

Code of practice for effective use of TurnitinUK

This code of practice has been developed by a working group of the University LTA Committee in 2011 and covers the Purposes, Principles and Processes for use of TurnitinUK.

Definition

1. TurnitinUK is a text-matching software that facilitates the identification in the submitted work of matching text in a database of professional publications, student essays, reports and other work.

Purpose of Using TurnitinUK

2. To obtain an Originality Report based on text-matching.
3. To use the Originality Report to detect and provide evidence of plagiarism, including student collusion.
4. As a tool, amongst others, for students to develop both their academic writing skills and their understanding of plagiarism.

Principles of Effective Use of TurnitinUK

5. Staff and students should be aware that TurnitinUK is not the sole way of detecting plagiarism or of raising issues regarding a student's submitted work.
6. To be effective, use of TurnitinUK needs to be embedded in programmes/modules alongside other tools and activities to develop academic literacy skills.
7. Staff and students should be supported through provision of support material, training and mentoring.
8. For any given assignment, staff and students should be clear on both the purpose and the implications of use of TurnitinUK.

Process for Use of TurnitinUK

9. It is important that staff who use TurnitinUK undertake appropriate staff development training, and exchange good practice, and appropriate resources are also available to them.
10. The purpose of using TurnitinUK in a module should be clear and unambiguous to the staff teaching on the module and to students, i.e. is it being used as a tool to develop academic writing and/or a tool to detect plagiarism.
11. When using TurnitinUK as a tool for developing good academic practice, consideration should be given to enabling one or multiple draft submissions, provision of student guidance on interpretation of originality reports, provision of additional support/teaching in correct citation, paraphrasing, summarising, critically reviewing, etc. Use of TurnitinUK cannot be considered as a substitute for teaching academic writing.
12. It is possible, by extracting text, to use TurnitinUK for evaluation of coursework prepared using Powerpoint or prepared in external web spaces such as wikis and blogs, for example. TurnitinUK is of limited value, however, for features such as graphics, software coding and formulae. Consideration therefore should be given to the value of submitting a particular type of coursework to TurnitinUK.
13. Originality Reports require careful interpretation. Since the overall similarity index (and accompanying % match) does not provide an assessment of whether the paper has been plagiarised or not, staff and student guidance on interpretation of the originality report should be provided.

14. Consideration should be given as to whether the TurnitinUK submission is the only mechanism used for coursework submission or whether a paper copy is also required, for example. In making this decision, some thought should be given to which submission is used to determine meeting the submission deadline, how are marks and feedback being returned to students.
15. Clear instructions should be provided to students via the Moodle site including the location of the TurnitinUK submission box, the submission deadlines, when they can expect to see the originality report, whether they can submit multiple/single draft prior to final submission.
16. Assessment briefs should contain clear instructions regarding submission.
17. Consideration should be given to anonymous marking – whether to use the anonymous marking function within TurnitinUK and provide marks through GradeMark, or use submitted paper copy of the assignment for marking.
18. If TurnitinUK is used in several modules in a programme of study, the development of a policy for use should be considered to ensure clarity of purpose of use and consistency across a programme.
19. Staff and students should be aware that TurnitinUK and the Originality Report generated do not represent the only method of detecting plagiarism nor the only evidence that can be provided and used by the Academic Conduct Officer.
20. Staff and students should be aware that the material submitted to TurnitinUK will be retained in their databases indefinitely. While the student's identity will not be revealed to others, any concerns surrounding reflective commentary and personal viewpoints in particular should be considered carefully.