

**Senate Committee: Education and Employment**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE  
Additional Estimates 2014 - 2015**

**Outcome: Higher Education Research and International**

**Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000226**

Senator Carr, Kim provided in writing.

***Essay mills***

**Question**

"In relation media reportings about essay mills selling assignments, including the MyMaster website:

- (a) Can the Department provide an update on what steps it has taken following these media reports
- (b) Has the Department or TEQSA contacted the ten universities named in media reports?
- (c) Is the Department satisfied that the institutions named have addressed these issues?"

**Answer**

On 17 November 2014 Minister Pyne wrote to Professor Nicholas Saunders AO, then acting Chief Commissioner of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) to ask what measures TEQSA was taking to ensure universities were responding appropriately to allegations of cheating.

On 24 November 2014 TEQSA wrote to all higher education institutions, including all universities, to seek their assurance that they are meeting their responsibilities under the relevant Higher Education Threshold Standards. Providers were also invited to share best practice approaches to minimising student misconduct in assessment and promoting academic integrity amongst students.

For those institutions identified in the media as having students who purchased essays online, TEQSA sought assurance they have in place appropriate mechanisms to investigate and address the issue of academic fraud. All affected providers reported taking specific action immediately after they became aware of the MyMaster website to discourage contract cheating by students.

On 19 December 2014 Professor Saunders wrote to Minister Pyne indicating that TEQSA had written to all affected higher education providers and confirmed all providers took immediate action in response to the allegations.

On 12 March 2015 TEQSA published a report drawn from the responses received.