

Trouble at mill: pedagogic responses to the threat from custom essay writing services.

Martin Seviour

Nottingham Language Centre

April 9th, 2019

What is contract cheating?

“A form of cheating where a student submits work for assessment, where they have used one or more of a range of services provided by a third party, which is not permitted. ... The contract with the student can include payment or other favours.”

NTU Quality Handbook Part E Section 17C:
Academic Irregularities (2018)

What is an Essay Mill?

“An organisation or individual, usually with a web presence, that contracts with students to complete an assignment or assignments for a student for a fee.”

QAA Contracting to Cheat *In HE* (2017)

What does an essay mill look like?



15 April 2019

Barclay Littlewood



Barclay James Littlewood^[2] (born 1978 in [Huddersfield](#)^[2]) is a [British entrepreneur](#) who founded [Ukessays.com](#), a commercial writing service which sells essays and other academic work. The work is sold over the internet to students in the UK, the [US](#) and [Western Europe](#). Despite criticism about the fact that students represent the work as their own, the company maintains copyright in all their work and they claim that the essays they sell are to be used as a study guide.^[3]

After training as a [barrister](#) at [Gray's Inn](#), Littlewood set up his company in 2003,^[4] based in [Arnold, Nottinghamshire](#).^[5]

The sale of academic work by Littlewood's and other companies has proved controversial and there have been frequent accusations in the media, especially from universities, that Littlewood's businesses encourage plagiarism.^{[6][7]} Littlewood claims that the essays are sold to aid students with their research.^[5]

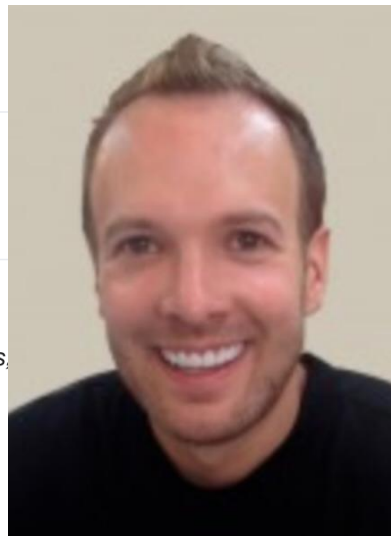
Littlewood claims to have discovered a scientific way to God.^[8] He offers his method for free on his website and also charges up to £6,000 a day for his services.^[9] He also works as a business consultant to large businesses under the name Business Bliss.^[10]

^ See also

- [Essay mill](#)

^ References

- ↑ [Sunday Times rich list](#)
- ↑ *a b* *GRO Index of Births, Marriages and Deaths*



Barclay Littlewood

Born	11 May 1978 (age 40) <div> Huddersfield, England</div>
Residence	London, England
Nationality	British
Occupation	Founder of <div> Ukessays.com, Ukessay.com</div>
Years active	1994–present
Net worth	£7 million (2008) ^[1]



News

Q: How do you make £1.6r year and drive a Ferrari? A essays for £400

Thou shalt cheat! Born again Christian running controversial essay-writing firm insists it is a 'godly business'

- **Millionaire Barclay Littlewood runs controversial business UK Essays**
- **Firm has been accused of helping students cheat by selling academic work**
- **But Mr Littlewood said company is based on 'honesty, respect and excellence'**

By [BEN ELLERY FOR THE MAIL ON SUNDAY](#)

PUBLISHED: 03:07, 31 March 2019 | **UPDATED:** 03:07, 31 March 2019



27
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As a born-again Christian, Barclay Littlewood likes to boast that his 'essay mills' company operates 'by godly principles'.

But the millionaire businessman has been rebuked by the Church of England, which says such firms are unethical and dishonest.



News

Non-practising barrister behind controversial essay writing company rebrands as self-help guru

By [Alex Aldridge](#) on Jun 24 2013 9:35am



A pupillage-less Bar graduate who made millions of pounds selling essays to students has launched a new service to help rich clients find happiness by spending time with him.

