students that have used ghostwriters would be to monitor ongoing engagement with the course and other assignments and assessments. It would be relatively trivial to examine different pieces of work side by side to see whether writing style differed significantly to show that a third party may have completed an assignment. Moreover, for the lower-quality essays, there are many tools to detect plagiarized text.

More information: Thomas Lancaster. The emergence of academic ghost writers from India in the international contract cheating industry, *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management* (2019). DOI: 10.1504/IJICBM.2019.099281

Provided by Inderscience

Citation: Finding the freelance cheats (2019, May 8) retrieved 7 May 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2019-05-freelance.html