



## SECRETARIAT

### ACADEMIC POLICY SUMMARY SHEET

<b>NAME OF ACADEMIC POLICY:</b>	Policy on Promoting Academic Integrity
<b>PURPOSE OF POLICY AND WHOM IT APPLIES TO:</b>	<p>The policy is aimed at all staff involved in designing assessments and supporting students in the production and submission of assessed work.</p> <p>Academic Board considered the policy on 19 March 2014 after the Education Committee endorsed the draft guidance on 30 October 2013.</p>
<b>RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ COMMITTEE WITH ROUTE OF APPROVAL:</b>	Education Committee
<b>LEAD STAFF MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS UPDATE:</b>	Learning & Teaching Co-ordinator, CERD
<b>PERSONS CONSULTED IN DEVELOPING POLICY:</b>	The draft guidance was approved by the Education Committee on 30 October 2013.
<b>POLICY FINALLY APPROVED BY:</b>	Academic Board on 19 March 2014
<b>DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:</b>	Operating from September 2014
<b>DETAIL OF DISSEMINATION:</b>	To relevant staff on 25 March 2014 and is available on the Secretariat's website.
<b>PROPOSED DATE OF REVIEW</b>	To be confirmed
<b>SECRETARIAT OFFICER – MAIN CONTACT:</b>	Officer to the Education Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	19 March 2014



## **Introduction**

The 2012 QAA Institutional review report recommended that the University should “Put in place plans for the accelerated roll-out of a system to address academic integrity issues in relation to student work...” This document was originally produced for Education Committee, aiming to provide guidance for staff on good practice in the prevention of plagiarism, and to promote more systematic use of text-matching software as part of wider adoption of electronic submission of work.

At its meeting on 30 October 2013, Education Committee approved the guidance document, and also recommended that the principles should be adopted as policy by Academic Board.

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## **Guidance**

There are three broad areas which contribute to a comprehensive plagiarism prevention policy:

- 1) Plagiarism prevention through the design of assessments
- 2) Training students in good academic practice
- 3) Effective use of text-matching software (Turnitin)

### **1) Designing out plagiarism**

There are number in ways in which plagiarism can be reduced, for example by:

- not re-using assignment titles
- creating personalised tasks
- integrating assessment tasks
- incorporating live assessments, such as viva voce exams and presentations

The following JISC guide, although slightly dated now, contains sound advice in this area, developed through a nationally funded programme of research

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/plagiarism/brookes.pdf>

### **2) Training students in good academic practice**

It is important to recognise that the term ‘plagiarism’ covers a broad spectrum, ranging from poor referencing and inadequate paraphrasing to overt cheating, for example through the use of professional writing services.

Students should be taught about academic integrity and plagiarism at an early stage of their programme. This is best delivered within the context of their discipline, although there is scope for a central resource as part of the Learning Development suite of materials, which can contribute to the broader development of academic and information literacies.

### **3) Effective use of text-matching software**

Text-matching software allows students' work to be analysed in order to identify sections of text which match electronic sources on the internet, in electronic publications, and in other students' work. As well as detecting plagiarism, its existence can also have a deterrent effect. Furthermore, it can be seen as a tool which will help students improve their writing, by increasing their awareness of how effectively they are incorporating external sources.

The dominant commercial software in this field is **Turnitin**, and for the sake of convenience the remainder of this guide will refer to Turnitin and its specific features. However, this should not preclude the possibility of alternative products being used in the future.

