

# Online assessment handling and use of Turnitin Policy and Procedure

## Purpose

This document sets out the policy requirements, expectations and operational procedures in support of online assessment handling and the use of the Turnitin text matching service.

The University has a subscription agreement with Turnitin, provided in the UK by Turnitin UK Ltd. Turnitin is a web-based software which enables text-based work to be submitted for assessment and also checked for matching text against webpages, e-journals and previously submitted work.

Turnitin is used:

- To check work submitted for summative assessment, potentially assisting the investigation of suspected cases of academic misconduct
- For postgraduate research students, to check reports submitted for the annual monitoring and transfer processes as well as the final thesis submission.
- As a learning tool supporting the development of learners' understanding of good academic practice.

The University uses Turnitin for the electronic management of assessment, enabling students to submit work electronically, and for it to be marked and moderated by staff.

## Policy

- 1.1 The University requires that written coursework assessments be set up, submitted, marked and moderated electronically, through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), using Turnitin. Marks and feedback should be provided back to learners in the same way. Turnitin is web-based software which enables text-based work to be submitted for assessment and also checked for matching text against webpages, e-journals and previously submitted work.
- 1.2 This requirement covers all assessed work that is text-based and word-processed. This therefore excludes other work, as outlined below (this is not an exhaustive list):
  - Laboratory experiments
  - Written examinations
  - Practical examinations
  - Oral presentations
- 1.3 Exceptionally if online submission is not possible for the assessment type or is not consistent with the fair assessment of the work (Defined as non-standard submission) alternative arrangements (in the form of another type of online assessment) may be implemented following discussion with Learning Technology, and approval by the Head of Learning and Teaching.
- 1.4 Any non-standard submissions should be identified when assessment structured are published at the start of the semester. It is the responsibility of the unit leader (with Course Leader oversight) for recognising non-standard submission is required.
- 1.5 In these cases, clear guidance must be provided to learners about the submission and feedback process, normally through the assessment brief.

- 1.6 Technical guidance and training materials are available for both staff and learners to support this process.
- 1.7 Access is granted as per the VLE management policy and staff must not make any unauthorised changes to submissions OR turnitin settings/non-standard submission tool settings without consulting Registry (Turnitin submission) or Learning Technology (non-standard submission).
- 1.8 Turnitin can also be used to support learners in understanding academic integrity and academic conventions, through formative use. It can also be used more formally as part of the process for detecting whether an academic offence may have occurred. The use of Turnitin comes with a responsibility to help learners with their understanding of the tool itself and how to use it to avoid unintentional plagiarism.

## 2. Electronic submission

- 2.1a Registry staff set up Turnitin submission points in the VLE for each submission (including arrangements for late and extended submissions). These must contain relevant information for learners, including the date when the submission is due.
- 2.1b Learning Technology set up non-standard submission points in the VLE for each submission (including arrangements for late and extended submissions). These must contain relevant information for learners, including the date when the submission is due
- 2.2 Submission boxes must be set up in accordance with the technical guidance provided.
- 2.3 The originality declaration will be included on the submission page. By submitting online, learners are automatically confirming the work submitted is their own. Submitting another learner's work on their behalf, (or asking another learner to do so) is not permitted and will be regarded as academic misconduct.
- 2.4 Learners must be provided with information about the required file type in which to make a submission (doc, .docx, .ppt, .pptx, .pdf) and the maximum file size for the submission (100-megabyte maximum). This information must be in the assessment brief.
- 2.5 Submission via Turnitin are subject to the Policy on word limits for students' written work.
- 2.6 Submission deadlines should be Monday-Friday, excluding Bank holidays.
- 2.7 The deadline for submission must be 12.00 noon in all cases (whether the United Kingdom is using GMT or BST). International learners submitting off-campus should ensure that they check time-zones before submitting. Failure to do so, and therefore submitting late, will not be regarded as grounds for exceptional circumstances or for academic appeal.

### Learners' responsibilities

- 2.8 Learners who do not wish (including on behalf of other group members if relevant) for the University to use, copy or reproduce their work (or any part of it) in any media, for the purposes of teaching other University learners, must **opt out** by pasting the text provided on the Turnitin submission page at the top of their work. Learners are under no obligation to allow their work to be used in this way and not doing so will have no effect on the marking of their assessment.
- 2.9 It is a learner's responsibility to:
  - (i) Make sure that they have read and understood the guidance on how to submit, and that they will be able to submit correctly from the computer they will use. Further advice is available from the homepage within the VLE. Failure to understand or follow the instructions will not be regarded as grounds for exceptional personal circumstances or academic appeal.
  - (ii) Allow sufficient time before the deadline to complete the submission correctly, taking account of internet connectivity and broadband speeds. Turnitin can use a lot of internet bandwidth and a good internet connection is required or timeouts can occur.

