

University Rankings as a tool to fight Diploma Mills

Mustafa Kayyali

^{1*} Manager of Higher Education Quality and Assessment Council HEQAC

*Corresponding Author: e-mail: kayyali@heranking.com

Available online at: <https://ijmsit.com/volume-3-issue-3/>

Received: 03 April 2022

Revised: 7 April, 2022

Accepted: 29 April, 2022

Abstract— Diploma mills, also known as fake universities or degree mills, are organizations that offer unaccredited degrees for a fee. They exploit the value and prestige associated with a university degree, often without offering any meaningful education or qualifications. In recent years, the rise of online education and the increasing importance of a university degree has led to significant growth in the number of diploma mills, which can be harmful to both individuals and society as a whole.

Keywords— Diploma Mills – Accreditation – Ranking – Quality Assurance.

I. UNIVERSITY RANKINGS AS A TOOL TO FIGHT DIPLOMA MILLS

Diploma mills, also known as fake universities or degree mills, are organizations that offer unaccredited degrees for a fee. They exploit the value and prestige associated with a university degree, often without offering any meaningful education or qualifications. In recent years, the rise of online education and the increasing importance of a university degree has led to significant growth in the number of diploma mills, which can be harmful to both individuals and society as a whole.

One of how university rankings can help fight diploma mills is by providing a means of assessing the quality and reputation of universities. University rankings are typically based on a range of indicators, including research output, reputation, student satisfaction, and employability. By comparing universities against these metrics, rankings can help potential students identify credible institutions and avoid diploma mills.

For example, a key criterion for most university rankings is accreditation. Accreditation is the process by which a university is recognized by a reputable body, such as a national or regional accreditation agency, as offering degrees of an acceptable standard. By including this as a ranking factor, university rankings can highlight the importance of accreditation and help students identify institutions that have been formally recognized as offering quality education.

Additionally, university rankings can also help to promote transparency and accountability in higher education. By publicly ranking universities, they are put under scrutiny and can be held to account for any shortcomings or deficiencies. This can encourage universities to maintain high standards and improve the quality of their education, which can help to deter the growth of diploma mills.

Moreover, university rankings can also play a role in raising awareness about diploma mills and the dangers they pose. For example, by including information about fake universities and warning potential students about the risks associated with unaccredited degrees, rankings can help to educate students and prevent them from falling victim to diploma mills. This can help to reduce the demand for fake degrees, which in turn can reduce the number of diploma mills operating in the market.

While university rankings can be a valuable tool in the fight against diploma mills, it is important to note that they are not foolproof. Rankings can be influenced by various factors, including data manipulation and bias, and may not always accurately reflect the quality of a university. Additionally, while rankings can be useful in identifying credible universities, they do not guarantee that a degree from a highly-ranked university will lead to success or employment.

Furthermore, the existence of diploma mills can also impact the validity of university rankings. For example, if a large number of fake universities are included in the data used to create rankings, the results may be skewed and the quality of the ranking itself may be called into question. Therefore, university rankings need to be transparent, accurate, and

impartial to maintain their credibility and value as a tool in the fight against diploma mills.

II. HOW UNIVERSITIES CAN STOP DIPLOMA MILLS?

Diploma mills are fraudulent organizations that sell fake degrees or diplomas, often for a fee, without requiring any real coursework or educational achievement. These fraudulent organizations damage the reputation of legitimate universities and can have serious consequences for individuals who are deceived into thinking they have earned a valid degree or diploma.

Fortunately, there are steps that universities can take to fight diploma mills and protect their own reputations as well as the integrity of higher education. In this blog post, we'll explore some of those steps and how they can be implemented effectively.

Raise Awareness

The first step that universities can take to fight diploma mills is to raise awareness about the problem. This can be done through a variety of channels, including social media, campus events, and student organizations.

By educating students and faculty about the dangers of diploma mills and the importance of earning a legitimate degree, universities can help to reduce the demand for fake degrees and diplomas.

Increase Verification Procedures

Another effective strategy for combating diploma mills is to increase verification procedures for degrees and diplomas. Universities can take a number of steps to verify the authenticity of degrees, including using software programs to check for inconsistencies in transcripts and requiring that students provide official transcripts from previous institutions.

Additionally, universities can work with third-party verification services to ensure that degrees and diplomas are legitimate. By taking these steps, universities can reduce the likelihood of individuals obtaining fraudulent degrees and diplomas.

Monitor Online Platforms

Diploma mills often operate through online platforms, making it difficult to identify and shut them down. Universities can combat diploma mills by monitoring online platforms for any signs of fraudulent activity.

This can include setting up alerts for keywords related to diploma mills, monitoring social media platforms for

advertisements promoting fake degrees, and working with law enforcement agencies to shut down fraudulent websites.

Implement Stronger Legislation

In addition to the steps universities can take, stronger legislation can also help to combat diploma mills. Universities can work with lawmakers to create laws that criminalize the sale of fake degrees and diplomas, increase penalties for those who operate diploma mills, and provide resources for law enforcement agencies to investigate and shut down these fraudulent organizations.

By implementing stronger legislation, universities can send a clear message that diploma mills will not be tolerated and can help to deter individuals from pursuing fraudulent degrees.

Provide Access to Resources

Finally, universities can help to combat diploma mills by providing access to resources for individuals who may be at risk of falling victim to these fraudulent organizations. This can include information on how to verify the authenticity of a degree, resources for reporting fraudulent activity, and counseling services for individuals who may have been deceived by a diploma mill.

By providing access to these resources, universities can help to protect individuals from the consequences of fraudulent degrees and diplomas and ensure that the value of a legitimate degree is maintained.

In conclusion, diploma mills are a serious problem that can damage the reputation of legitimate universities and have serious consequences for individuals who are deceived into thinking they have earned a valid degree or diploma. However, by raising awareness, increasing verification procedures, monitoring online platforms, implementing stronger legislation, and providing access to resources, universities can help to combat diploma mills and protect the integrity of higher education. It is essential that universities take a proactive stance in the fight against diploma mills, and work together to prevent these fraudulent organizations from thriving.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, university rankings can play a valuable role in the fight against diploma mills by providing a means of assessing the quality and reputation of universities, promoting transparency and accountability, and raising awareness about the dangers of fake universities. However, it is important to recognize the limitations of university rankings and to ensure that they are accurate, impartial, and transparent to maximize their effectiveness in the fight against diploma mills.