EXTRACT FROM LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE MINUTES: 20.6.16

Guidelines for the Use of Turnitin

The Committee noted that the draft Guidelines were intended to help improve students’ understanding of academic writing with the aim of reducing instances of plagiarism and improving student understanding of academic integrity and the expectations for academic writing with a consequent reduction in instances of plagiarism. It was noted that the guidelines were not framed as a policy but explained how the service was used and clarified what staff and students needed to know about it. They reflected current practice. They should be introduced to staff and students as part of their respective inductions. Sub-Committee members would circulate them within Faculties and Schools following approval.

Clarification was sought as to whether there was functionality for students to submit multiple times through Turnitin without this being recorded on the UK repository. Professor Murphy would review the Guidelines to ensure that this possibility was clear.

AGREED: that, subject to a number of minor amendments, the Guidelines be endorsed (finalised version at Appendix 2).

APPENDIX 2

**GUIDELINES for the use of turnitin at ulster university**

Turnitin is originality checking software and has been used to detect potential instances of plagiarism and incorrect referencing at Ulster since the early 2000s. Ulster has an institutional licence for the software, with single sign on from within Blackboard Learn.

The University’s primary focus for using the software is to support Ulster’s Plagiarism policy[[1]](#footnote-1) which states that: “It is expected that all students are educated in correct academic practice, including writing and referencing, early in their careers at the University and know what is expected of them and understand the meaning of plagiarism and its consequences”.

To support this aim - Turnitin is available to all staff and students, through Blackboard Learn integration, and should be used to:

* help improve students understanding of academic writing with the aim of reducing instances of plagiarism.
* improve student understanding of academic integrity.
* support discussions about the academic integrity of a submission.
* aid the detection of plagiarism where an individual student is suspected of plagiarism.

A secondary use of Turnitin, which has and continues to become increasingly popular, is for the Electronic Management of Assessment. Turnitin’s Grademark functionality supports online annotation, online marking, reusable comments, audio feedback and digital feedback.

These guidelines set out how Ulster staff use the service and include recommendations to support academic staff and students who use the service.

1. At Ulster University Turnitin is primarily used to encourage students to improve their academic practice.
2. Turnitin is integrated with Blackboard Learn and is available in all modules. Turnitin should be accessed through Blackboard Learn for single sign-on and ease of use.
3. It is acknowledged that there are specialised, subject specific, assignment types which Turnitin cannot check for originality; for example specialist binary file types, graphics, animations, video and non digital artefacts. Ulster staff will therefore apply judgement to decide if Turnitin is appropriate for individual assessments.
4. Ulster staff will be open and transparent when checking students’ work. If an originality report is to be generated and reviewed by the academic team, it will be clearly indicated in the Turnitin submission area and module handbook.
5. There may be occasions when it is necessary to generate a Turnitin originality report to assist in the identification of plagiarised work as part of a formal disciplinary process. In these circumstances, academic staff are permitted to submit papers on behalf of the students.
6. Turnitin is not a substitute for academic judgement on student submissions. Text matching indicated by Turnitin should be used as an indicator and a particular percentage value does not prove instances of plagiarism. The text matches identified in an Originality Report must be reviewed, and judgement applied, to determine:
   1. sources that can be excluded
   2. proper referencing and citation in accordance with University requirements
   3. common terminology in the discipline
   4. the nature of the submission
7. Turnitin will be made available to students, prior to final submission, permitting multiple submissions to check their assignments throughout their course of study. A separate Turnitin submission box (not submitted to the UK repository) should be available for this purpose.
8. Turnitin matches against its database material, this is not guaranteed to identify all instances of potentially plagiarised text.
9. All students should be advised that their work may be made available to third parties (such as Turnitin) for business workflows such as external examining, quality assurance and originality checking.
10. Academic staff should bulk download and back up submissions locally and once marked bulk download and back up any annotated submissions.
11. There may be occasions, beyond Ulster’s control, when Turnitin may be unavailable due to technical reasons. Downtime is rare and normally short in duration. As marking is often a time critical process, it is advised that local backups of your assignments are created for business continuity purposes.
12. If Turnitin is unavailable during submission deadlines, assignment extensions will be permitted until the service is restored. Turnitin settings should be amended to facilitate later submission or a separate submission box can be set up to accept late submissions.
13. The Office for Digital Learning will endeavour to communicate downtime through available channels – all student emails, Blackboard announcements and Twitter. Academic staff are encouraged to use module specific communication channels to notify students of the downtime.
14. If Turnitin is unavailable and you need an alternative submission method there are other options available:
    1. Blackboard Assignment tool
    2. Paper submission
    3. Email submission
15. If Turnitin is unavailable and you need to mark assignments offline, you have three options
    1. Use the iPad app – the Turnitin iPad app stores copies of assignments locally and allows you to mark offline. Marks and feedback will be transferred to Turnitin when the system is restored. You should sync assignments to the app as soon as the submission deadline has passed.
    2. If you have prepared in advance and downloaded all submissions locally you can
       1. mark assignments offline and record marks locally for transfer to Turnitin when service is restored. This process is manual and will be labour intensive.
       2. Use offline annotation tools such as Adobe Acrobat Reader, Word etc – again this process is manual and will be labour intensive.

1. http://www.ulster.ac.uk/academicservices/student/plagiarism.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)