



**The invisible third party.**

**Digital outsourcing of course work:**

**What can we do about it?**

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**Communication, Information, Media Centre**

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# University of Konstanz, Germany



# Agenda



- 1) Introduction
- 2) Definition
- 3) The problem
- 4) Frequency
- 5) Costs
- 6) Time
- 7) Risk
- 8) Reasons
- 9) Counterstrategien

# Poll



How often have you been confronted with suspicious cases?

1. Never
2. Once
3. Several times

# Observations



Benjamin, Roy A.:

- „most curricula overload the student“ (p.159)
- „men and women want time for the subject that interest them the most“ (p.159)
- In most cases a „C“ student asks for a „C“ paper so the professor won't be suspicious at the sudden improvement (p.159)
- „Many students hardly know what a good essay looks like. Professors as a rule fail to discuss and do not let students read the essays submitted by other members of the class.“ (p.160)

# Source



Benjamin, Roy A.

Ghost goes to College

In: *The American Mercury*, June 1939, 157–160.

# Definition: Contract Cheating



Form of academic misconduct when a person uses an undeclared and/or unauthorized third party to assist them to produce work for academic credit or progression, whether or not payment or other favour is involved.

Source: <https://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/glossary>

Goes back to:

*Lancaster T. and Clarke R. (2007): The phenomena of contract cheating. In: Roberts T. (ed.) Student plagiarism in an online world: problems and solutions, 144–158, Hershey.*

# Problem

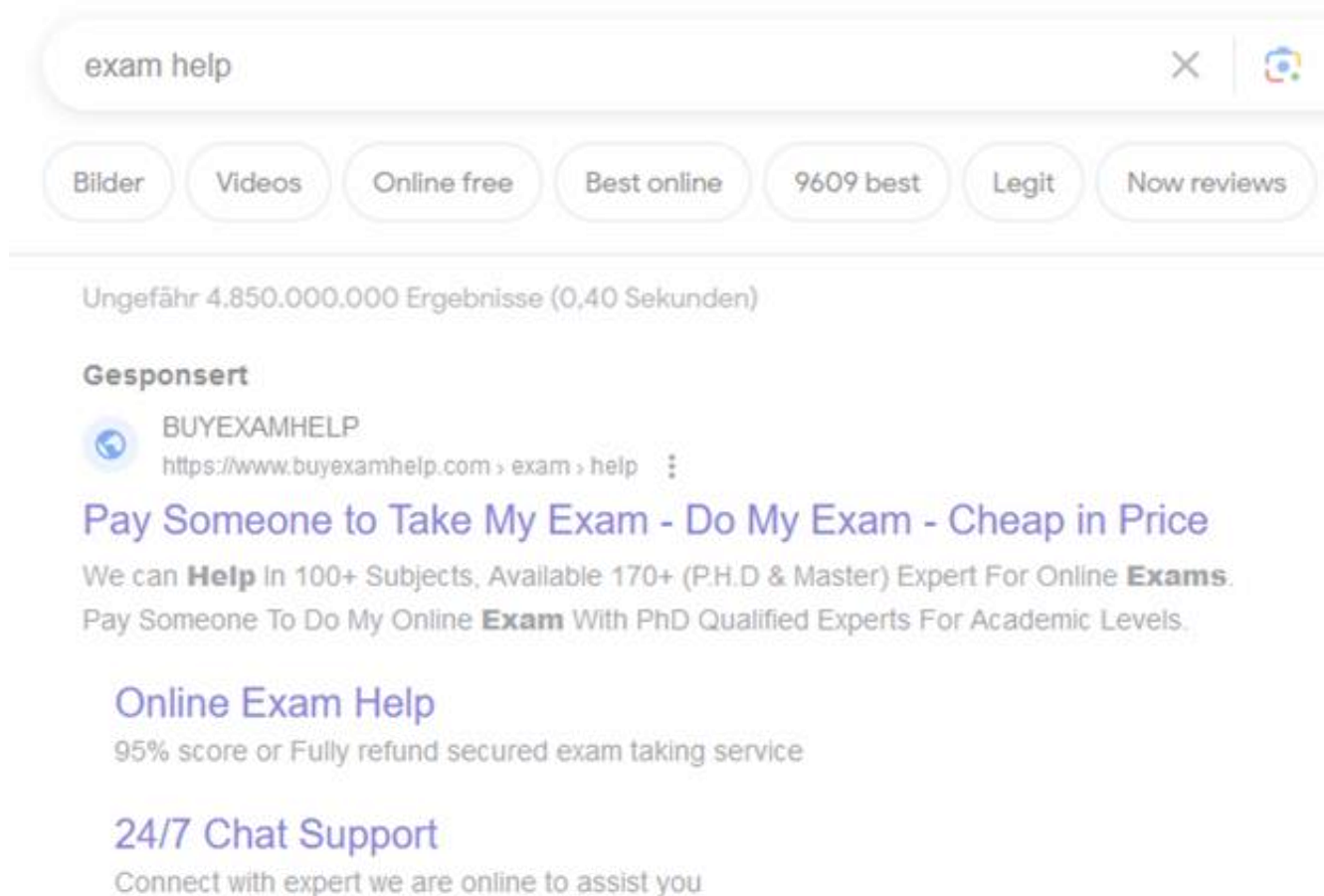
The image shows a Google search bar with the text 'hausarbeiten schreiben' entered. To the right of the search bar, the English phrase 'essay writing' is displayed. Below the search bar, a list of auto-complete suggestions is shown, each with a magnifying glass icon. To the right of each suggestion, its English equivalent is listed in italics. At the bottom of the search bar, there are two buttons: 'Google Suche' and 'Auf gut Glück!'.

