

Academic Council Policy

Use of Anti-Plagiarism Software

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Description:

Approvals:

Approved by Academic Standards Committee: March 16 2005

Approved by Academic Council:

Date Effective: September 2005

Approval Authority: Academic Council

Signature:

Rationale

Plagiarism has recently become a serious concern at OCAD, as it has at universities across the continent, largely as a consequence of the proliferation of web-based research and full-text databases. In an effort to provide faculty with an additional means of encouraging academic integrity among students, the Faculty of Liberal Studies decided to subscribe to Turnitin.com on a pilot basis commencing September 2004.

A growing number of universities make use of Turnitin.com, to the extent that its database now houses the most extensive collection of source files for student essays, making it the most effective tool for faculty to track undocumented material in student assignments. However this tool is itself undeniably also a source of concern, raising questions about the violation of student intellectual property (IP) rights questions, among other things.

Turnitin.com is an Internet-based service created at the University California, Berkeley by a Professor and a graduate student. Fundamentally what it does is to scan submitted works for similarity to material that may have been copied from public web-sites, academic journals, papers purchased from an essay mill, etc., and essays and assignments concurrently or previously submitted to Turnitin, which are stored in its extensive and growing database. The determination of a potential breach of academic honesty and the decision to proceed with a charge is made entirely by the professor of the course.

- When used as suggested, that is students voluntarily submit their work directly to Turnitin, the process does not breach the IP rights of students.
- The service does not breach confidentiality. Through the privacy pledge of Turnitin.com, the student's personal information and uploaded papers will not be released without the student's permission.
- It does not determine whether or not a charge of plagiarism should be laid; that is determined solely by the professor/instructor.

The experience of the Faculty of Liberal Studies during its pilot use of Turnitin.com was very positive: the number of cases of plagiarism was significantly reduced, the overwhelming majority of students used the Turnitin.com system without complaint, and the faculty using the system agreed that Turnitin.com had served both as an excellent deterrent to plagiarism and also a useful pedagogical tool for helping students understand the standards of documentation. Based on this experience and the belief that the benefits of using Turnitin.com significantly outweigh the concerns, the following policy is recommended on a further one-year trial basis:

Policy:

1. All Liberal Studies courses shall require that written assignments be submitted electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy to the instructor, with the exception of those situations noted in 4 and 5 below. Written assignments include all research papers and may include personal statements, critiques, or group projects, at the discretion of the instructor.
2. Courses in other Faculties may make use of Turnitin.com at the discretion of the instructor.
3. Students must be informed in writing at the outset of the course, i.e., in the course outline, that the instructor will be using Turnitin.com. The course outline should contain a statement such as the following:

A print-copy of your essay must be submitted by (date). You must also submit an electronic version of your paper to Turnitin.com, otherwise your paper will not be marked and you will receive a zero for that assignment. Instruction about how to make submissions to Turnitin.com will be provided by the course Instructor. If you are uncertain about the proper citation and documentation of secondary literature, or about the definition of plagiarism, please contact the Library or the Writing & Learning Centre for assistance.

4. Turnitin.com is most effective when it is used by all students in a particular course. However, if and when students object to its use on principle, they must be offered a reasonable offline alternative. Students desiring an offline alternative must provide a written request to their instructor at the outset of the course, stating clearly their objections to Turnitin.com. This information should also be provided in the course outline.
5. Faculty members who object on principle to using Turnitin.com in their courses should meet with their Dean to discuss off-line options.
6. This policy will be subject to a one-year trial period and reviewed toward the end of that period (by April/ May of 2006).

Implementation

1. Information and training must be provided for all faculty and students:
 - Hold faculty workshops and discussion sessions organized by the Faculty of Liberal Studies Office in consultation with the Writing & Learning Centre, starting in August 2005. In addition to training regarding Turnitin.com, these workshops should include cross-cultural training regarding the use of secondary sources in research papers and offer faculty ideas and resources for helping students.
 - Develop a webpage for students detailing the College's policy regarding Anti-Plagiarism software and providing answers to FAQs (the Faculty of Liberal Studies Office, LS

- Academic Standards and Policy Committee, and the WLC will work jointly on this for going live by August 1, 2005).
- Place Tips for Faculty Use of Turnitin.com on the Faculty Web page homepage as well as link to Turnitin.com.
 - Request Myocad to include Information for Students about Turnitin.com and/or a direct link to the information webpage described above.
2. Ongoing support for students who for cultural or other reasons do not understand the rationale let alone the strategies for using proper citations in research papers will be provided through WLC workshops and in-class options in conjunction with the WLC.
 3. The Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Studies should provide semesterly updates to the Academic Standards Committee regarding faculty and student feedback on the use of Turnitin.com.