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Seeing ghosts, telling ghost stories – Assignment cheating and the nurse educator

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Background to research:

- Conversations in academic context – program committees, teaching teams, marking and moderating meetings
- Academic background
- Noticing ‘apparitions’ when marking assignments.
- Hearing colleagues tell their ‘ghost stories’.
- Ghost-hunting notoriously difficult – lack of hard evidence.

Plan...

- Narratives from nurse educators' noticing of intentional cheating in the form of 'ghostwriting' or 'shadow writing'
- Having someone else write much or all of an assignment/dissertation –usually for money
- Language of ghost stories in storytelling – noticing apparitions, tackling ghosts (not getting slimed)
- Noticing of news media and public discourse about student behaviour including intentional cheating
- Not including plagiarism in terms of Turnitin similarity or poor acknowledgement of sources





<https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/movies/a51593/ghostbusters-2016-canon/>

Then...



<https://www.gizmodo.com.au/2016/05/a-whisper-of-vomit-the-ghostbusterscast-describes-the-first-time-they-got-slimed/>

Now...

- Findings from literature review including publications found on Ebscohost databases.
- 18 articles including one from 2001 and the rest from 2008 onwards (English language).
- Precursor to narrative review/integrative review study – question yet undefined.
- Little empirical data; one Chinese study (2011) reports 1800 fte producing 8000 ghostwritten assignments



News media and commonly-available conversations

- Indignation
- Coupled with poor student behaviour (drinking, setting fire to couches, promiscuity)
- Commonly linked to stories about international students
- Among academics, 'plagiarism' the dominant theme

Concerns:

- Lack of fairness for hard-working students
- No learning occurs
- Flags propensity for unprofessional and unethical behaviour once student is qualified



Issues for students

- Competing commitments/lack of time
- Lack of interest in subject
- Lack of consequences/assessment of risk
- Context of education –academic capitalism, competitive environment,
- Perceived focus on external rewards/high grades
- Perception of it being common
- Ease, availability and convenience

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UnemployedProfessors.com

Schoolsucks.com and cheathouse.com

For nurse educators: Institutional and societal constraints

- Lack of consistency between institutions, within institutions, within departments, within teaching teams, within individual educators, regarding how to proceed when a 'ghost' is spotted
- Proximity of educator to student can blur boundaries when pastoral care is provided
- Evidence difficult to mount
- Technology, peer to peer sharing, editorial support, challenge older notions of authorship and integrity (ever since the printing press), ownership, copyright etc
- Democratisation of access to learning material challenges legitimacy of learning institution as purveyors/owners of rules about knowledge
- 'Sharing' culture threatens older ideas about ownership (Sharepoint, Teams)

- Get baselines of written work early
- Require written assignments regularly
- Give clear, regular, repeated explicit information about expectation, reasons, consequences
- Engage students – give choices about topics and methods of assessment
- Request formative assessments including writing/structure plans, reference lists, drafts, conversations with students where they describe what they are writing about, and their approach.
- Get students to write under supervision
- More research (and philosophy)