German Suggestion	English Equivalent
hausarbeiten schreiben lassen	<i>have term papers written</i>
hausarbeiten schreiben lassen ki	<i>have term papers written ai</i>
hausarbeiten schreiben tipps	<i>essay writing ai</i>
hausarbeiten schreiben ki	<i>have term papers written cheap</i>
hausarbeiten schreiben lassen günstig	<i>essay writing law</i>
hausarbeiten schreiben jura	<i>essay writing computer progr.</i>
hausarbeiten schreiben lassen programm	<i>have term papers written app</i>
hausarbeiten schreiben programm	
hausarbeiten schreiben lassen app	

Google search, auto-complete, 30.3.2023



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Displayed as 1st hit on 10.8.2023

# and demand



How can do a reflective essay responding to this question in less than an hour? 5 Tage  
left  VERIFIZIERT

€15 Gebot i.D.  
68 Angebote

I am looking for a skilled writer who can help me with a reflective essay. The specific question will be provided by me and the essay should be between 250-500 words in length. The essay should follow the MLA format. Question: Though there are thematic similarities between Neruda and Hayden's poems ("The Heights of Macche Picchu" and "Middle Passage"), their style is vastly different. What makes each author's poem powerful? Skills and experience required: - Strong writing skills - Familiarity with the ML...

<https://www.freelancer.de/projects/research-writing/how-can-reflective-essay-responding> (accessed on 10.8.2023)

# Small advertisements



Kleinanzeigen Kempten > Dienstleistungen > Weitere Dienstleistungen

## Ghostwriter Hausarbeit

**VB**

📍 87427 Bayern - Kempten

📅 30.03.2023

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### Beschreibung

Guten Tag,

im Rahmen einer kurzfristigen Hausarbeit suche ich eine Person, die das Schreiben dieser für mich übernimmt. Der Rahmen sind 12 Seiten. Ich bin Student und würde mich über Angebote freuen!

Informationen:

- das Thema ist aus dem Bereich Pädagogik, welches ich euch gern Privat mitteile.
- bitte mit Wohnort/Bundesland anschreiben, sowie Preisvorschlag!
- Abgabe an mich soll spätestens am kommenden Montag, den 03.04.23 um 23:59 Uhr erfolgen.
- alles diskret und vertraulich!

I am looking for a person to write a term paper for me at short notice. The length of the paper is 12 pages. I am a student and would be happy to receive offers.

