Dear student who is cheating: You are rotting inside out.

THOMAS FROESE

It’s a new day, a good day, a day when you’ll be tested. Yes, it’s time for another exam and you, dear UCU student, are out of bed, finished your breakfast and walking with a confident smile. This is why today is such a fine day; You know the answers, every one. Because you know the questions too.

Nobody suspects you’re a cheater because you know the game and play it with skill. You’re at every Sunday and community service to praise the Good Lord and pray with fervour too.

You know how common cheating is. But you don’t think cheating is the best word, no, not the most accurate. Everyone needs to prepare in their own way and while plenty of UCU students study honestly, you know plenty of others get ready in the same dishonest ways that you do. Sure, UCU has rules and warnings and a disciplinary committee. But you’ll take your chances. You can handle a dead term. Better than a big financial hit which hurts more, but isn’t very common punishment. Besides, you also know how easy this all is. There are so many ways. Last term your lecturer dropped you a simple SMS with everything you needed. Nobody suspected, no, not from that lecturer, a Christian above reproach.

And the favour he wanted wasn’t so bad. You’d do it again.

Your parents are so proud of you too, ever since your picture landed in the newspaper when you were young. You’ll never forget how they showered their love and approval. You can’t disappoint now. You have a career ahead.

This is how it works in the real world anyway. In Uganda, anyone with eyes can see it. You’ve learned to cheat (I mean prepare creatively) in so many ways. The best way to fight cheating is to create proper exams. You over-heard this once in a conversation between two UCU heads. It was outside a classroom.

One said that most exams in Uganda are, in fact, a sham. That’s dishonest ways that you do.

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But these issues aren’t your concern, right? If universities want to turn a blind eye to avoid embarrassment and even build on sand, well, that’s their business. Let the system and the entire country suffer. You just need to walk on and keep calm and cheat.

After all, you might want to continue with post-grad studies later. Copy and paste, copy and paste is how your friend just did it at Makerere. He graduated just fine. His supervisor didn’t have time to look into it. And who’s supervising the supervisor?

So you’re ready for it, this test. You’ve exercised your body and steadied your mind. Still, there’s this thought that dishonest gain rots the bones and the soul both, that you’re becoming an empty shell, a shadow of who you meant to be.

The secret thought has nagged you, somehow. It has chased you. You think you might have even dreamed about this recently. The dream was terrifying. You literally rotted from the inside out. It was a horrible and shameful loss. Then you forgot it. Until you read this.

This, dear UCU student, is your test today. It’s your test any day.

Author and journalist Thomas Froese is a founder of The Standard. Read him at www.dailydad.net and www.thomasfroese.com