Turnitin is often described as 'plagiarism detection software'. This is not particularly helpful for two reasons. Firstly, it can create anxiety amongst students. Secondly, it creates a false impression that Turnitin can prove or disprove plagiarism

#### **The responsibility for identify plagiarism lies with the tutor – Turnitin is simply one tool that can assist in this process**

### **3.1 Limitations of Turnitin**

Turnitin will not detect plagiarism:

- Where the source material does not exist electronically
- If the source material is in a different language to the submitted work and has been translated either manually or by machine translation
- Where the work has been purposefully written by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party, such as an essay-writing service
- Where a student has systematically 'fine-tuned' an essay so that the plagiarism is undetectable by Turnitin (for example, by the use of an electronic thesaurus to automatically generate synonyms of key words)
- Where the plagiarised material is not in text form (e.g. images and mathematical equations)

In addition, Turnitin will only accept text-based assignments produced using standard word-processing packages. Therefore, submission through Turnitin will not be appropriate if:

- the assignment consists largely of images
- the file is in a format that cannot be read by the text-matching software (e.g. Excel Spreadsheets)
- the submitted work is over 20Mb in size
- the assignment involves the submission of more than one file (e.g. portfolio assessment)

### **3.2 Interpreting the similarity index and the originality report**

Turnitin provides a similarity index for each piece of work, which represents the percentage of the assignment that matches text in other sources. With the exception

of high scores of e.g. over 40%, which should always be investigated, the similarity index tells you very little. The figure that might be expected for an assignment can vary greatly depending on:

- The nature of the assignment
- The use by students on non-electronic source materials
- The options chosen when setting up the assignment (e.g. excluding the bibliography, excluding small matches)

Consequently, **staff should not identify or communicate to students an ideal, minimum or maximum score for the similarity index**, as this can lead to mechanistic behaviour or create anxiety amongst students whose index is higher or lower.

The similarity index becomes more meaningful when viewed alongside the originality report. This provides a breakdown of all the matches (with the largest listed first) and highlights the matching text in the student's work. A high similarity index may have an originality report showing a large number of small matches, each properly cited, whereas an assignment with a lower index may still have a significant section plagiarised from a single source.

Some of the identified matches will be with other students' work either at Lincoln or in other institutions. For data protection reasons, details of the original source are not displayed but can be requested via an automatically generated email to the relevant tutor. **This option should be used sparingly**, and only where there is evidence of substantial copying. Many small matches to students' work are coincidental, as both students have referenced the same source material (which may not be electronic). There are sophisticated ways to fine-tune the originality report by excluding certain sources and altering the original optional settings. **All staff should receive full training and support in the use of Turnitin.**

### 3.3 Developing School-based policy and practice

Each school should develop policy to ensure the effective and consistent use of Turnitin, in a way which is appropriate to the discipline. There are a large number of optional settings when creating a Turnitin assignment submission, and inconsistency can create confusion. In particular the following questions need to be considered:

- are students allowed to view their originality report?
- if so, is this immediately, or only on the due date?
- are students able to resubmit<sup>1</sup> after viewing their originality report?  
**Note:** the recommendation is that students should be able to view their report and have at least one further opportunity to submit.
- which options are chosen (excluding bibliographies, quotations, small matches. These can be retrospectively amended for individual reports, but the options chosen can have a significant impact on the similarity index)?
- will Turnitin be used simply for submission, or also for grading and feedback?

Each school should incorporate formative use of Turnitin at appropriate points in each programme, as part of their strategy to promote academic integrity.

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<sup>1</sup> Turnitin uses the term 'resubmit' to mean an additional opportunity to submit work **prior** to marking and before the due date. This should NOT be confused with the process of resubmission of work **following** marking

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**Summary of recommendations:**

- All appropriate text-based assignments should be submitted electronically via the VLE and incorporate the use of text-matching software (Turnitin).
- Turnitin should be presented to students as a tool to help them improve their writing, as well as a deterrent from some forms of plagiarism.
- Responsibility for identifying plagiarism always lies with the tutor. Allegations of misconduct should never be made solely on the basis of a 'similarity index' score.
- Students should receive training and support in the principles of academic integrity, and in interpreting an originality report. This should be provided within the context of the discipline, with centrally provided resources also available as part of the library's suite of learning development materials.
- Staff should not communicate to students an ideal, minimum, or maximum score for the similarity index.
- Each school should develop a plagiarism prevention policy, which includes a description of how Turnitin is to be used.
- Students should be able to view their originality report and have at least one further opportunity to submit.

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**January 2014**