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Dear Ms Watkins

The [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education](#) (QAA) is the UK's independent quality body for higher education. We work with universities and colleges, parliamentarians and anti-plagiarism experts to campaign against cheating and fraud in UK higher education.

We need your help to stop the essay writing companies that encourage students to cheat advertising their services on platforms like Yahoo.

Our UK universities are internationally recognised for their high academic standards. Students from across the globe seek out a UK education for the potential it offers to improve their lives and career prospects.

However, our academic integrity is being threatened by the growing number of companies that prey on vulnerable students by selling customised essays, which can then be submitted as the student's own work. As the essays are written to order, they can often evade plagiarism software.

Essay mills are a scourge on the reputation of the higher education sector. They impact on the academic experience of students, and the trust that employers place in UK graduates.

Yahoo and other employers risk taking on graduates who lack the skills, knowledge and competencies which they rightly believe higher education qualifications ought to provide. Students committing fraud by passing off purchased essays as their own work are liable to significant penalties if caught, including being disqualified from professional practice.

Hundreds of essay mills across the world use platforms like Yahoo to promote their services to students, paying for Yahoo advertising to stand out in an increasingly competitive market.

While it is impossible to accurately assess the exact extent of cheating, recent research by Professor Phil Newton at Swansea University estimates that, from 2014 to the present, the percentage of students admitting to paying someone else to undertake their work was 15.7 per cent, or 31 million students around the globe.

In 2016, the Department for Education asked QAA to investigate ways of tackling essay mill abuses. Universities Minister Sam Gyimah MP describes this form of cheating as 'shocking and pernicious', and 'corrosive to education'.

A search using the term 'Write my essay' regularly reveals multiple paid for Yahoo ads for essay companies, as shown below (page one results, 28 November 2018).

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Douglas Blackstock
 Chief Executive
 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education