



Test the Waters: Auditing a Contract Cheating Website

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**Academic integrity is
the intellectual
standard of both staff
and students.**

Introduction

In 2016, an audit was undertaken of RMIT's assessment items that appeared on a pay-for-service website *Assessmentswap.com* [not its real name] and compared these with assessment instructions available for each course in the Learning Management System (LMS) sites and course guides.

Assessmentswap.com describes itself as: “... a student community where comprehensive study notes and study guides can be downloaded and shared with other students. We have a simple exchange system that allows you to benefit from the expertise of past students, whilst contributing to the success of future students.”

[Retrieved 14 December 2016] Assessmentswap.com is not endorsed by any university or college.

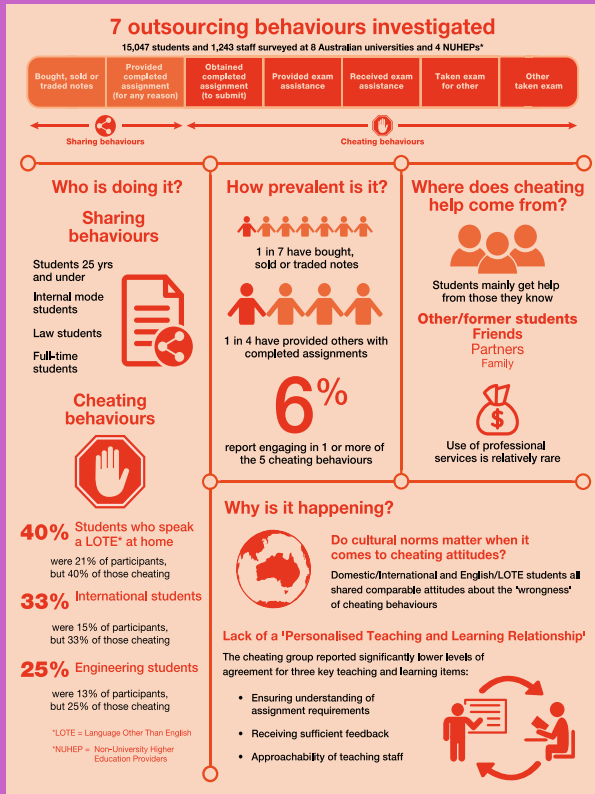
How does Assessmentswap.com works ?

Site visitors can ...

- 1) ... gain exchange credits for uploading content, and can then use this credit to purchase other uploaded items;
- 2) ... purchase credit to use across the site.

A student receives one exchange credit for each university essay/project they upload, and one to five exchange credits per set of study notes. If the student chooses not to upload content, they can purchase one exchange credit for AUD\$4.95. There are discounts for the purchase of multiple exchange credits (e.g. 10 credits costs AUD\$34.95). The essay/report items audited by RMIT were available for purchase at a cost of two exchange credits per item. No items were purchased as part of the audit: we worked with the publically available information.

- Sharing notes may not be considered as cheating.
- Sharing assignments is likely to be seen as at the lower end of the continuum of cheating.
- Multiple behaviours that establish patterns may however be persistent in the model cheat.



Audit Methodology

- Create list of all courses on [assessmentswap.com](https://www.assessmentswap.com) (used incognito Chrome browser and only looked up publically available information)
- Review for matched courses at RMIT
- Match all [assessmentswap.com](https://www.assessmentswap.com) resources against resources in LMS
- Identify assessments by College (Col 1; Col 2; Col 3)

Results of Audit

Summary of Audit results	Col 1	Col 2	Col 3	Total
Unique course codes with content present on assessmentswap	69	29	52	150
Count of assessmentswap Study notes available	101	7	19	127
Count of assessmentswap Essay/Projects available	83	39	80	202
Count of HIGH RISK courses that had a confirmed match between the assessmentswap Essay/Project item and the course assessment in LMS/course guide	0	1	9	10
Count of LOWER RISK courses that had a possible match between the assessmentswap Essay/Project item and the course assessment in LMS/course guide	11	9	5	25

Action Taken

- Course coordinators of high risk category items were asked to review assessment items for next study period. The course coordinator/course team were advised of the risks in re-using the same assessment tasks. One assessment item needed to be changed during the study period and the Academic Registrar was asked to intervene due to the impact of students both in Australia and in overseas locations.
- Colleges of assessment tasks that fell into the lower risk category were given the option to contact course coordinators, raise their awareness and encourage assessment redesign.
- Going forward best practice – education for staff and students and emphasis placed on academic integrity as both conduct and practice.

What we have learned

- It is unsustainable to audit or monitor cheating activity on contract cheating websites.
- It is impossible to know who is posting assignments or notes. Even when a student ID was visible it is still unsubstantiated. Anyone with access to an assessment can potentially share it.
- Academics have varied attitudes to the disruption of being asked to amend an assessment.
- Changing assessments is considered to be time-consuming.