LearnBliss.com, which endeavours to "remove suffering" via the attainment of "bliss", sees Gray's Inn member Barclay Littlewood charge himself out at an incredible £6,000 per day "for a minimum time period of two years". That equates to a total of £438,000...

Excerpt from Barclay Littlewood's website

All Answers Ltd. has proved quite controversial because we take the approach that all students have a right to receive any help they wish. As long as they use that help correctly they aren't doing anything wrong at all. The company is based on a few key tenements of life and business, these being – honesty, respect and excellence. You can read more about how I run my businesses by [Godly principles here](#).

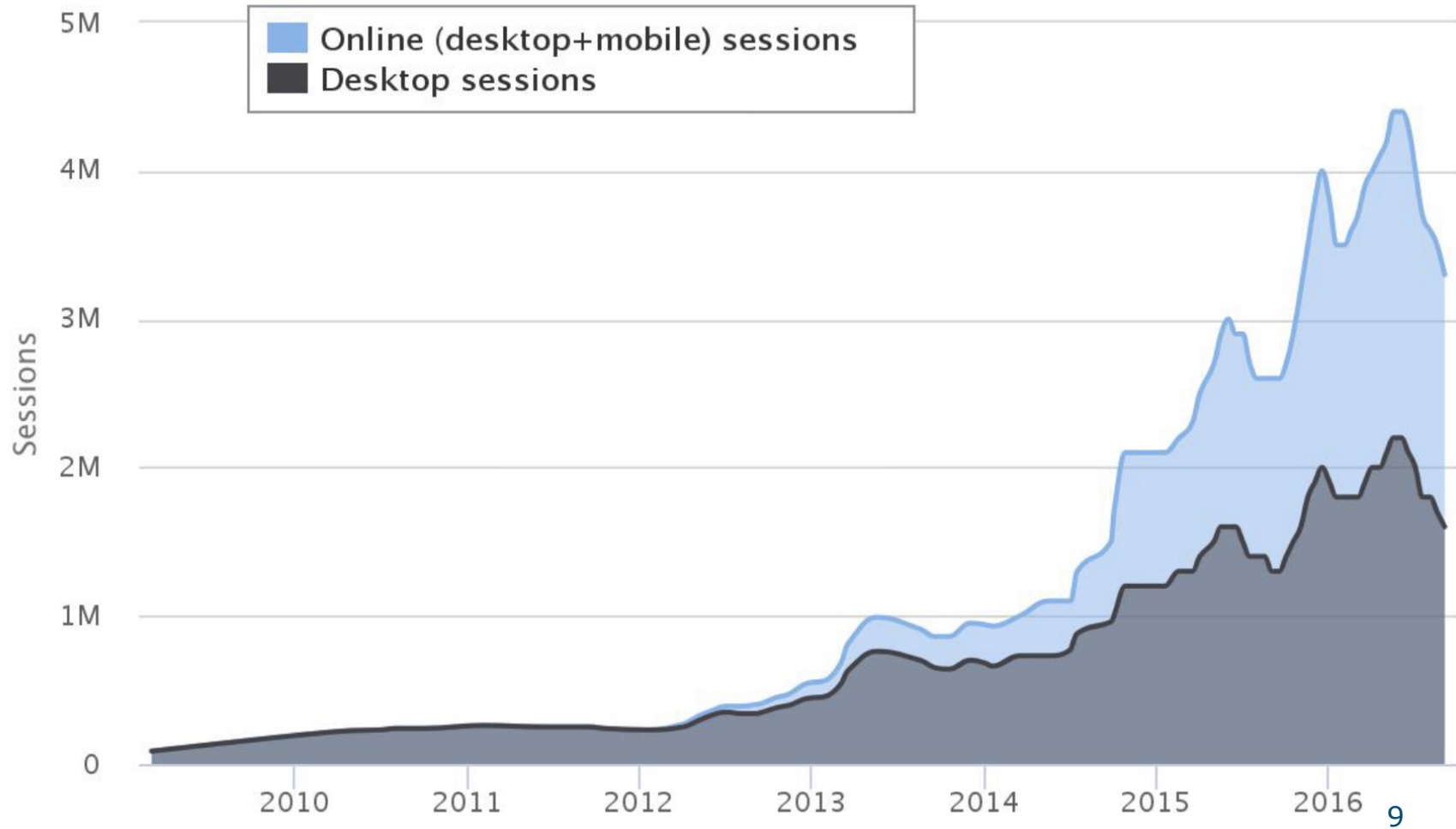
<https://barclaylittlewood.com/>

The UK Essays website

<https://www.ukessays.com/>

The growth of UK Essays (<http://thomaslancaster.co.uk/blog/>)