Accessed on 30.3.2023,

<https://www.ebay-kleinanzeigen.de/s-anzeige/ghostwriter-hausarbeit/2400245582-298-7620>

# And many more options



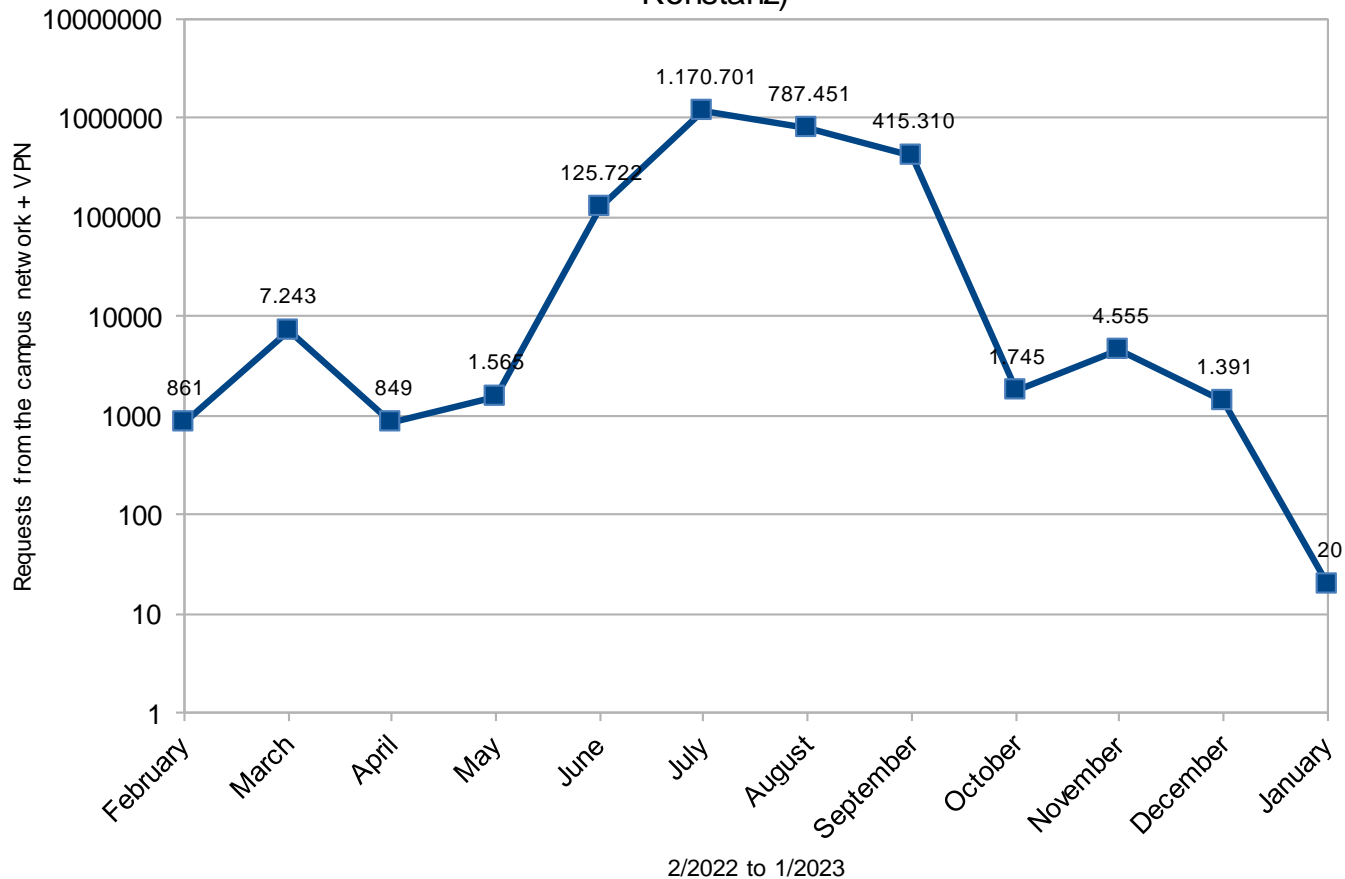
Fiverr, Reddit, Chegg, Twitter ...

