



NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

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Aide-Memoire: Academic Cheating

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
From:	Dr Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive
Date:	21 October 2021
Reference:	CR23077

Purpose

1. This aide-memoire informs you about how the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) and Universities New Zealand (UNZ) are working together and internationally to combat academic cheating in New Zealand tertiary education organisations (TEOs).
2. NZQA proposes to proactively release this briefing as part of the next publication of documents.

Background

3. NZQA works collaboratively with our international counterparts to combat academic cheating. Earlier this year, Australia's Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) contacted NZQA and UNZ to offer information and research about contract cheating that may affect New Zealand students and TEOs.
4. The information includes:
 - A list of 2064 websites that are suspected of offering essay writing services to students.
 - Separately, an Australian university's research using 2017-2019 data identifying suspected academic cheating by students of certain New Zealand and Australian TEOs.

NZQA and TEQSA have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enable the sharing of this information. To date, NZQA has received the list of suspected essay writing websites and the list of TEOs that were identified through the research but is awaiting the research itself.

5. NZQA legal advice is that the agency obtains confidentiality undertakings from providers before providing the relevant data to minimise the risk of liability for any privacy breach or for any defamation claim by a website.

Discussion

6. Academic cheating services threaten the reputation and quality of higher education worldwide. Academic fraud by students is most commonly related to assessment.
7. Commercial academic cheating services pose a threat to students themselves. Not all students accessing these websites are deliberately seeking to cheat. There have been instances of students overseas being blackmailed by the cheating service.
8. NZQA's quality assurance includes processes to support well-designed and administered assessment. NZQA regularly works within its international networks and shares information and effective practice guidance with education organisations in New Zealand.
9. COVID-19 and the resulting lockdowns has hastened the development and implementation of online and distance education for some TEOs. This poses a heightened risk of academic cheating. NZQA supports TEOs and students adapting to new modes of learning through its quality assurance activities, and has published research for TEOs about [Good practice for offshore online delivery](#).
10. Earlier this year TEQSA advised Australian TEOs about the 2064 websites suspected of offering essay writing services to students.
11. Separately, TEQSA sent letters to Australian TEOs:
 - where one or more of their students have been found to have submitted assessments obtained from academic cheating websites. TEQSA offered these TEOs the student data relevant to their institution
 - where their students have not been identified though the research but reminding them of the threat of commercial academic cheating service providers.
12. NZQA is working with the Academic Quality Agency (AQA) and UNZ to ensure that all New Zealand TEOs will receive consistent information about the data received from TEQSA.

Next steps

13. NZQA, AQA and UNZ will write to New Zealand TEOs to offer the list of suspected contract cheating websites to help them with their own academic integrity work. TEOs will be able to use the information as they see fit with no action being required of them upon receipt of it. Some may choose to block such websites from their network, remind students of their own essay writing support services, and/or review their own policies and processes.
14. NZQA is awaiting information from TEQSA relating to specific New Zealand TEOs where students appear to have submitted plagiarised work identified by the plagiarism detection service *Turnitin*. NZQA will determine any course of action once the information is received.
15. NZQA remains vigilant of the evolving challenges that academic cheating poses.



Dr Grant Klinkum
Chief Executive
21 October 2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education
24 / 10 / 21