Where possible, to avoid these issues, learners are recommended to submit work from on campus. Learners should avoid completing online submissions from smart devices.

Learners are strongly advised to submit their work well in advance of the deadline time; any discrepancy in the learner's computer clock or slower than anticipated upload time may result in the submission being late. The date and time of submission is taken from the Turnitin server and is recorded when the submission is complete, not when the learner begins the submission. The official time of submission is the time given on the electronic receipt.

For further information on the University policy on penalties for late submission please refer to the Assessment Regulations for all Higher Education Courses.

- (iii) Ensure their browser is compatible with the VLE (Moodle) and Turnitin – learners should check the recommended browser requirements guidance on the submission tab before submission
- (iv) Ensure that files are submitted according to any specifications outlined in the relevant assessment brief and the technical guidance associated with this policy. This may include, but is not limited to:
  - file types such as Microsoft Word documents .doc or .docx, Rich text format .rtf, PowerPoint .ppt or .pptx, Portable Document Format .pdf
  - file size (no more than 100 megabytes)
- (v) Ensure there is no personal (e.g. patient or client) or other confidential information embedded within the files

In accordance with the Additional Learning Support (ALS) requirements in assessments policy and procedures, Learners who have an additional learning needs assessment which states 'ALS Marking Guidelines' must be used, should include the term 'ALS Marking Guidelines' in the header of their document. **If eligible learners do not do this, their work will be marked using the standard guidelines. For avoidance of doubt, learners who are ineligible for ALS should not add this term to their work; if they do, they may be subject to Student Disciplinary proceedings.**

- (vi) Ensure they check their word count in line with the policy on word limits for learners' written work and type the word count at the top of in their submission.
- (vii) Check, during the submission process, that the correct file has been selected. This can also be checked on the submission receipt. Failed submission attempts, or partial completion of the electronic process by the deadline will not be considered as 'submitted'. It is the learner's responsibility to check and resolve any corruption in transit (contact via <https://ithelpdesk.aecc.ac.uk> quoting the unit of the assignment and submission title, submission ID given on the Turnitin digital receipt).
- (viii) Keep a copy/back up of their own work. This should include copies of notes and drafts, not only the final submission.
- (ix) Check their University email account regularly before the deadline submission. In the event of any technical failure on the University or Turnitin systems, information will be communicated via learners' University email addresses.

2.10 It is the learners responsibility to submit an electronic file that complies with the published instructions students will be counselled (1<sup>st</sup> offence) on the need to submit the accurate file, future failings will be considered as part of the overall mark awarded typically within the marks allocated to formatting, presentation etc.

2.11 If the file has become corrupted in transit, and the work cannot be assessed as a result (e.g. the file type cannot be opened and read, or a blank document is submitted), the student will be given the opportunity to provide an alternate version of the work after deadline recognises that a submission has been made by the deadline but cannot be assessed.

2.12 Turnitin automatically generates a digital receipt once a submission is made. This includes date and time of submission, word count, character count, file size, indicates file type and name of file submitted. Learners should **download a copy of this receipt and retain it for future reference**. If

the receipt is not generated it is their responsibility to check their submission and raise any problems via <https://ithelpdesk.aecc.ac.uk> immediately.

- 2.13 Only the Turnitin digital receipt will be accepted as evidence of a successful electronic submission
- 2.14 Learners are expected to check their work to ensure it is complete and ready for submission and are therefore encouraged to submit work once only. If a learner chooses to submit another copy, it is only the final submission that will be considered for assessment by staff. All other earlier submissions will be discarded from the marking process. When making another submission learners should also download an updated digital receipt.

### **Exceptional personal circumstances**

- 2.15 The only grounds for consideration of learner exceptional personal circumstances regarding the online submission process is evidence of Turnitin server failure or University IT system failure. Online connection speed or other IT issues, or failure to understand or follow the instructions for submission (including file type and size) will not be regarded as grounds for exceptional personal circumstances or academic appeal.