*Lancaster, Thomas (2020): Commercial contract cheating provision through micro-outsourcing web sites. In: International Journal for Educational Integrity 16 (1), DOI: 10.1007/s40979-020-00053-7*

*Lancaster, Thomas; Cotarlan, Codrin (2021): Contract cheating by STEM students through a file sharing website: a Covid-19 pandemic perspective. In: International Journal for Educational Integrity 17 (1), 1–16. DOI: 10.1007/s40979-021-00070-0*

# Example?

Access to websites of contract cheating providers (University of Konstanz)



# Frequency

## – what do we know?



- ca. 3,5%
- Men more often than women
- Advanced students less often than inexperienced students
- Also differences between countries and study programmes
- Figures are based on anonymous surveys and self-reporting; an estimated number of unreported cases must be expected.
- The questions are not identical in all studies!

*Curtis, Guy J.; Tremayne, Kell (2021): Is plagiarism really on the rise? Results from four 5-yearly surveys. In: Studies in Higher Education 46 (9), 1816–1826. DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2019.1707792*

*Curtis, Guy J.; McNeill, Margot; Slade, Christine; Tremayne, Kell; Harper, Rowena; Rundle, Kiata; Greenaway, Ruth (2021): Moving beyond self-reports to estimate the prevalence of commercial contract cheating: an Australian study. In: Studies in Higher Education, 1–13. DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2021.1972093*

# Costs and time



- Cheap: 10-20 euros per page, even less to nothing with AI
- Fast: 1-5 days for humans, immediately for AI
- A >100 million market

*Wallace, Melisa J.; Newton, Philip M. (2014): Turnaround time and market capacity in contract cheating. In: Educational Studies 40 (2), 233–236. DOI: 10.1080/03055698.2014.889597*

*Ellis, Cath; Zucker, Ian Michael; Randall, David (2018): The infernal business of contract cheating. Understanding the business processes and models of academic custom writing sites. In: International Journal for Educational Integrity 14 (1), 1–21. DOI: 10.1007/s40979-017-0024-3*

*Owings, Stephanie; Nelson, Jennifer (2014): The Essay Industry. In: Mountain Plains Journal of Business and Economics 15 (1), 1–21. Online: <https://openspaces.unk.edu/mpjbt/vol15/iss1/1>*

# Reasons



- Dissatisfaction with teaching and learning situation (Bretag et al. 2019)
- Perception of opportunities (Bretag et al. 2019)
- Not motivated (Awdry and Newton 2019)
- Language skills missing (Awdry and Newton 2019)
- Fear of failure and struggling with demands (Amigud and Lancaster 2019)
- Topic or task not understood (Foltynek and Kralikova 2018)
- Time constraints, poor time management (Foltynek and Kralikova 2018)
- Laziness (Foltynek and Kralikova 2018)
- Probability of detection is perceived as low (Rigby et al. 2015)
- Believe that others also do outsourcing (Awdry and Ives 2021)



# Reasons



*Amigud, Alexander; Lancaster, Thomas (2019): 246 reasons to cheat: An analysis of students' reasons for seeking to outsource academic work. In: Computers & Education 134, 98–107. DOI: 10.1016/j.compedu.2019.01.017*

*Awdry, Rebecca; Newton, Philip M. (2019): Staff views on commercial contract cheating in higher education. A survey study in Australia and the UK. In: Higher Education 78 (4), 593–610. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-019-00360-0*

*Awdry, Rebecca; Ives, Bob (2021): Students cheat more often from those known to them. Situation matters more than the individual. In: Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education 36 (1), 1254–1268. DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2020.1851651*

*Bretag, Tracey; Harper, Rowena; Burton, Michael; Ellis, Cath; Newton, Philip M.; van Haeringen, Karen et al. (2019): Contract cheating and assessment design. Exploring the relationship. In: Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education 44 (5), 676–691. DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2018.1527892*

*Foltýnek, Tomáš; Králíková, Veronika (2018): Analysis of the contract cheating market in Czechia. In: International Journal for Educational Integrity 14 (4), 1–15. DOI: 10.1007/s40979-018-0027-8*

*Rigby, Dan; Burton, Michael; Balcombe, Kelvin; Bateman, Ian; Mulatu, Abay (2015): Contract cheating & the market in essays. In: Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization 111 (3), 23–37. DOI: 10.1016/j.jebo.2014.12.019*

# Risk



- Personal data, e.g. mail, credit card details, etc., are transmitted when third parties are used.
- Writers are poorly paid, high incentive to access such data
- Additional claims and blackmail
- Bad work is much more common than good work