Traffic history for domain ukessays.com, last 7 years





US essay mill firm targets new students through WhatsApp

Exclusive: Quality Papers, along with anonymous individuals, is infiltrating group chats in UK

Iftikhaar Aziz and Sarah Marsh

🐦 @sloumarsh

Mon 8 Apr 2019 06.00 BST

The extent of the problem

- Newton (2018) synthesised findings from 65 prior studies(1978-2018) involving over 54514 HE students
- Contract cheating self-reported by average of 3.52% of students
- There are over 200 million HE students worldwide (UNESCO 2017). This suggests that around 7 million are paying other people to do their work.
- NTU has approx. 30,000 students. So over 1000 of them could have made use of contract cheating at some point.

Why do students use essay mills?

(Walker & Townley, 2012)

- Ease/convenience/laziness
 - Alternative to cyber-plagiarism
 - Pressure (financial/to obtain good grades/job opportunities)
 - Disengagement - 'anonymous numbers in an education machine'
 - 'Normalisation' of cheating
 - Commodification of HE – the degree as a means to an end
 - Disconnection from submitted work (written work as a commodity)
 - Lack of confidence in written academic English skills
 - Lack of familiarity with some assessment types/tasks
 - Perception of teachers as not caring about the assessment
 - Assumption of untrustworthiness is a self-fulfilling prophecy
-

Responses

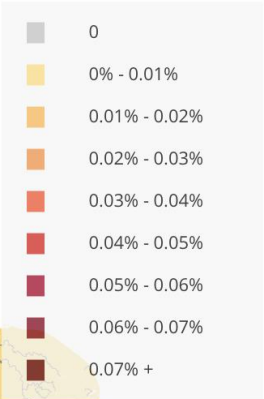
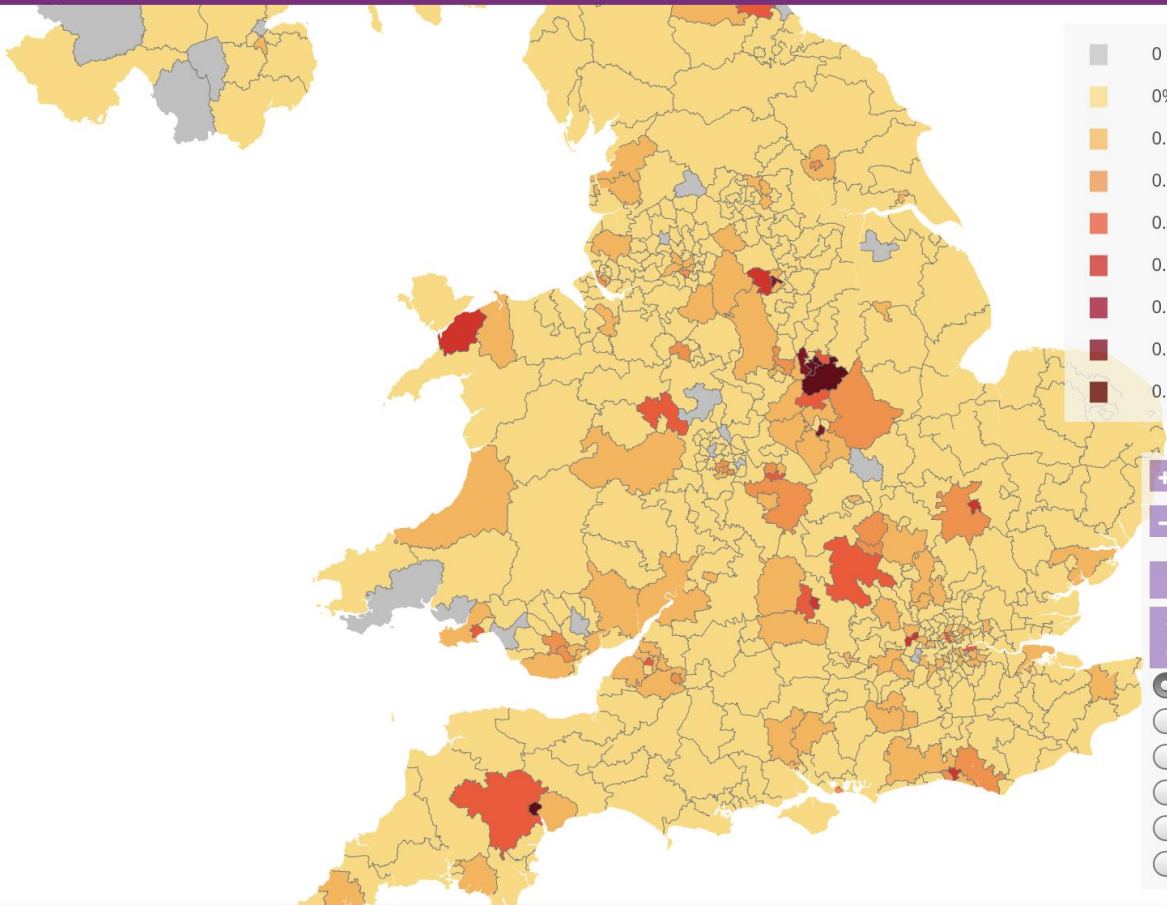
- Legal



