

# Fake Graduates

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**Abstract** There is growing concern regarding the erosion of industries' trust in the reliability and validity of university graduates. Fake graduates are described in this letter. This article endeavors to warn of a new version of the scholarly black market, in which theses and dissertations are sold to students seeking to graduate under false pretenses.

**Keywords** Fake graduates · Scholarly black market · University

## Letter to the Editor

Academic misconduct and unethical behavior of students are listed as serious educational problem of broad social concern; students' unethical behavior affects their qualifications and comportment in their future professional career (Dömeová and Jindrová 2013). Plagiarism, in particular, has been widespread within higher education for as long as some records of such academic misconduct have existed (Ison 2014). In plagiarism cases, the author presents the work of another author as her or his own, although there exists a wide range of other definitions of plagiarism.

It may seem normal for a college student to ask a friend or a more senior student for help in doing class assignments. Sometimes students borrow papers from their seniors or others to help them prepare their assigned reports. They may even pay for writing assistance. There are even instances of companies or communities being founded to provide and sell assignments to students. This also applies to graduate dissertations and theses. The scholarly black market (SBM), first reported by Sorooshian (2016), is involved in buying and selling scholarly manuscripts.

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Assignments, postgraduate theses and dissertations can also be found in these markets. Buyers present purchased reports to their universities and as a result they graduate, thereby making them fake graduates. One part of this market is composed of ghost writers, who agree to write or prepare a report for sale; the other part of the market is composed of report robbers, who steal reports from others and sell them. Usually, report robbers are more actively involved in safer markets, specifically those regions in which universities instruct students using local languages that are not covered by plagiarism detection software (e.g., Turnitin, Grammarly). Some unprofessional typing, printing and binding service institutes/shops in certain countries are now involved as report robbers for the SBM. They keep copies of the research reports and theses of their customers to sell to others—fake graduates—from different institutes or even the same institutes, either in the same language or translated into another language.

Industries and economies can be negatively affected by fake graduates. Fake graduates not only submit invalid assignments and dissertations but also undermine universities' ability to use adequate supervision and assessment as mechanisms for monitoring and improving instruction. A university's trustworthiness and reputation may be harmed by fake graduates. One way to maximize the reliability of university graduates, which is crucial with respect to future scientists and engineers, is to control and reduce the existence of SBMs. Professors, research supervisors, universities and educational institutes should be very careful to assess the validity of submitted research reports.

#### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

**Conflict of interest** None.

## **References**

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