Aston University Turnitin guidance

Turnitin (Tii) is a complementary tool that supports, not replaces existing robust assessment and misconduct procedures. Staff should be made aware of the comparative weaknesses with all text matching algorithms and scope of services covered/indexed[1]. The 2010 report by Dr Jo Badge underpins previous research[2] that a text matching tool should form one part of a holistic approach to deterring plagiarism and collusion[3].

Using the tool with students as a teaching aid, under supervised conditions is regarded as effective practice, and reinforces existing scholarly practice across all disciplines. By involving students closely with the entire process of submitting and interpreting originality reports also ensures that they develop autonomous learning strategies. Research at Aston[4] and wider indicates that those who are most at risk receive the greatest benefit from this supportive and formative approach of using Tii. Closely supported formative use of Tii ensures that students are less likely to misinterpret results by learning the nuances of paraphrasing, citation, and referencing, as opposed to focussing on how to "beat the system" (e.g. achieve a zero %) - if left unsupervised.

Typically, the Tii similarity index is a composite number comprising of many smaller matches. Misinterpretation of this composite number can also reinforce the spurious "false positive" result. It is advised against using the similarity index in isolation, to indicate severity of misconduct. Given these typical system anomalies, all staff concerned should be trained in interpreting the similarity index. Adherence to existing penalty tariffs[5] will also ensure consistency of practice across Schools or Programmes.

Creating and distributing a School specific training guide that addresses the nuances of the software and reinforces agreed policies is advised. LSS use this approach to reinforce targeted training sessions for both staff and students. CLIPP have collated and created Tii guidance notes (CLIPP Blackboard module) and also provide training through regular workshops.

Tii was not designed as an e-submission tool, and therefore does not easily accommodate typical HE administration systems, without a great deal of process adaption. Anonymous marking can cause particular administration problems if using Tii in parallel with existing paper based systems. If using Tii in parallel with existing assessment procedures, Schools need to consider methods and policies to track non submission of scripts, and the matching of paper and electronic scripts.

Using Tii via the Blackboard-bridge is the recommended method of use, due to its tight integration (module cohorts) and relative ease of use for staff. Centralised support and archiving methods ensures that Blackboard is recommended as a robust e-submission tool. For large scale use, all digital scripts can be gathered using Blackboard, and then suspected plagiarism is subsequently processed using Tii, following usual marking procedures (see schematic overleaf). The use of Tii with small cohorts varies widely across Aston, as those tutors are more in control of managing innovative and more flexible approaches.

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1. http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/documents/conference2010/papers/4IPC_0023_final.pdf
2. http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/resources/good-practice-guide
3. http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/academicintegrity/SupportingAcademicIntegrity.pdf
4. http://www1.aston.ac.uk/clipp/projects/
5. http://www1.aston.ac.uk/registry/for-staff/regsandpolicies/references-for-students-and-staff/

Aston University

Recommended parallel process for large scale use of Tii

Digital trail
(recommended)

Paper trail
(typical)

NOTE: this process can run in parallel or as a stand-alone digital process

Assignment set date

Configure BB Assignment tool to accept digital submissions.

Announce "hand in" criteria

Assignment due date

Close BB Assignment tool

Archived centrally.

Close assignment "hatch"

Online marking and feedback*

Assess scripts using existing procedures

Check a sample set of every cohort for plagiarism and collusion*

Plagiarism or collusion suspected?

Set up Tii Assignment via BB course. Retrieve digital assignment from BB. Re-check suspect scripts using Tii.

Note: Tii submissions are stored externally

Yes

No

Yes

Informal hearing

No

Confirmation of plagiarism or collusion?

Yes

Academic misconduct

No

Remedial work /re-grade?

Yes

Assignment post date [provisional grade]

Enter marks into SITS

*Denotes feasible parallel processes