*Draper, Michael J.; Lancaster, Thomas; Dann, Sandie; Crockett, Robin; Glendinning, Irene (2021): Essay mills and other contract cheating services. To buy or not to buy and the consequences of students changing their minds. In: International Journal for Educational Integrity 17 (1), 1–13. DOI: 10.1007/s40979-021-00081-x*

*Yorke, Jonathan; Sefcik, Lesley; Veeran-Colton, Terisha (2022): Contract cheating and blackmail: a risky business? In: Studies in Higher Education 47 (1), 53–66. DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2020.1730313*

*Sutherland-Smith, Wendy; Dullaghan, Kevin (2019): You don't always get what you pay for. User experiences of engaging with contract cheating sites. In: Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education 44 (8), 1148–1162. DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2019.1576028*

*Lines, Lisa (2016): Ghostwriters guaranteeing grades? The quality of online ghostwriting services available to tertiary students in Australia. In: Teaching in Higher Education 21 (8), 889–914. DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2016.1198759*

# Examples of yours?



Is there an example situation you would like to present to the group?

# Counterstrategies: Prevention



- Talk about it!
- Do not criminalise alone, but emphasise the effects & benefits of good scientific practice
- Individualise tasks, if possible (externals did not participate in the course)
- Plan for the possibility of asking questions about the origin of the paper
- For recurring courses: Do some research to see if the assignments are circulating on the net.
- Include reflection for students to communicate and reduce reasons for contract cheating.

# Counterstrategies: Detection



- Indications of outsourcing in the references list
- Indications of outsourcing in the metadata
- Language:
  - Mix of high linguistic quality and at the same time low quality content is suspicious
  - Technical vocabulary of other disciplines
  - components untypical for the required text genre
  - Text inflation and redundancy e.g. due to many function words
- Feedback session as part of the general assessment process
  - Questions about understanding one's own work & the underlying assertions

# A glance at the reference list



- Does the bibliography contain strange, unexpected, fabricated entries?
- Access data, links etc.
- Accessibility of the sources
- Old sources – new dates
- Formalia

# Metadata of files

Eigenschaften *	
Größe	20,3KB
Seiten	3
Wörter	227
Gesamtbearbeitungszeit	0 Minuten
Titel	Titel hinzufügen
Tags	Tag hinzufügen
Kommentare	Kommentare hinzuf...

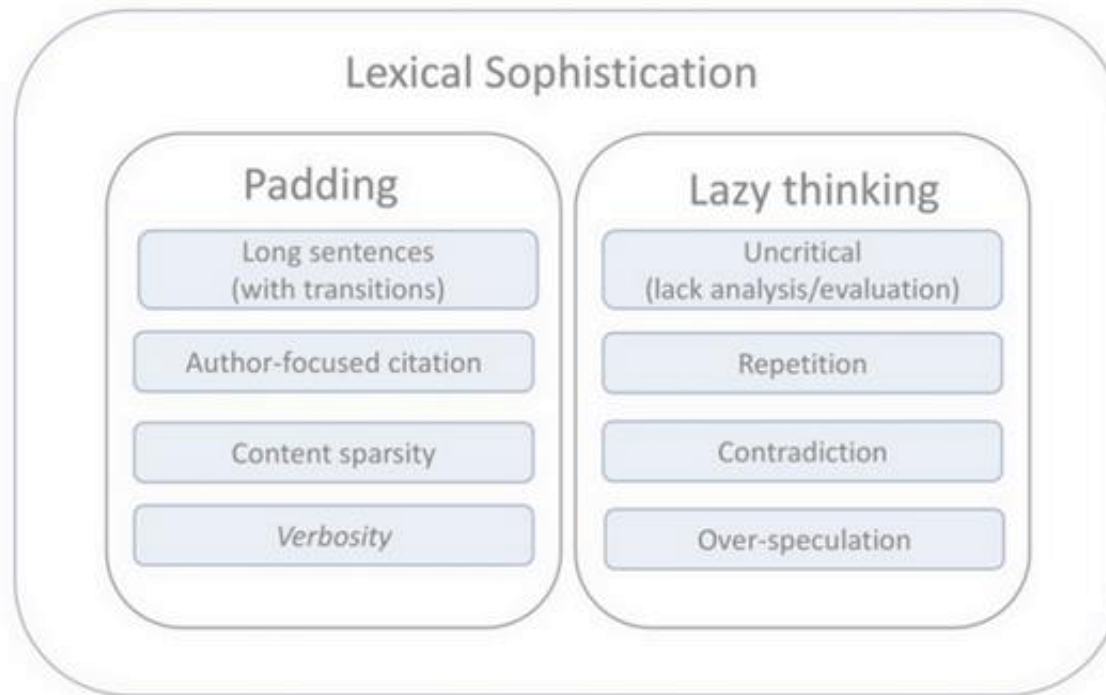
Relevante Datumsangaben	
Letzte Änderung	30.09.2022 13:49
Erstellt	01.02.2017 17:16
Zuletzt gedruckt	

