

The Sydney Morning Herald

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 HD **The cheating factory**
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LP

HERALD INVESTIGATION - Essays and exams written to order - 16 universities hit

TD

DIPLOMA PASS CREDIT
 500 words \$80 \$100
 1500 words \$210 \$270
 3000 words \$420 \$550
 BACHELOR DEGREE
 500 words \$80 \$100
 1500 words \$225 \$290
 3000 words \$450 \$585
 MASTERS DEGREE
 500 words \$90 \$120
 1500 words \$240 \$310
 3000 words \$480 \$620

The fee is doubled for a 24-hour urgent order and tripled for a 12-hour order. Students can negotiate a price for a distinction or high distinction

The cheated
 *unknown users excluded

Top 10 known users*	REQUESTS	%
BY INSTITUTION:		
Macquarie University	131	20.8%
Newcastle University	127	20.2%
University of Technology, Sydney	99	15.7%
University of Sydney	61	9.7%
University of New South Wales	47	7.5%
Curtin University	36	5.7%
University of Wollongong	26	4.1%
Royal Gurkhas Institute of Technology	23	3.7%
La Trobe University	17	2.7%
University of Western Sydney	16	2.5%
BY SUBJECT:		
Business	225	33.9%
Accounting	93	14.0%
Management	75	11.3%
Marketing	74	11.1%
Arts/Social Sciences	67	10.1%
Economics	40	6.0%
Finance	37	5.6%

Design	19	2.9%	
Science/engineering		14	2.1%
Commerce	10	1.5%	
Law		10	1.5%

BY AMOUNT SPENT:

Newcastle University	\$27,490
Macquarie University	\$25,815
University of Technology, Sydney	\$16,593
University of Sydney	\$11,484
University of New South Wales	\$7740
Curtin University	\$5948
University of Wollongong	\$4765
La Trobe University	\$3108
Central Queensland University	\$2989

Uni students are cheating on an industrial scale, paying up to \$1000 for others to do their work. Amy McNeillage and Lisa Visentin report.

Up to 1000 students have hired a Sydney **company** to write their essays and assignments and sit online tests. The practice threatens the credibility of some of the nation's most prestigious institutions.

A Fairfax Media investigation has uncovered a sophisticated online business, which has produced thousands of university assignments and turned over hundreds of thousands of dollars since it began operating in May 2012.

Chinese-born Yingying Dou, 30, is the sole director of MyMaster Group, which is behind the website, written in **Chinese** and aimed at international students. It claims to be the largest essay-writing service in Sydney, with 100 graduate writers from "prestigious universities in Australia" ready to accept jobs.

A flyer posted to a toilet door at UTS gives insight to the anxiety among international students Ms Dou has capitalised on.

"Are you racking your brains on your schoolwork? Do you worry about spending \$3000 retaking tuition on the failing subject? Leave your worries to MyMaster and make your study easier!," it says in translation.

Fairfax Media has seen 700 receipts for direct deposits to the MyMaster bank account, totalling more than \$160,000 this year alone - a conservative estimate of the **company's** income, as students can also pay by cash or PayPal.

Payments range from \$13 to \$1050 and during busy assessment periods the website receives up to 20 requests a day.

One request lodged was for a 6000-word research assignment for a human rights law course at the University of NSW, which was worth 70 per cent of the student's overall grade.

The cheating is widespread throughout universities, with almost 1000 assignments produced this year for students studying courses as diverse as philosophy, economics, law, engineering, astronomy and marketing.

One student spent more than \$1500 on assignments for five courses at the University of Newcastle's Business School. Another student from the University of Wollongong paid for at least eight assignments.

The University of Sydney, the state's premier institution, was among the most widely affected. During 2014, students from at least 37 of the university's courses used the service.

Ms Dou went to high school at Pittwater House, a private school in Collaroy, and studied accounting at Macquarie University.

When approached by Fairfax Media, Ms Dou, who runs a university tutoring **company** called Yingcredible, would not comment on the website.

"If you're talking about MyMaster, I have nothing to talk [about]," she said. "No comment for today."

Records show MyMaster and Yingcredible Tutoring are registered to the same principal place of business in Sussex Street in **Chinatown**. Ms Dou is also the registrant of the mymaster.com.au website domain. Within hours of Fairfax Media approaching Ms Dou, the site was taken down.

A postgraduate finance student at Macquarie University said the practice of buying assignments online was widespread. On two separate occasions while he was working on a group assignment, international students in the group suggested they **purchase** the assignment online, rather than do the work themselves. "I was not keen on that idea. I think people just want to do whatever they can to pass the course at all costs," he said.

Prices are advertised as a flat rate based on the number of words and the student's qualification, with masters students paying more than undergraduates or diploma students. The flat rates promise students a pass or credit grade, but they can negotiate for work that is of a distinction or high distinction quality.

MyMaster recruits its writers on **Chinese** social media sites, promising good rates.

Clients have also paid for business reports, speeches, PowerPoint presentations and the completion of online tests, and requests range from short homework tasks to comprehensive research assignments.

Some students uploaded instructions for their ghost writer, detailing how they wanted their assignment to be completed.

They are guaranteed the purchased work is original and will not be detected by the universities' plagiarism software.

Fairfax Media is aware of numerous websites offering similar services to students in Australia but most appear to be based offshore.

Australia's international student market is a \$15 **billion** industry and the largest export after **iron ore**, **coal** and **gold**. International students, who often pay more than three times as much as locals for their degrees, generate a quarter of the income at some universities.

Interstate universities have also been ensnared, including RMIT, La Trobe, Curtin and the Queensland University of Technology.

The chief executive of Universities Australia, Belinda Robinson, said universities were aware of such **operations** looking to exploit "a small minority of students seeking an easy path to success".

"Students caught deliberately attempting to pass others' work off as their own can be subject to harsh sanctions, up to and including automatic failure of courses and, ultimately, expulsion from the university," she said.

Do you know more?

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How it works

MyMaster service advertised on university toilet doors and social media

Student lodges an assignment request online and uploads the outline and lecture notes or readings

Student pays 50% deposit

Up to 100 writers log onto website searching for jobs

Writer accepts job and completes half the assignment

If student is satisfied, payment is complete and writer finishes job

Total requests 943

JAN - OCT, 2014

Total number of receipts 697

Total value of payments \$162,874

Average receipt value \$234

Institutions affected 21

CO macqun : Macquarie University | unswau : The University of New South Wales | uowsc : University of Western Sydney | utsaus : University of Technology, Sydney

NS gedu : Education | npag : Page-One Stories | gcat : Political/General News | ncat : Content Types | guni : University/College

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