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Argyll and Bute
Brendan O'Hara MP
Scottish National Party
5 signatures
0.01% of 86,810 constituents



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Australian universities

University cheaters would face two years' jail or big fines under Coalition plan

Education minister Dan Tehan says legislation would target cheating students and anyone who helps them cheat



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Responses

- Legal
- Detection
- Regulations and sanctions
- AI awareness campaigns
- Changing assessment type and design
- Pedagogic responses

Pedagogic responses

- Focussing on what good academic practice looks like
- Developing assessment literacy - brief/criteria/question analysis
- Teaching key skills of critical reading, use of sources, essay planning
- Formative use of Turnitin to teach source use
- Use of student exemplars
- Opportunities to draft writing and receive feedback
- Vivas in which students talk about their writing
- Peer review and feedback opportunities
- Knowing our students -spotting warning signs - offering support
- Talking directly about the risks involved in contract cheating

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Module Check: **brief and assessment matrix**

What does the word '**defend**' mean on page 6 of the assessment matrix?

Skills, qualities and attributes:

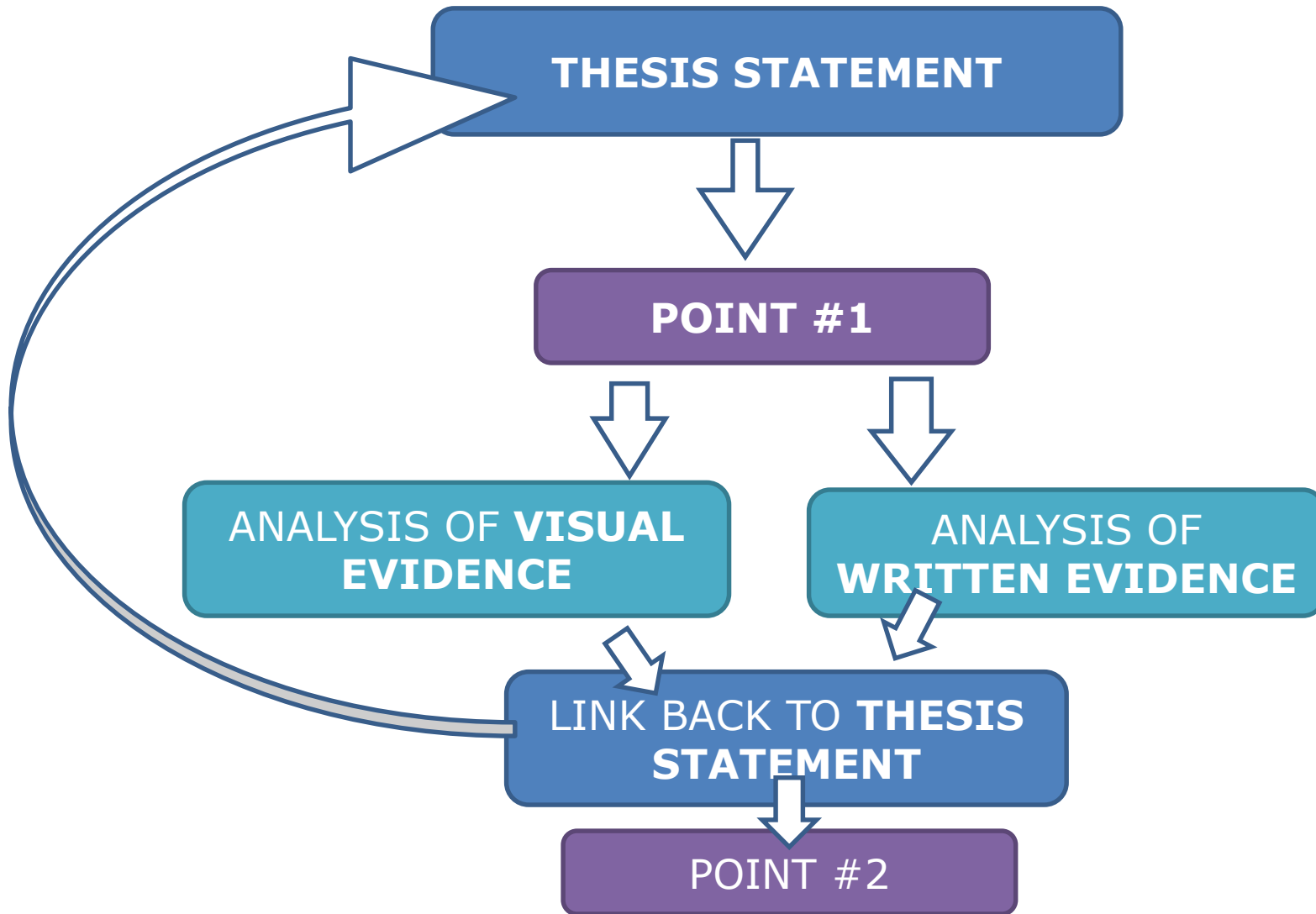
e) **Defend** the selection of appropriate marketing tools and techniques that would help an organisation achieve its short-term objectives.