Relevante Personen	
Autor	Autor hinzufügen
Zuletzt geändert von	Noch nicht gespeich...

Allgemein		Sicherheit		Details		Vorgängerversionen	
Eigenschaft				Wert			
Kategorien							
Kommentare							
Ursprung							
Autoren							
Zuletzt gespeichert von							
Revisionsnummer				44			
Versionsnummer							
Programmname				Collabora_Office/22.05...			
Firma							
Dokumentverwalter							
Inhalt erstellt				01.02.2017 17:16			
Letzte Speicherung				30.09.2022 13:49			
Zuletzt gedruckt							
Gesamtbearbeitungszeit				02:48:00			
Inhalte							

## Contract Cheater Writing Profile



Olumide Popoola, 2021

Popoola, Olumide (2021): Detecting 'Contract Cheating', <https://outliar.blog/2021/03/02/detecting-contract-cheating> (accessed on 6.6.2023).



# Paraphrasing with software



- counterfeit consciousness (AI)
- arbitrary woodland
- insusceptible framework
- bosom malignancy
- erroneously sure
- irresistible infections
- wellspring of blunder
- feathered creatures
- creepy crawlies
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Random Forest (machine learning)
- immune system
- breast cancer
- false positive
- infectious diseases
- source of error
- birds
- insects

Bik, Elisabeth: The Dark Side of Science: Misconduct in Biomedical Research,  
Presentation at the European Conference on Ethics and Integrity in Academia, Porto, 6th May 2022.

# Material



Eaton, Sarah Elaine (2019): **U Have Integrity: Resource for Teaching Assistants.** University of Calgary, <http://hdl.handle.net/1880/111012>

*Guideline about what to do if you as a TA or your TA suspect or observe academic misconduct.*

- *How accessible do you find this material?*
- *Does your university have a policy on academic misconduct and are you familiar with it?*
- *What do you do when you suspect a student cheating? Is there a clearly defined process and/or (external) bodies?*
- *Do you want to add some points?*
- *Are there points you doubt to be helpful? Are there points you find not suitable for your everyday teaching?*
- *How do you want to adapt it to you specific situation (discipline/institution)?*

# Material



Academic Integrity Office, University of California, San Diego:

**Detecting Contract Cheating in narrative assignments,**

<https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/files/Detecting%20Contract%20Cheating.pdf>

*This table provides help for having a conversation, and also identifies characteristics that may be indicators to contract cheating. At the same time, the limitations of these indicators are addressed.*

- *Have you been in such a situation and what have you done?*
- *How accessible do you find this material?*
  
- *Do you want to add some points?*
- *Are there points you doubt to be helpful?*
  
- *What do you do when you suspect a student cheating? Is there a clearly defined process and (external) bodies?*
- *How do you deal with unclear indications in narrative assignments?*
- *Do you consider using this material, add something to it or rather won't use it?*

# Material



University of Konstanz (2023):

**Discovering unauthorised outsourcing of coursework:  
10 questions for the bibliography, <https://cloud.uni-konstanz.de/index.php/s/skR5EanZpRqR4EL>**

*These ten questions should help to critically check bibliographies for indicators of contract cheating.*

- *How accessible do you find this material?*
- *Do you want to add some points?*
- *Are there points you doubt to be helpful?*
  
- *How do you deal with unclear indications in the reference list?*
- *Do you consider using this material in your discipline, add something to it or rather won't use it?*

**Many  
Thanks!**

**Dr. Oliver Trevisiol**

**Christoph Schmitt**

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