

Lead-in

Work with a partner. Discuss the following questions.

- When was the last time you wrote an essay? What was it about?
- Have you ever heard of custom essay-writing services?
- Do you think many people use them?

Reading

1. Read the following extract from the overview of a report by Quality Monitoring in Higher Education (QMHE). Match a heading a–e to section 1–3. Two headings are not used.

- QMHE's approach
- Average cost of a custom-written essay
- Search engines and customer essay-writing services
- The scale of the problem
- Custom essay-writing services and their claims

2. Read the report again and answer the following questions.

1. Custom essay-writing services claim that their essays are not plagiarised from other essays. Why is this claim irrelevant?
2. What claims made by custom essay-writing services are explored in the full report?
3. Does QMHE know precisely how many times students have been caught submitting custom-written essays?
4. What data did QMHE collect from UK universities?
5. What are the most probable reasons for the rise in the use of custom essay-writing services?
6. What action does QMHE take against custom essay-writing services?
7. How does QMHE work with higher education institutes to stop essay plagiarism?

3. Work with a partner. Discuss the following questions.

- What do you think of the essay-writing companies?
- Are there any other well-known ways of academic cheating?

Reading strategies: identifying paragraph focus

When reading an article or report, we need the ability to identify the focus of each paragraph. To help with this:

- Focus on the first sentence in each paragraph. This is often called the topic sentence and is a good indicator of forthcoming content.
- Underline or highlight key words in each paragraph. Ask yourself if they are similar. Ask yourself if they suggest a theme or overall focus.
- Use the margin to summarise in note form what the paragraph is about.

Vocabulary

1. Add a similar word from the box to sentence 1–6. You may need to change the form.

aspect	submit	specific	highlight
commission	target	procedures	potential

- Each section of QMHE's report looks at different **a. facets** / e.g. aspects of the plagiarism issue.
- Once a custom-written essay is **b. given in** / _____ for assessment and represented as a student's own, it becomes a plagiarised essay.
- The report looks closely at **c. particular** / _____ cases where custom essay-writing services have been used.
- The report **d. looks at** / _____ claims made about turnaround times and the qualifications of those **e. hired** / _____ to write essays.
- QMHE looks at ways of **f. taking action against** / _____ the use of custom essay-writing services.
- Higher education institutes should design thorough assessment **g. processes** / _____ so they can flag **h. suspected** / _____ cases of plagiarism.

2. Add the words from Vocabulary 1 to sentences 1–7. You may need to change the form.

- Students who _____ essays after the deadline will normally have marks deducted.
- Some essays require students to cover various _____ of a topic. Some require students to focus in on one _____ issue and explore it in depth.
- Universities regularly identify _____ cases of plagiarism. However, in many cases it is eventually found that the work is the writer's own.
- A good essay should _____ examples which support the overall argument.
- Universities often have strict _____ on handing in essays and other assessed work. Students should follow these carefully.

6. Although regulatory bodies want to _____ plagiarism aggressively, they often lack the power and resources to really make a difference.
7. Research suggests that while some students consider using custom essay-writing services, the vast majority never actually _____ them.

Language

1. Add the language in italics from the text to the table.

Giving reasons	Providing evidence
Giving examples	Contrasting

Pronunciation: linking

Fixed phrases often contain examples of linking, where words join together. Understanding this can help with listening comprehension and spoken fluency. Look at the following examples.

- a. This is /ðɪ'sɪz/
backed up /bæk'tʌp/ by
looking at the number
of websites which now
offer essay-writing
services.
- b. For example /fə'ɪɡ'z
ɑ:mpl/, it highlights
claims made about
turnaround times.

**Look at the table
in Language and
underline examples of
linking.**

2. Add the following words/phrases to the table.

- One reason for this is ...
 ... such as ...
 For instance, ...
 though ...
 This is the overriding reason why ...
 This is supported by ...
 Despite ...

3. Rewrite sentences 1–5 to make them sound more natural. Use words and phrases from Language 1.

1. The vast majority of students write their own essays.
A small but increasing number choose to use an essay-writing service. (contrast)

2. The number of plagiarised essays submitted to universities has increased.
There are more frequent reported cases as well as many websites which now offer essay-writing services. (evidence)

3. Plagiarised essays have increased.
Students lack confidence in English language writing skills. (reason)

4. External pressures may be another factor behind students paying to have their essays written.
Parental pressure has often been described by those caught cheating. (example)

5. Some essay-writing services promise students that they will help them keep to deadlines.
Essaypal.org claims they can get a 15,000 word dissertation completed from scratch in 28 days.
(example)

Task

- 1. You are going to discuss some of the issues from the lesson. Read the statements and make notes about your response to them. Use the table in Language 1 to help you.**
 1. Essay-writing services should be heavily regulated and not allowed to advertise. That would stop people using them.
 2. Cheating could be prevented by tutors monitoring draft essays regularly. Penalties could be given to students who do not submit drafts.
 3. People buying fake degree certificates is a more serious problem than essay-writing services..
 4. Search engines should take essay-writing services off their search results, and they certainly should not take advertising money.
 5. Essay-writing companies are not a major issue because the vast majority of students cannot afford their services anyway.



2. Work with a partner. Discuss the statements and your responses.
3. Make your own statements about academic cheating. Discuss them with your partner.

Reflection

