

## Essay mills – why they are unprofessional

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I knew that it happened, but had imagined it was in the deep dark corners of the academic world, where no one I knew would go. Then I saw a poster on the London Underground openly offering the essay-writing service as though it was a normal and legitimate activity. I was so surprised that I went down the escalator in order to go back up and check. You may have seen it too, or have been targeted with online ads.

These custom cheating websites are sometimes known as 'essay mills'. In other words, you buy a custom written essay that will supposedly pass your course without being caught in a text matching filter. Or at least that's what they tell you. There are also sites where students 'share' their work, receiving essays in return.

Nobody needs to be told that submitting work that is not your own is cheating, that it is dishonest and unprofessional. Students should also be aware that websites which offer other services, such as a plagiarism check, have been known to keep the essays submitted for checks and resell them through these essay-selling sites, which could get other students into trouble down the line.

And medical students run a double risk. The GMC guidelines on professionalism identify passing off the work of others as your own as unprofessional behaviour, which could lead to fitness to practise procedures ([Achieving good medical practice](#), paragraph 81)

### *Finding the right support*

The essay mills try to justify themselves by saying they help students who are under time pressure and who are not being supported by their universities.

All universities have support for your writing and time management. Developing professionalism means learning effective time management strategies and making sure you are aware of the academic support offered by your University well before you need it. Developing integrity means being aware of times and situations which create pressure to cut corners, but you still do the right thing.

If any students are struggling to keep on top of work, I'd urge you speak to your medical school, who want you to succeed.