Answer: Justifying your choice of KPI's – **giving reasons why** you made your choices.

In your brief, you have been instructed to choose three KPIs, and more importantly, you have been instructed to JUSTIFY why you have selected them.

Part of this process of *justification* is being able to **give reasons why** you have made your choice.

Criteria	What to do and what to avoid	What will you do to succeed?
Reasoned analysis of key HR issues Identification of integrating themes/strategic concepts.	<p>Avoid: Only identifying a few issues. Do: Identify all the key HR issues.</p> <p>Avoid: Making claims without theories Do: Use theories to justify my analysis Do: Demonstrate how themes integrate.</p>	<p>-Make notes in lectures of types of HR issues so I can identify them in the case study. -Target my reading to research different types of HR issues.</p> <p>-Ensure I know how the theories work in practice. Ask questions in lectures/seminars if I'm unsure.</p>
Outline of the impact on the business	<p>Avoid: Failing to discuss the significance of the HR issues on the business. Do: Explicitly link HR issues with specific business impacts, and overall business performance.</p>	
Recommendations to manage these issues: specific HR policies and practices and their integration into a coherent strategy	<p>Avoid: Do not make recommendations that are not realistic. Do: Give recommendations that relate directly to the analysis and are well justified</p>	



It was a crucial period whilst nations were rebuilding; designers of all disciplines had to use the tool of design to motivate the world into an optimistic state of mind.



