# Editorial

# From the History of Contract Cheating to the New Challenges of Artificial Intelligence: The Changing Landscape of Academic Integrity

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## Abstract

We present the second issue of the fifth volume of the Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity (CPAI). This issue features the third invited historical article about contract cheating and three peer-reviewed articles that highlight two challenging issues within the field of academic integrity--mental health and artificial intelligence--and a study that explores the definition of academic misconduct, which is a persistent challenge in higher education.

*Keywords:* artificial intelligence generated text, Canada, contract cheating, definitions of misconduct, history, mental health

# From the History of Contract Cheating to the New Challenges of Artificial Intelligence: The Changing Landscape of Academic Integrity

In this issue of the Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity, we are excited to feature the final article in a three-part series by invited contributor, Dr. Geoff E. Buerger, which was based on his dissertation describing the development of the contract cheating industry in the United States (US) and Canada (Buerger, 2002). In the first article in the series, Buerger (2021) provided details of the commercial contract cheating industry during the period 1930 to 1970 in the US. He described how journalists and student journalists investigated the industry and published various news stories to expose their lucrative operations so these companies could no longer work in the shadows. In the second article, Buerger (2022) described the attempts in three US jurisdictions to quash the industry. In this issue's article, Buerger (2023) concludes the series by describing how essay mills advertised in student newspaper publications and operated their businesses in Canada. Attempts were made by university administrators and government officials to reduce the activity of defrauding the education system, which have largely failed. As a

collection, Dr. Buerger's articles are useful for generating discussion about the contract cheating industry with students, faculty, administrators, and other higher education professionals.

One of the long-standing issues within the field of academic integrity and academic misconduct is the discrepancies in how individuals in different stakeholder groups in postsecondary education define the behaviours of academic misconduct. In "Cheating: It depends on how you define it", Jelenic and Kennette (2023) explored how students and faculty at a two-year college defined academic cheating using their own words and rated behaviours as cheating or not. The authors found that there was many similarities and differences in definitions provided by student and faculty groups. Perhaps not surprisingly, faculty articulated their definitions using more words. Jelenic and Kennette suggested that maturity was an important factor in understanding academic cheating. Thus, the lexicon of academic integrity and academic misconduct continues to be ill-defined for many stakeholders (e.g., students and faculty) within Canadian higher education.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a great impact on students' physical and mental health, and has been implicated in the rise of academic misconduct occurring around the world. Eaton et al. (2023) conducted a rapid review to understand the literature surrounding the topic of academic integrity and student mental health and well-being more fully. Their search resulted in 46 articles suitable for analysis in which they discovered themes of negativity bias, differing definitions, paradigmatic tensions, external stressors, and mental well-being prior to incidents of academic misconduct. Eaton et al. challenge educators, researchers, administrators, and other higher education professionals to develop better ways to support postsecondary students.

The next frontier in the academic integrity and academic misconduct field is greater understanding of technology that produces text, images, and other deliverables that students may submit unchanged to gain credit. This is not new technology, but it is becoming more sophisticated and more easily accessible to students. It will also be less expensive and perhaps less risky to students to use artificial intelligence produced than to engage with contract cheating suppliers who have been known to blackmail and extort students. For this editorial, we attempted to use a headline generator to create a title using various combinations of the keywords (e.g., contract cheating, artificial intelligence, stress). All of the titles were inappropriate, for example, one of the suggestions was "The Joy, Comfort, and Stress-Reducing Power of Contract Cheating." This is not the message that we want to send to our readers.

Moya et al. (2023) presents a protocol for rapid scoping review of the academic integrity and artificial intelligence in higher education. Exploring the breadth of the articles at this space in time will help to identify boundaries of understanding of this emerging area. The scoping review will undoubtedly provide a meaningful contribution relevant to those within higher education who are excited, horrified, or feeling something in between given this quickly evolving technology.

The topics covered in this issue of the *Canadian Perspectives on Academic Integrity* provide insight into the types of conversations we are having on post-secondary campuses and the types of challenges that faculty and staff are grappling with, including mental health, advances in technology like artificial intelligence and the enduring question(s) about how we define and understand academic misconduct. This issue spans two calendar years, however, our next volume (Volume 6) will have two calls for submissions with issues being released in June and December. As always, we welcome your submissions whether a peer-reviewed article, practitioner pieces, book review, or position paper. Review the notes to authors for more information.

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