



29 November 2018

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Dear Ms Rose

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 Bing.

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.

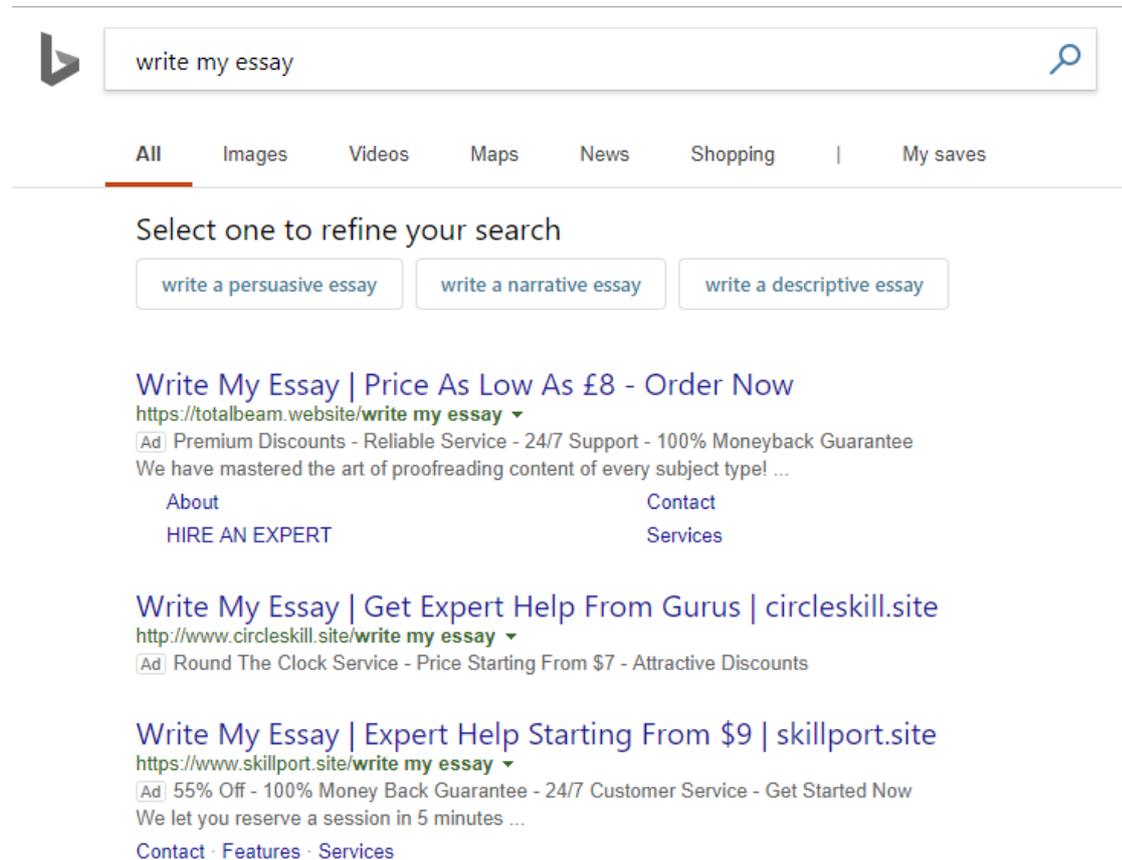
Microsoft and other employers risk taking on graduates who lack the skills, knowledge and competencies which they rightly believe higher education qualifications ought to provide. Students committing fraud by passing off purchased essays as their own work are liable to significant penalties if caught,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

Hundreds of essay mills across the world use platforms like Microsoft Bing to promote their services to students, paying for Bing 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 Bing ads for essay companies, as shown below (page one results, 28 November 2018).



The screenshot shows a Bing search interface. The search bar contains the text 'write my essay'. Below the search bar are navigation tabs for 'All', 'Images', 'Videos', 'Maps', 'News', 'Shopping', and 'My saves'. Underneath, there is a section titled 'Select one to refine your search' with three buttons: 'write a persuasive essay', 'write a narrative essay', and 'write a descriptive essay'. Three search results are displayed, each starting with a blue title and a URL, followed by an 'Ad' label and a brief description. The first result is from 'totalbeam.website' with the title 'Write My Essay | Price As Low As £8 - Order Now'. The second is from 'circleskill.site' with the title 'Write My Essay | Get Expert Help From Gurus'. The third is from 'skillport.site' with the title 'Write My Essay | Expert Help Starting From \$9'. Each result includes links for 'About', 'Contact', and 'Services'.

Will you join our campaign to end the opportunities available to these companies to promote their services? By refusing to accept essay company advertising, you will make it more difficult for them to find an audience for the unscrupulous services that damage reputations and lives.

Thank you.



Douglas Blackstock
Chief Executive
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education