Figure 36: Perrier Mineral water Poster. (Savignac, 1950).



Figure 37: Perrier Mineral water Poster. (Savignac 1950)

For example, Raymond Savignac produced several posters for a French mineral water company called 'Perrier' in 1950 (see figure 36 and 37). The adverts show a humorous character in a relaxed layout with simple text. The poster implies a "laid back and informal lifestyle." (Raizmann, 2010, p. 54).

STUDENT CLAIMS/IDEAS

VISUAL EVIDENCE

CITATION OF VISUAL EVIDENCE

TEXT EVIDENCE

CITATION OF TEXT EVIDENCE

Interpreting the Turnitin report

as walls and windows.

Many influential Architects still to this day use the steel elements and foundations such as Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid and Moshe Safdie and have challenged the idea of using steel to construct a building and instead have created and innovative and abstract, shiny structure that showcases the material in a unconnected way.

Moreover, many other modern architects are experimenting with the aesthetics of steel and shaping and changing it to present high shine and still show the characteristics of constructivism.

evered architects such as Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, and Moshe Safdie, to name a few, have challenged the idea of using steel merely to construct a building's skeleton and have instead created innovative and surprisingly fluid structures that allow the material to take center stage. What's more, many modern architects are experimenting with the esthetics of steel, from cultivating rust for an aged patina to polishing for a high shine to bronzing for a warmer finish.



Word Count: 900

Text-only Report

High Resolution

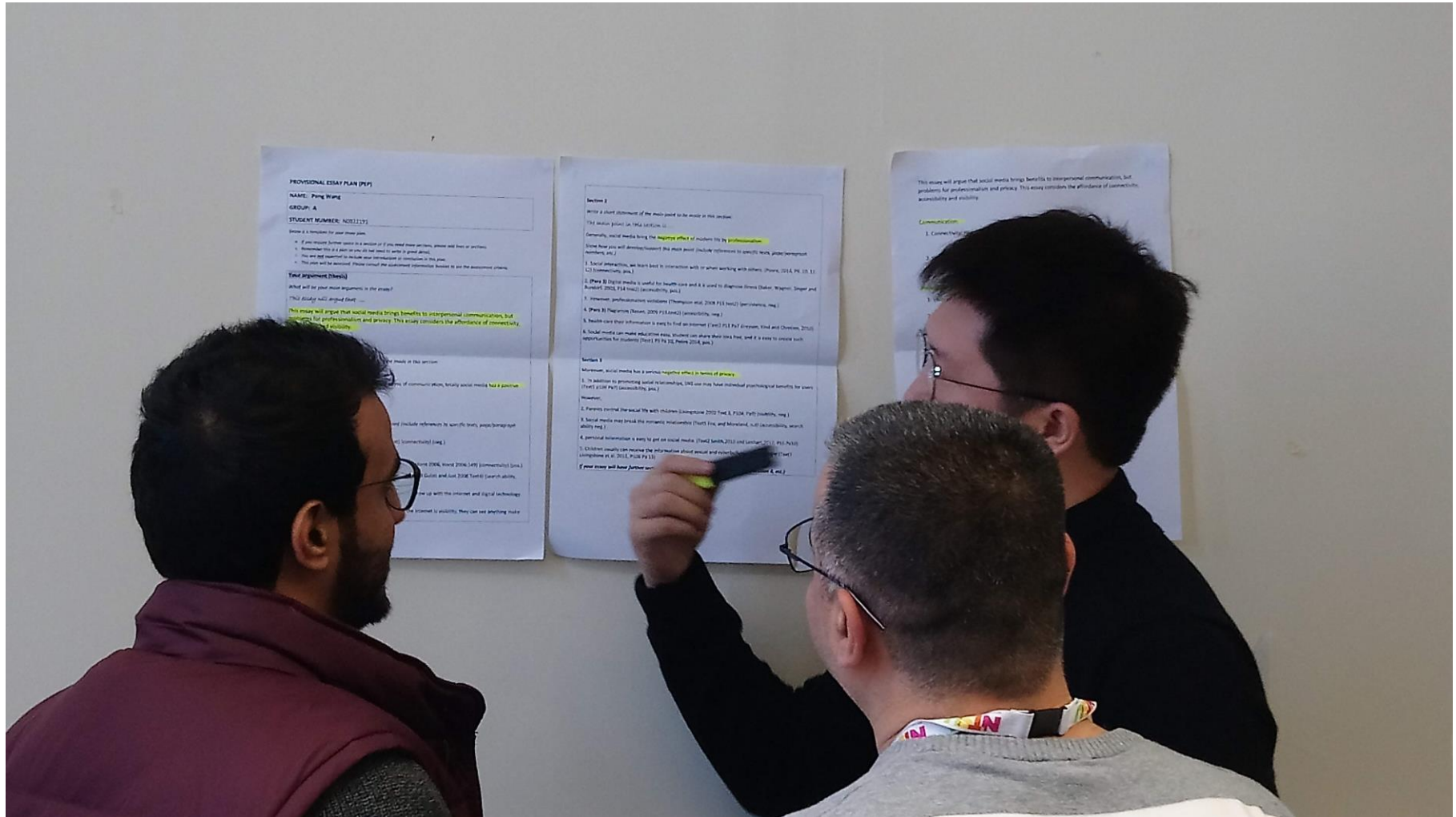
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Style – formal or informal?

