



Alex Burghart MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfes

26 May 2022

Dear Colleague,

Criminalisation of Essay Mills

On 28th April, the [Skills and Post-16 Education Bill became law](#). Through this act, the Government has legislated for landmark reforms that will transform post-16 education and skills, including criminalising essay mills.

As you will agree, cheating of any kind is unacceptable. It not only threatens to undermine the reputation of our world-class higher education sector, but also devalues the hard work of those who succeed on their own merit. I know that the higher education sector has taken, and continues to take, a number of actions to attempt to tackle the problem of essay mills. I want to thank you for your support in stamping out these practices and ensuring they do not go unnoticed or unpunished.

Government has listened to calls for legislation from the sector and intervened to criminalise the provision of and advertising of cheating services, to minimise the number of these in operation and to strengthen and enhance activity already taking place to detect, deter and address incidents of cheating.

It is now a criminal offence to provide, or arrange for another person to provide, contract cheating services for financial gain to students taking a qualification at a post-16 institution or sixth form in England, or enrolled at a higher education provider in England, or any other person over compulsory school age who has been entered for a regulated qualification at a place in England.

Similarly, it is now an offence for a person to make arrangements for an advertisement in which that person offers, or is described as being available or competent, to provide or arrange for another person to provide a cheating service.

To capitalise on this legislation what we now need is a strengthened, collaborative effort across the sector to tackle essay mills. I know many providers are deeply committed to tackling essay mills, with nearly 200 providers already signed up to the Quality Assurance Agency's [Academic Integrity Charter](#).

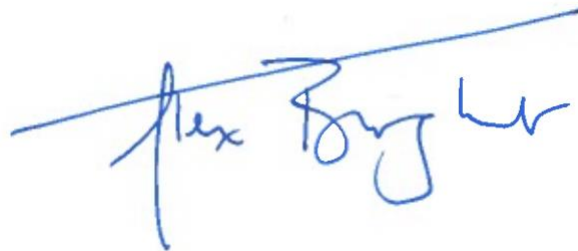
HE Providers are the guardians of the academic standards of the awards they offer, and you are best placed to understand the needs of your students, including when they may be struggling or appear to have submitted work that is not their own. I am writing to ask you to continue to do everything in your power to help clamp down on the unethical practice of essay mills. This includes: communicating

clearly to your students that these essay mill companies are now illegal, ensuring appropriate academic and pastoral support is in place so that vulnerable students are not drawn to these unscrupulous companies, and continuing to engage in sector led initiatives such as the Academic Integrity Charter and regional academic integrity networks. I also want to encourage you to report any illegal essay mill activity to the police.

I hope that in writing to you today I have underlined the urgency of this issue and the vital role that higher education providers play in stamping out essay mills once and for all.

Thank you for your ongoing support with this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alex Burghart', with a long horizontal line extending from the start of the signature.

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