
Contract Cheating

ACDICT
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<https://www.freelancer.com/>

Contract cheating ...

“... the submission of work by students for academic credit which the students have paid contractors to write for them”

(Clarke, R. & Lancaster, T (2006)

“... students employ or use a third party to undertake their assessed work”

(Lancaster, T & Clarke, R. (2016) Handbook of Academic Integrity, p. 639-652)

Sources of contract cheating ...

- Essay writing services
- Friends, family, other students
- Private tutors
- Copyediting services
- Agency websites – students outsource the production of their work
- Reverse classifieds – students advertise for their work to be created



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Extent of contract cheating ...

- *Rentacoder* website study (Lancaster & Clarke, 2006)
 - 12% requests were from students.
 - More than half of the students placed multiple requests – (2-7 requests)

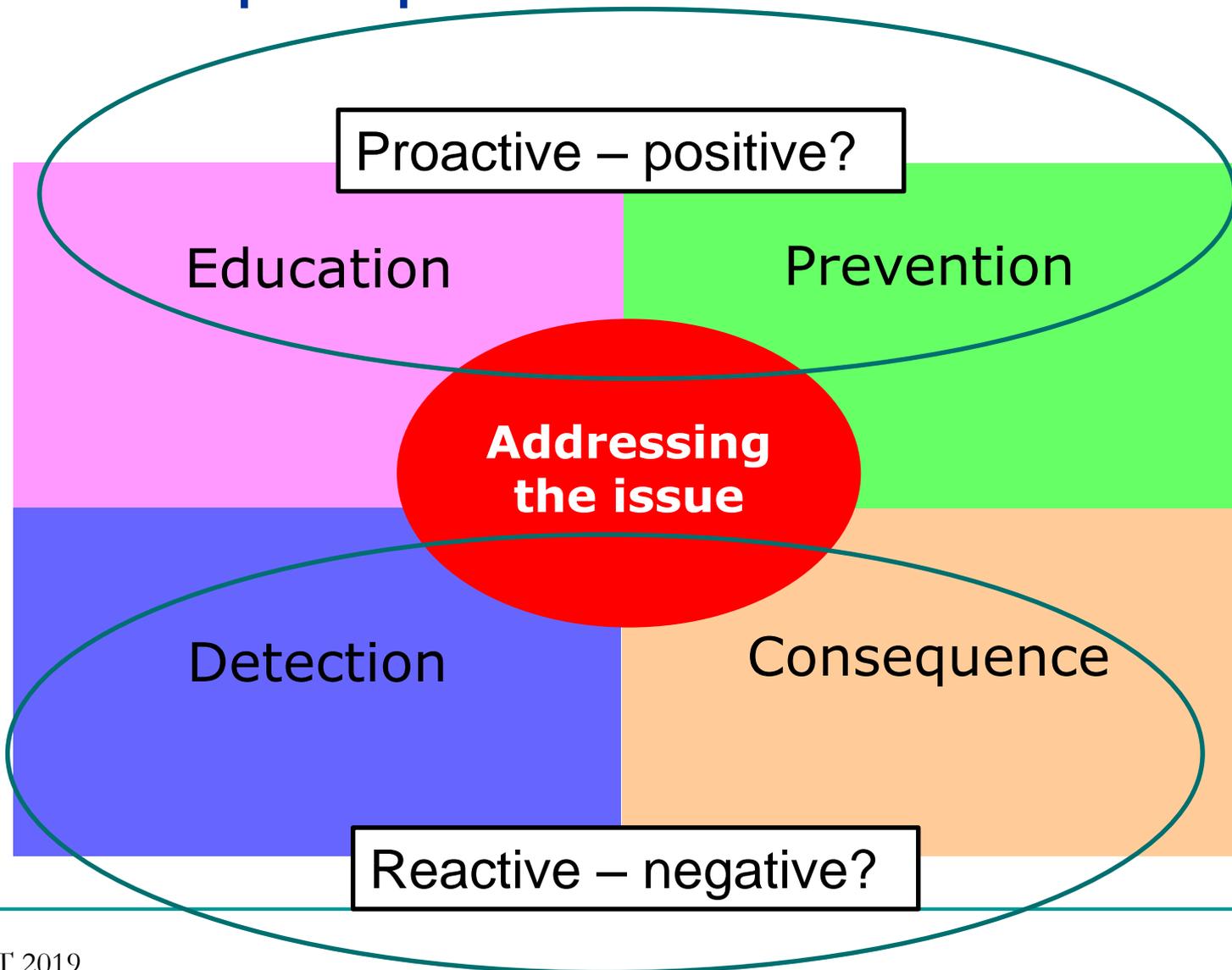
- Survey at East Carolina University (Ruiz, 2014)
 - 8% students admitted to paying someone to do their work
 - 10% admitted to being paid by another to produce a piece of work

- *Transtutors* website study (Lancaster & Clarke, 2014)
 - 23% assignment postings were from computing students.

Contract cheating experiences...

- Assignment specifications regularly found on websites by:
 - Colleagues
 - contract cheating detectives
 - students
- Advertising assignment “help” services around the campus:
- Outside tutoring service held on campus
- Report of blackmailing.

Different perspectives ...



Australian study ...

Survey of teaching practices in first year IT courses. Thirty academics from 25 universities were interviewed.

We identified 21 strategies for safeguarding academic integrity. These focussed on education and prevention, covering five broad areas:

- Education
- Discouraging cheating
- Reducing the benefits of cheating
- Making cheating difficult
- Empowering students

Different philosophies

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} Educator designs the learning environment to safeguard academic integrity

Empowering students
Educator designs the learning environment so that the desire and the need to cheat are reduced

Strategy 1: Education

- Instruction about academic integrity
- Heighten awareness of the consequences of cheating (e.g. punishment)
- Information resources
- Instructional tools

“a little bit ad hoc”

“academic integrity is in every session that I teach”

Strategy 2: Discouraging cheating

- Requiring students to commit to abide by academic integrity policies
- Observing students working
- Monitoring progress
- Setting staged assignments
- Making work visible (e.g. using social media)
- Requiring students to work in groups
- Oral presentations
- Interviewing students
- Making it too risky to cheat (e.g. using plagiarism detection)

“Interviews are quite popular in the programming type subjects ... You can ask them a few pointed questions ... they tend to be pretty good at picking up students who mightn’t have done all their work”

Strategy 3: Reducing the benefits gained from cheating

- Low stakes assessment (therefore not worthwhile to cheat)
- Setting hurdles (for each course component)
- Verification of assignment work in exams

“we kind of design the final exam to make sure that the students have done their work”

Strategy 4: Making cheating difficult

- Invigilating assessment
- Individualising assessment

“... every student or group is doing a different task. That doesn't stop them getting help from people inside or outside the class. But it does diminish the prospect of people colluding on the same piece of work and each of them handing it in as their own.”

Strategy 5: Empowering students

- Supporting students
- Building relationships with students
- Focusing on learning gained through doing the assessment tasks

“One of the big changes with the portfolio assessment was creating that really positive environment where everything was focused on learning and the assessment became secondary.”

One academic's view ...

“We prefer to adopt a positive approach and encourage them to see us if we’re stuck, rather than a punitive approach.”