

## **International Day of Action (IDoA) Against Contract Cheating 2020—Update from the Chair of the IDoA Planning Committee**

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The year 2020 has been a tumultuous one to say the least. The global pandemic gave rise for us to pause and reflect on a number of fronts. Apart from our personal health and safety, and as a result of the recent pandemic, educational organizations have been challenged to scrutinize existing approaches to teaching and learning.

With the mandatory pivot to online learning systems, faculty, students, and leaders within learning communities have been challenged to re-consider longstanding educational pedagogies and ways of interacting. This dramatic and sudden change created increased concerns for the quality of educational offerings and research that in turn affect the credibility of the certificates, diplomas, and degrees conferred by post-secondary educational institutions. Specifically, worries have surfaced about the effectiveness of evaluations of learning through our current online delivery platforms. So, the annual International Day of Action (IDoA) against contract cheating, seemed an even more relevant and important undertaking in 2020.

The academic integrity community of practice was dealt a sad blow with the recent death of our Australian colleague Dr. Tracey Bretag. This IDoA took on a special meaning and relevance as it was devoted to the memory of Tracey. She was a tireless advocate for academic integrity and helped move us forward through her teaching, presentations, publications, and research. Her contributions to the field are nothing short of incredible and her spirit, positive energy, warm heart, and bright mind will be missed.

Contract cheating runs counter to academic integrity and is characterized by students outsourcing their academic work to third parties. The IDoA, sponsored by the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI), marked its 5<sup>th</sup> international annual event on October 21, 2020 that coincided with the Carnegie Council's Global Ethics Day. From the IDoA 2020's inception, it was clear that there was strong interest to engage our global educational community to its fullest. International engagement was evident in a variety of ways.

An international planning committee was struck with content experts from around the

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world, and across the educational landscape. Content experts and researchers from primary educational and post-secondary educational sectors as well as educational quality assurance boards provided a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to the overall planning efforts for the IDoA. The planning committee included representation from Canada, Dubai, England, Greece, Ireland, and the United States (ICAI, 2020a). The aims and objectives for the 2020 IDoA were set by this group after careful discussion and consideration of various stakeholders and the current literature, research, and pressing issues related to contract cheating (ICAI, 2020b).

New to this year's IDoA was the addition of an international student planning group (ISPG). The ISPG boasted membership from 9 different parts of the world (Canada, Chile, Dubai, European Network, Greece, Ireland, Mexico, Ukraine, and United States). These students brought an energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to the aims and objectives for the IDoA and led an innovative social media campaign and kick-off to the live feed event that happened over a 20-hour period.

Their active involvement in planning student engagement leading up to and on the day, served to strengthen the connection with students around the world to the blight of contract cheating.

Additionally, the ICAI board awarded three prizes to students from Greece and the United States for their winning submissions to the *International Students Speaking Up for Integrity Creative Contest* (ICAI, 2020c).

The ICAI webpage was updated with current and relevant information about contract cheating, offering resources that can be easily downloaded for use around the world (ICAI, 2020b). The spotlight activity for the day was the live feed event entitled *Twenty Live in 20 ~ Global Conversations about Contract Cheating*. This live feed event occurred through Zoom and Facebook Live and offered opportunities for those interested in learning more about contract cheating to hear what was happening around the world. The live feed allowed us to connect across great distances and helped galvanize our efforts to speak up and out against contract cheating. A truly international effort of sharing ideas, potential resources, and current practices to combat contract cheating highlighted our strengths across the globe.

Canada's presence was obvious through the chair position on the international planning group, two student members, and the Canadian presentation at the virtual 20-hour live feed event. Canada's presentation included experts from seven provinces and provided a glimpse of some of the interprovincial collaboration currently happening around issues related to contract cheating and academic integrity. It is clear that Canada continues to grow stronger as a community of practice committed to the promotion of integrity across

the Canadian educational sector.

A record-breaking 250+ organizations registered for the day, which speaks to the relevance and interest around contract cheating and the preservation and promotion of academic integrity across our educational organizations. The IDoA was an opportunity and positive step to unite as a world committed to the quality of our educational endeavours but it is clear that this commitment and work needs to continue throughout the year. Dr. Camilla Roberts, President of the ICAI issued a statement against contract cheating letter (ICAI, 2020d) on October 21<sup>st</sup> that covers practical steps in our continued efforts to thwart contract cheating. The IDoA was meant to inspire and unite us, and we now have opportunities to collectively move forward with our efforts with renewed hope and fortitude.

## References

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