



Policy on the use of text-matching services.

Documentation Management

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Policy on the use of text-matching services

Text-matching tools have generated much interest and are routinely used in many institutions with the aim of 'detecting plagiarism' and sometimes additionally of 'educating students in good academic writing'.

Plagiarism is generally defined as the unacknowledged use of the ideas, structuring of ideas, distinct expression of ideas of another person (unless these ideas, structuring of ideas or distinct expression of ideas are common knowledge).

The following precepts and policy on the use of text-matching services, by staff and students was approved by the then Quality Assurance Committee on 18 June 2015.

Precepts:

1. Text-matching tools do not in any way provide an assessment of whether plagiarism has occurred.
2. Nevertheless, tools can assist in the detection of plagiarism.
3. Some text –matching tools have very large database of previously submitted documents, is useful in identifying similarities to previously submitted student assignments/projects/dissertations not accessible via web searches.
4. Text-matchin tools are restricted in their usefulness in assisting plagiarism detection in that only text is matched; other representations of ideas such as diagrams, illustrations, equations, music, video, etc. are not addressed.
5. Text-matching tools cannot identify work produced through 'contract cheating' unless the work has already been sold to someone else and submitted to Turnitin.
6. Students' use of text-matching tools cannot improve their academic writing skills; however, it can clearly reduce the occurrence of detection by the tool.
7. If students have direct access to submit their work to, and receive "originality reports" from, a text-matching tool, a dishonest student could be greatly aided in hiding their dishonesty by using a text-matching tool.
8. A student version of some text-matching tools are accessible by anyone such that a determined plagiarist can check/ensure, prior to submission, that their use of others' work may not be detected by text-matching tools
9. Use of text-matching tools are not endorsed by the University.

Policy:

1. No student shall be provided with direct access to a text-matching tool by the University.
2. Staff may use text-matching tools for identification of text similarities, by submitting either all pieces of work for an assessment or, where they have suspicions of possible plagiarism, by submitting individual pieces of student work.
3. Staff should ensure that text-matching tool “originality reports” are used cautiously, recognising the limitations of the tool as discussed in the precepts.
4. Staff should be aware that the availability of student versions of such tools means that a student may have rendered the tools ineffective.