



University of the Highlands and Islands

Originality Checking Policy

Policy number: POL146

Table 1: Policy administration

Item	Description
Lead Officer (Post)	Head of Corporate Systems Compliance
Responsible Office/ Department	Corporate Governance
Responsible committee and officer	QAEC, Chair QAEC
Review Officer (Post)	Head of Corporate Systems Compliance
Date policy approved	03/12/2019
Date policy last reviewed and updated	20/01/2025
Date policy due for review	Every 2 years or at the commencement of a new originality checking software contract or after changes to licence terms and conditions or privacy policy
Date of Equality Impact Assessment	29/11/2019
Date of Privacy Impact Assessment	20/01/2025

Table 2: Policy summary

Item	Description
Overview	<p>The university subscribes to Turnitin, an externally hosted software program that may be used for originality checking, anonymous marking, and peer review of students' text-based work. Turnitin assists staff in assessing potential instances of plagiarism.</p> <p>Turnitin must be used as specified in this Policy to ensure that students are not disadvantaged and to permit staff to use Turnitin as supporting evidence in an academic misconduct enquiry.</p>

Item	Description
Purpose	The policy discharges the university's legal duty to ensure that it complies with the vendor's terms and conditions. It lists the steps staff must implement to ensure students are not disadvantaged. Failure to implement these steps means that Turnitin may not be used as supporting evidence in an academic misconduct enquiry.
Scope	All staff and students using Turnitin in the university's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or accessing the software via the vendor's site.
Consultation	The original policy (Turnitin policy) was discussed and approved by the LTQC in 2012 and AC on 14/06/2012. The updated policy (Originality Checking Policy covering Urkund/Ouriginal and Turnitin) was discussed and approved by the QAEC on 03/12/2019 and Academic Council on 11/12/2019.
Implementation and monitoring	Implemented by FE academic staff, HE Associate Deans, Programme Leaders, and Module Leaders. Monitored by the Head of Corporate Systems Compliance.
Risk implications	Failure to adhere to the policy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May disadvantage students. 2. Will prevent Turnitin being used as supporting evidence in an academic misconduct enquiry. 3. May exceed licence limits, which may have financial implications and 4. Could result in withdrawal of service by the vendor.
Link with strategy	Strategic aim 2 – learning and teaching
Equality Impact Assessment	29/11/2019
Privacy Impact Assessment	20/01/2025 data protection risks are managed by way of this policy, the Privacy notice - HE Enrolment and Why we collect data about you - Turnitin .

1. Policy statement

Students may be asked to submit assignments (essays, papers or other text-based projects) through the university's originality checking software service, Turnitin. Originality

checkers are online services that conduct textual similarity reviews of submitted papers. When assignments are submitted to an originality checker a copy of the submitted work usually remains in the originality checking database for the sole purpose of originality checking in future submitted assignments. Where applicable, students retain copyright on their original course work. Formal acceptance of the university's regulations permits the use of originality checking software.

The policy regulates staff and student use of originality checking software to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by its use. Failure to implement this policy means that Turnitin may not be used as supporting evidence in an academic misconduct enquiry.

2. Definitions

Academic misconduct: includes, but is not restricted to, plagiarism, cheating, collusion, falsification or fabrication, personation, or bribery as defined in [UHI's Academic Standards and Quality Regulations](#).

Originality checking software: online services that conduct textual similarity reviews of submitted papers. They do not check for plagiarism. Text is checked against a variety of sources and if matches are found this is highlighted for staff to review. More information is in [3. Purpose](#), below.

Plagiarism: unacknowledged incorporation in a student's work either in an examination or assessment of material derived from the work (published or unpublished) of another. More information is available in [UHI's Academic Standards and Quality Regulations](#).

VLE (Virtual Learning Environment): software that gives students access to online learning materials, permits the submission of assessments, and has a variety of tools such as discussion boards, quizzes and surveys.

3. Purpose

The policy discharges the university's legal duty to ensure that it complies with the vendor's terms and conditions and that students are not disadvantaged. Use of Turnitin indicates acceptance of Turnitin's User Agreement.

4. Scope

This policy applies to UHI, the UHI Partnership teaching and teaching support staff and all students.

5. Exceptions

None.

6. Notification

The policy will be published on UHI's website and SharePoint Policies area.

