

CYPE(6)-07-21 – Paper to note 1

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Paul Davies MS
Chair Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

12 November 2021

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your letter of 18 October regarding essay mills. I agree that essay mills facilitate plagiarism, exploit vulnerable students and have the potential to normalise cheating. I also recognise that some research has shown that students who use essay mills may be vulnerable to blackmail. It is clear that these contract cheating services pose a threat to the integrity and reputation of a university education.

You may be aware that the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) are pursuing development of a Welsh academic integrity and assessment network. Furthermore, in October 2020, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) launched the Academic Integrity Charter. In QAA's own words, the charter 'is intended to provide a baseline position upon which UK providers, as autonomous institutions, can build their own policies and practices to ensure that every student's qualification is genuine, verifiable and respected'. I am particularly glad that all universities in Wales have signed the charter, demonstrating their commitment to this issue.

I agree that a UK-wide approach would seem sensible here and we have been engaging with the UK Government on this matter, and officials from all four governments have met to discuss the issue. However, there was no intention to legislate for Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland in the upcoming Skills and Post-16 Education Bill. We will continue to work with the UK Government and the other devolved governments to see whether a UK-wide solution is possible. I am also considering how we in Wales can address this problem in addition to a four nations approach or in the case that a four nations approach cannot be established at this time.

I hope the above has helped to clarify my position on this important matter and hope to have more to say in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Miles', with a wavy line underneath.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.