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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**Code of Practice for the use of similarity detection software on electronic submission
of text based coursework with effect from 1 August 2017**

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*This Code brings together and updates recommendations initially agreed considered by the
Learning and Teaching Board in 2010 and 2011 following the introduction of the Blackboard
VLE in 2009. The updates reflect changes in practice arising from the Digital Strategy for
Taught Student Education and the institutional move towards electronic submission of
coursework (TSEB/14-82) by the start of the 2016-2017 session, and developments in good
practice standards in use of similarity detection software to support academic integrity.*

1. Electronic submission and collection of assignments

Where Schools require students to submit specific pieces of work electronically:
a) Schools should have in place a transparent system for the receipt and anonymisation of
    electronically submitted student work comparable to that used for hard copy submission
    where reasonably possible[1].
b) Schools can require students to submit a hard copy of their assignment (i.e. in addition to
    the 'electronic' copy). Where both forms of submission are required Schools should be
    clear about any penalties for lack of consistency in either submission date or content.
c) One copy of student work, however submitted, should be retained in line with relevant
    University guidelines, e.g. for consideration by external examiners
d) Copies of student work submitted and marked electronically must be kept for the same
    length of time as work submitted and marked in hard copy.
e) Student work retained electronically, must be kept on a University-supported system for
    security and backup.

As a minimum, students are required to submit work electronically using the Turnitin
software for at least one text based assignment per student each semester for the duration
of their programme.

2. Anonymising work for marking

The Learning Technologies Team recommend best practice settings for use of Turnitin[2]. The
recommended settings for set-up will mean that anonymous marking is enabled, and the authors'
names in the Turnitin Assignments inbox are not visible.

3. Use of Turnitin

The use of Turnitin provides three main benefits: a) publicising the fact that it is used is a
clear deterrent to those who might plagiarise, b) it enables evidence to be gathered to feed
into the academic judgement of whether plagiarism has taken place, and c) it helps a school
to get an insight into how wide scale plagiarism is.

The process: a member of staff creates a "Turnitin Assignment" in Minerva for the collection
and checking of student work. Students (or staff) submit assignments electronically. Turnitin
processes the assignments and produces an "Originality Report". The report compares the
student's paper to web pages, online journals and its own database of work that has already
been submitted and highlights content that is matches material elsewhere (with links to that
content where possible). A percentage mark of non-original text is given – the similarity

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[1] Where a paper has been successfully submitted to the Minerva through Turnitin a student will receive an email confirmation
receipt http://www.leeds.ac.uk/vle/students/assess/turnitin/.

[2] http://www.leeds.ac.uk/vle/staff/assess/turnitin/setup/index.htm

index. The matched text may be correctly quoted and referenced, poor academic writing or plagiarised. It is an academic decision to decide whether the originality report indicates potential plagiarism.

4. Student Guidance

As part of a supervised teaching session, students should be allowed to see an originality report based either on a model assessment or a draft of their work and perhaps resubmit as a learning exercise early during their academic career and before marks count towards degree classification. At level 2 and above, students should not be provided with their originality reports. Schools should run a similar exercise with anyone who is new to study at the University (e.g. new taught postgraduate students who may not have been made aware of Turnitin at undergraduate level, study abroad students, and online distance learning students).

5. Checking of originality reports

There should be checking of all originality reports for work submitted electronically through Turnitin for plagiarism by all students on all modules, regardless of percentage match indicated by the similarity index.

The Module leader is responsible for checking of originality reports. It is at the School discretion whether the marker checks the reports. Checking might be assigned to an intern or Teaching Assistant to perform given adequate training and supervision. Administrative staff might undertake basic checking and pass any suspect cases to an academic for further consideration. Schools are required to write local guidance in the context of their discipline to be drafted by the Academic Integrity Lead.

It is at the School discretion when originality reports are checked, and whether before or after the marking is undertaken. Originality reports must be checked before the exam board. Where plagiarism is suspected following consideration of an originality report, it shall be for the School to determine, whether or not the assessment will be marked.

Any marks published by a School prior to checking of originality reports must be on a provisional basis.

School arrangements for checking of originality reports shall be published as part of the School Code of Practice on Assessment.

6. Wider considerations of plagiarism

Consideration of plagiarism should not rely entirely on the use of Turnitin. Irrespective of whether Turnitin is being used, where, in marking a piece of work, a marker has a suspicion of plagiarism that piece of work should be submitted to Turnitin and the Originality Report should only be used to inform the consideration of whether or not plagiarism has taken place.

Document Control	
Document Title: Code of Practice for use of similarity detection software on electronic submission of text based coursework	Document Owner: Secretariat
Version Number: 2	Date of Version : 16 May 2018