Academic and academic support staff will be made aware of the policy, principles and associated guidance through team meetings and information being cascaded from senior management teams.

Students will be made aware of the policy at induction, in unit, module and programme related information, (including programme handbooks) as appropriate, and (where appropriate) the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment).

7. Roles and responsibilities

QAEC is responsible for approving the policy and ensuring its compliance.

Principals and Senior Management Teams are responsible for overseeing operational compliance with the policy, and cascading information to appropriate teams.

UHI Deans and Associate Deans are responsible for cascading information to appropriate teams.

Line managers are responsible for supporting relevant staff to follow the policy in their day-to-day role.

Staff are responsible for following the policy in their day-to-day role and highlighting any operational challenges that arise.

Where Turnitin is used as supporting evidence for academic misconduct, **teaching staff** and if the case goes to the Academic Misconduct Panel, **members of the Academic Misconduct Panel** are responsible for determining that this policy has been followed and the student has not been disadvantaged.

The **Head of Corporate Systems Compliance** is responsible for developing the policy, accommodating any legislative changes, and submitting the policy to the relevant committees for endorsement.

8. Procedures

8.1 Staff

- 8.1.1 Generic accounts may not be used to access Turnitin. Staff obtain a Turnitin account by viewing or creating a Turnitin assignment in the VLE. Students do not require a Turnitin account.
- 8.1.2 Turnitin may only be used for officially registered units/modules in which students are enrolled. If Turnitin is used, the work of all students must be submitted. Individual assessments may not be submitted. Turnitin may not be used in a Programme, Training, Development or Test area or in a Cyber Café.
- 8.1.3 To comply with GDPR and to ensure students are not disadvantaged, if Turnitin is to be used, students must be notified about the use of Turnitin at induction, in unit, module and programme related information, (including programme handbooks) as appropriate, and (where appropriate) the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). Students must be directed to read Turnitin FAQs and training for students and this policy, available on [Turnitin for students](#).
- 8.1.4 Students using assistive technologies specified in their PLSP **must have** at least one formative use of the originality checking software before it is used on summative assignments.
- 8.1.5 It is recommended that all students should have **at least** one formative use of the originality checking software before it is used on summative assignments.
- 8.1.6 UHI assessment coversheets containing all mandatory fields and the Turnitin section must be used for SQA, undergraduate and taught postgraduate assessments:
- [Assessment coversheet: SQA](#) (staff login required)
 - [Assessment coversheet: undergraduate](#) (staff login required)
 - [Assessment coversheet: taught postgraduate](#) (staff login required).
- 8.1.7 If Turnitin is used, the work of the entire cohort must be submitted to Turnitin. Individual assessments may not be submitted unless the student is the only person registered on the unit or module.

- 8.1.8 If plagiarism is suspected and Turnitin was not used at point of assessment submission to check the work of the entire cohort, staff may only use Turnitin to check the work if:
- students were given access to information about Turnitin prior to assessment submission, and
 - the work of the entire cohort is submitted to Turnitin and all originality reports reviewed.
- 8.1.9 A record of the use of Turnitin must be kept which can be used in an appeal.
- 8.1.10 All Turnitin assessments must be expired at the end of each semester or at the end of the unit/module, whichever comes first.
- 8.1.11 To prevent double counting of seats, resit assessments that use Turnitin must be set up in the latest version of the course, units or modules and not the unit or module area where the student was originally enrolled.
- 8.1.12 Staff are solely responsible for any and all use of their Turnitin account.
- 8.1.13 Staff must maintain the confidentiality of their Turnitin password and may not share their password with any other person.
- 8.1.14 If unauthorized use of a Turnitin account or access to a password or class identification number is suspected, Turnitin must be notified immediately by sending an e-mail to legal@turnitin.com. Turnitin allows staff to request copies of student work that matches to a student's submission. Requests for copies of student work are usually sent to the Turnitin administrator. If staff receive a request to supply a copy of a past or present student's work, either through the Turnitin system or by another means, to ensure that applicable laws and privacy rights are not violated, staff must follow these steps:
- Do not supply copies of student work to anyone if they are not authorised to see it. e.g. they are not part of the teaching, quality or examination team for that unit/module.
 - Forward the email to the Deputy University Secretary.
 - If the requester is employed by the University or its Academic Partners, permission will normally be granted for the sharing of anonymised work

providing the originality score is >5%. External requests may be granted permission to view anonymised work if the work is necessary to establish academic misconduct providing the originality score is >5%.

