

Abstract 5A

Marking Level 1 and Level 2 Essays via Turnitin on an Industrial Scale.

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A major challenge in Level One and Level Two teaching is giving educationally meaningful assignments to hundreds of students, whilst enabling staff to manage the marking in a robust and efficient manner. Within the Level One Biology (620 students) and Level 2 Essential Genetics (400 students) we are keen for students to have the experience of writing essays in a scientific fashion, yet at the same time we have to appreciate that staff time is a precious commodity. Therefore we used Turnitin via Moodle to collect, grade and provide feedback on short essays, for classes with hundreds of students. Our experience has generally been positive.

Timely, instructive and developmental feedback on student work is arguably the most powerful single influence on a student's ability to learn, and for their future prospects (Hattie & Timperly 2007; Black & Wiliam 1998; Gibbs & Simpson 2004). The four main principles for effective feedback are that it should:

- Be frequent, timely, sufficient and detailed
- Be linked to the purpose of assessment task and criteria
- Be understandable and account for the student's level of sophistication
- Focus on learning rather than marking

By making use of technologies there is the hope that marker time can be better directed to encourage a more focused level of feedback to ensure that student's gain appropriate and clear direction on their submitted work.

In the L2 Essential Genetics Class 400 students submitted 500-word essays on a Turnitin link on our class Moodle site. Apart from some accessibility problems around the single closing time (the site was 'down' for around 90 minutes) we encountered few difficulties. The two staff involved in the course used the Turnitin tools to grade each essay and make comments, then return the essays to the students within 14 days. *Ad hoc* feedback from students suggest that within 4 days of the staff completing this task about 90% of the students has read our comments, compared to around 30% who used to collect their paper copies from us in previous years. This was also an entirely paper-free exercise, which clearly limits our contribution to deforestation.

Level One Biology has trialed electronic submission of student work over the past two academic sessions. This process has been managed through Moodle, following the same structure as used by the Turnitin Moodle add on. Student work is then provided to markers on memory pens for grading. This session, a random selection of the Level 1 Biology students submitted their assessed lab reports in the normal way as well as doubly submitting through Turnitin. This has allowed us to gain detailed information on both systems and test Turnitin with a wide variety of file types and formats. Some small

issues have been identified with questions being posted back to TurnitinUK for consideration. Feedback has been generally positive with some marked improvements introduced in the newer versions of Turnitin.

Student, Staff and Assessment coordinator comments and perceptions will be presented at this meeting along with suggestions for future developments.

References

Black, P. and Wiliam, D. (1998) Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education*, 5 (1), 7–74

Gibbs, G. and Simpson, C. (2004) Conditions under which assessment supports learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, (1), 3–31

Hattie, J. and Timperley, H. (2007) The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77, 81–112