- 1) **It's** clear that students **don't** like this brand.
- 2) They need to **figure out** the best way to sell the product ...
- 3) **Nowadays**, brand awareness is very important ...
- 4) The aim of this research is to **find out** how the brand ...
- 5) The new store offers an **amazing** customer experience.
- 6) **What should** the company do to make the brand more competitive?
- 7) **Lots of** people said they prefer this brand because ...
- 8) After **I** created the survey **I** shared it on social media.

EMOTIVE
LANGUAGE

VAGUE
WORDS

MULTI-WORD
VERBS

CLICHES

COLLOQUIAL
-ISMS

QUESTIONS

CONTRACTIONS

FIRST
PERSON

Which of these is most serious?

- Making a mistake in your list of references
- Not changing the original text enough when you paraphrase
- Making a mistake with citation
- Summarising someone's work but forgetting to cite it
- Quoting someone but not using quotation marks
- Using Google Translate
- Copying the work of another student
- Working with another student to write an essay together
- Asking another person to write your essay for you

EXAMPLES OF
**POOR
ACADEMIC
PRACTICE** –
WE'LL HELP
YOU TO
**DEVELOP
SKILLS** TO
AVOID THESE

**INTENTIONAL
PLAGIARISM**

COLLUSION

**CONTRACT
CHEATING**

Examples of how the NLC can support CLs

- timetabled academic language support classes which relate to specific modules (for international students only or whole cohorts)
- lectures/workshops on aspects of academic English integral to a module syllabus (for whole cohorts)
- working closely with a course/module leader to provide learning material which can scaffold complex written assessments
- working closely with a course/module leader to help rewrite assessment briefs/criteria in student-friendly language

If you are interested

- Join the TILT Academic Integrity Group (contact Catherine Gillam catherine.gillam@ntu.ac.uk)
- Get involved with the AI awareness day on Clifton Campus in November (contact Rachel Challen rachel.challen@ntu.ac.uk)
- Contact the NLC if you would like specific sessions of the type illustrated here

Martin Seviour martin.seviour@ntu.ac.uk

Walter Nowlan walter.nowlan@ntu.ac.uk

A word from the founder...



There is no one against us in this world but ourselves. You are against you. A failure to love, embrace, and accept yourself based on not a thing flows outwards and causes conflict. Love you for being alive, accept and embrace all of you, and where is the hate now? How can you hate another now? Where can conflict arise?

— *Barclay Littlewood* —

AZ QUOTES



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