### **3. System faults and failures**

- 3.1 A fault, or a problem with the University VLE, with Turnitin external hosting University may impact on submission of online assessments. Faults may be identified by learners or staff who should report them to the IT Helpdesk as soon as possible (<https://ithelpdesk.aecc.ac.uk>). The problem will then be investigated, and the impact assessed.
- 3.2 In such instances, IT will communicate to learners and staff if the fault is with the VLE or other University maintained network facilities. Where the fault is with Turnitin this will be confirmed to learners and staff by Learning Technology.
- 3.3 In the event there is a verified systems outage one and a half hours before a submission deadline the deadline for all affected summative assessments, will be extended by 24 hours from the original deadline. Late submission penalties will not apply between the original and revised submission dates.
- 3.4 Major outage: In the event of a major outage lasting more than 24 hours from the original deadline, alternative arrangements will be put in place for learners to submit work. Instructions will be sent directly to affected learners and staff by e-mail by Registry. This will include details of the revised deadline for submission. Late submission penalties will not apply between the original and revised submission dates.
- 3.5 In all circumstances outlined in paras 3.3 – 3.4 above, assessed work submitted after the extended deadline will incur the standard late penalty policy from the amended deadline.
- 3.6 The deadline to return marking and feedback will be extended in line with all revised times of submission.

### **4. Marking and moderation**

- 4.1 Marking and moderation should be undertaken in line with the Marking and Moderating Policy. For work submitted electronically the processes of marking and moderation must be undertaken electronically within Turnitin through the VLE. Information on how to undertake these processes within the VLE is available in the technical guidance associated with this policy.

### **5. Return of marks and feedback to learners**

- 5.1 Feedback on assessment must be provided for learners in accordance with the principles and timescales set out in the Feedback on Assessment Policy.
- 5.2 Marks and feedback for work that is submitted electronically must be provided to learners electronically within Turnitin through the VLE. Turnitin Feedback Studio should be used for feedback.

As a minimum a mark and summary of feedback must be returned to learners, but staff have freedom to use in-line comments, quick marks, rubrics, forms and audio feedback in addition. Information on how to provide and return feedback and marks using Feedback Studio is available in the technical guidance available to staff via Moodle

- 5.3 The release of unconfirmed marks and feedback is the responsibility of Registry. Marks remain provisional until ratified by the Assessment Board and are therefore subject to change until that point. Marks will be confirmed following the official publication of results.
- 5.4 When a piece of work is being investigated under the Academic Misconduct Policy, the student's mark will not be released until that process has concluded.
- 5.5 Management of the transfer of marks from the VLE to the student records system is the responsibility of Registry.
- 5.6 Management of confirmed marks following ratification by the Assessment Board is the responsibility of Registry staff.

## 6. Use of Turnitin

### Student data and Turnitin

- 6.1 Turnitin holds the name and email address of anyone (learner or staff) who makes use of the system. Turnitin's Privacy Pledge and Privacy policy<sup>1</sup> confirms that this information will not be passed to external institutions or individuals except for the purpose of running the service. For instance, Turnitin will send the details of one user to another where a request to view a matched paper has been submitted
- 6.2 The majority of work submitted to Turnitin is stored in its repository, against which future submissions are checked. This enables lecturers to identify where text matches occur between their learners' submissions and previously submitted work both within and outside of the institution. This also means that work submitted by AECC University learners is held indefinitely by an external organisation
- 6.3 Copyright and intellectual property rights are retained by the original owner. This is usually the learner submitting the work.

### Opting out

- 6.4 It is not possible for learners to opt out of submitting and having their work checked through Turnitin.
- 6.5 Learners may however request that their file is subsequently deleted from the repository on certain grounds. Valid grounds for a request for deletion include, but are not limited to:
  - An incorrect file was uploaded
  - The work contains commercially and/or clinically sensitive contentA concern about intellectual property is not a valid reason to request that work is deleted – the copy in Turnitin does not alter the ownership of the original work.
- 6.6 Learners should submit requests via e-mail, outlining the reason they believe the work should be removed, to [learningtechnology@aecc.ac.uk](mailto:learningtechnology@aecc.ac.uk)
- 6.7 Learning Technology should consult the Data Protection Officer ([DPO@aecc.ac.uk](mailto:DPO@aecc.ac.uk)) and the Unit Leader as required, in making decisions on such requests.
- 6.8 If granted, work will be removed from the repository by the Learning Technologist.

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<sup>1</sup> [Privacy and Security \(turnitin.com\)](https://help.turnitin.com/Privacy_and_Security/Privacy_and_Security.htm#:~:text=Privacy%20Pledge%20Integrity%20is%20at%20the%20heart%20of,how%20we%20protect%20any%20personal%20data%20you%20provide.)