- 8.1.15 Staff may not submit their own work to Turnitin using their staff ID. Staff may only submit their own work to Turnitin if they are registered students on a unit/module where Turnitin is being used. In this case, staff must use their student ID.

8.2 Students

- 8.2.1 Where Turnitin is used, compliance with this policy is a requirement of undertaking the unit/module.
- 8.2.2 Students do not require a Turnitin account or an authorisation number. Students do not submit work through Turnitin's website. If staff have decided to use Turnitin, students will be directed to submit their work through a Turnitin enabled assessment submission area in the VLE.
- 8.2.3 Students may only submit an assignment to Turnitin if it is being used in their course, unit or module.
- 8.2.4 Students should read Turnitin FAQs, training for students and this policy, available on [Turnitin for students](#).
- 8.2.5 Students should use only their student number in submitting work through Turnitin and avoid providing any details that will compromise their privacy.
- 8.2.6 While students are still registered and after they have left UHI, students' work will be retained under UHI's name in the Turnitin database and may be further reproduced and used for disciplinary investigations concerning other students.

9. Policy detail

The Turnitin Policy was approved by Academic Council on 16/6/2012. The Originality checking policy superseded the Turnitin policy to include FE originality checking software. The Originality checking policy was approved by Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee on 3/12/2019 and Academic Council on 11/12/2019. The university has moved to one originality checker for FE and HE.

For FE, this policy and other relevant Academic Partner policies apply.

For HE, the Policy must be implemented in conjunction with UHI's:

[Academic Standards and Quality Regulations.](#)
[Assessment, feedback and feedforward policy.](#)

Although students own the copyright to their work, their formal acceptance of the university's regulations permits the use of originality checking software such as Turnitin, and gives staff the right (subject to compliance with this policy and the implementation of the steps in point [8 Procedures](#) above) to submit student assignments to university approved externally hosted originality checkers such as Turnitin. Note only approved technologies may be used. Turnitin is the only originality checker that may be used. Due to the flaws of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) detectors, such as generating false negatives and positives, their bias, and the failure to provide supporting evidence, coupled with the speed of the development of GAI tools, UHI is not using a GAI detector. Staff may not submit student work to any GAI detector.

Staff are encouraged to use originality checking software as an educational tool to inform and educate students in scholarly writing and referencing. Students should be allowed to view their originality report prior to final submission.

The originality score and/or feedback received from an originality checker is but one piece of evidence about a student's writing ability. If an originality score is used to support an important decision about a student's performance, staff should review and evaluate the score and/or feedback to ensure the appropriate decision about performance or plagiarism. Staff must exercise their independent professional judgment in, and assume sole and exclusive responsibility for, determining the actual existence of plagiarism in a submitted assessment with the acknowledgement and understanding that originality checker reports are only tools for detecting textual similarities between compared works and do not determine conclusively the existence of plagiarism, which determination is a matter of professional judgment of the academic and university. Originality checking scores may not be used to support a case of academic misconduct if the steps in in point [8 Procedures](#) above have not been implemented.

10. Risk assessment

Information about Turnitin must be given to FE and HE academic staff and academic support staff at induction.

Failure to implement the policy:

1. May disadvantage students.
2. Will prevent Turnitin being used as supporting evidence in an academic misconduct enquiry.

3. May exceed license limits, which will have financial implications.
4. Could result in withdrawal of service by the vendor.

11. Legislative framework

[Data Protection Act 2018.](#)

[Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council](#) as amended by UK Law.

12. Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Other Resources

[Academic Standards and Quality Regulations](#)

[Generative Artificial Intelligence Policy](#)

[Turnitin for staff](#) (requires staff login)

[Turnitin for students](#) (requires UHI login)

[Essential Student Skills: Turnitin student guide](#)

13. Version control and change history

Table 3: version control and change history

Version	Date	Endorsed by	Amendments	Author
0	03/12/2019	QAEC and AC	Original	Andy Brown
1	06/11/2023	QAEC	UHI Assessment Cover Sheet links and request to view Turnitin submissions updated.	Andy Brown
2	03/02/2025	QAEC	Policy on new policy template. All references to Urkund/Ouriginal removed. Account and paper request processes changed. AI checking statement updated. PIA section completed.	Andy Brown
3				