[https://help.turnitin.com/Privacy\\_and\\_Security/Privacy\\_and\\_Security.htm#:~:text=Privacy%20Pledge%20Integrity%20is%20at%20the%20heart%20of,how%20we%20protect%20any%20personal%20data%20you%20provide.](https://help.turnitin.com/Privacy_and_Security/Privacy_and_Security.htm#:~:text=Privacy%20Pledge%20Integrity%20is%20at%20the%20heart%20of,how%20we%20protect%20any%20personal%20data%20you%20provide.)

- 6.9 Should a learner fail an assessment due to a breach of confidentiality (for example because the work includes patient or client data which has not been anonymised) the Course Leader must advise Learning Technology to remove the relevant piece of failed work from the Turnitin repository.

## 7. Turnitin and academic integrity

- 7.1 For each piece of submitted work Turnitin provides a similarity index, which indicates the percentage of the submitted paper that Turnitin has identified as matching other sources; and an originality report, which shows each of these matches in more detail, including the source(s) that Turnitin has found.
- 7.2 Turnitin only highlights matched text; it does not detect plagiarism and it should not be described as a 'plagiarism detection tool'. A marker may interpret a Turnitin originality report to help but Turnitin itself does not make this judgement. Reports show the amount of matched text that Turnitin has found by highlighting the matched text in a learner's work and identifying sources for the matched text. This will include correctly referenced and quoted text. The role of markers in identifying potential plagiarism as they read learner work is therefore unchanged, and only academic staff will make a judgement on whether plagiarism may have occurred in a piece of work, as a matter of academic judgement.
- 7.3 For this reason the institution does not set a percentage score for the similarity index above which work should be investigated for potential plagiarism. A low Similarity Index does not necessarily mean there is no plagiarised text. Further guidance on the interpretation of Turnitin originality reports is available in the technical guidance associated with this policy.
- 7.4 Where plagiarism is suspected the University's **Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policy** must be followed.

## 8. Learners' use of Turnitin

- 8.1 Learners are encouraged to use the 'try it out' system available within the VLE under Tools for Learners both to practice making an electronic submission and as a learning tool to help them develop their academic writing skills and academic integrity. Learners will only view a Similarity report for their draft submissions in the Try it Out section within the VLE. A Similarity report is generated for all online submissions where Turnitin is enabled in the units within the VLE. These reports are available to the Teaching Team only.
- 8.2 During the implementation year there is no limit to the number of occasions a learner may submit through the 'try it out' system or receive an originality report. This allows learners the opportunity to practice and improve their academic writing and referencing skills

## 9. Requests for assignments from Turnitin's Repository

- 9.1 When using Turnitin, a marker may find that an originality report identifies matches with text in another learner's work. Markers may request sight of a full copy of the matched work, both from within the University and from external sources.
- 9.2 Similarly, the University may receive requests from other institutions to release a full copy of the matched work.
- 9.3 All such requests will be managed by Learning Technology, in discussion with the relevant Unit leader as required.
- 9.4 There is no obligation to share pieces of work. However, the normal expectation is that as an institution we would agree to such requests, as part of our commitment to ensuring academic integrity and academic standards across the higher education sector.
- 9.5 Considerations about whether to share the assignment may include:
- The size of the percentage match – it may not be appropriate to provide an assessment if the percentage match is small.

- The nature of the matching text. A matching bibliography or sourced material in appendices will probably provide little useful information.
- The nature of the assignment. Assignments that could contain personal information about the learner, sensitive information (for example the results of a focus group, material relating to children / medical information etc), may not be appropriate for sharing or may need to be redacted before sharing.

## 10. Retention of work

- 10.1 In support of academic integrity across the higher education sector work will be retained in the Turnitin central stored repository in perpetuity, unless a learner request for removal of the work is agreed (see paras 6.4-6.9). Work will be retained in the institutional submission repository within Turnitin in line with the institutional retention schedule.

Version:	2.2
Approved by:	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Assistant Registrar (Quality Assurance)
Owner	Head of Learning and Teaching
Reference source	Examples from other institutions used as source material
Date approved	30 July 2024
Effective from	August 2024
Review date	2024/25
Target	All academic staff, all students and apprentices, Registry, Library and Learning Services and IT staff
Policy location	INTERNAL
Equality analysis	No direct impact, reasonable adjustments can be made to these arrangements if required