



Using Turnitin as a teaching tool and for summative assessments

Transcript of podcast

Grainne: Hello, I'm Grainne Hamilton from the JISC Regional Support Centre Scotland South & West. I'm here with Jo Oliver, from The University of the West of Scotland, who is a Lecturer in Nursing. Jo will be talking about her experience of using Turnitin, for summative assessment and also as a teaching tool. Hi Jo.

Jo: Hi

Grainne: Could you tell me about your role at the University of the West of Scotland?

Jo: I'm a lecturer in nursing and I work in the Dumfries campus. I work mainly with post-registration students. A lot of older people, often, are coming back into education.

Grainne: You decided to use Turnitin for summative assessment but also as a tool within your teaching. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

Jo: Well, Turnitin is a tool that allows you to look at the students' assignments and it compares similarities with pieces of work that other people have written. That was why it was bought in the first place. I use it to encourage the students to submit their work, check it themselves; it allows them to check if they've paraphrased something, if they have used a quote, if they have set it out properly, if they have referenced properly. It allows them to see that sometimes they've maybe cut and paste something to remember something, and they've put it in by mistake, and it allows them to fix it. So it's a really, really good tool for students to learn how to look at their own work, to learn how to paraphrase, to make sure the referencing meets the guidelines, whatever they are, and it just makes them look at what they have actually written. It's a great tool.

From my point of view, as a lecturer, the other thing I discovered you could do with it - you can use it to mark. So for me, it gives me all my assignments in the same place. I don't have piles of paper all over, I don't have the dog eating them or anything like that. They are all there, they are all in the same place and you can move from one assignment to the next. So, you can read them all before you mark them, which is great. It really speeds up what you are doing. It allows you, when you are reading, to think things like "well, that isn't very well written" or "it is well written" and you can then put a comment in and you can save that comment and keep it so you can use the same comment time and time again. It allows you to slide comments. If people are using quotes, there are pre-set comments that allow you to say things like, "you need to cut the

quotes”, “you’ve got too many quotes in”. If they’re not referencing, there’s pre-set things that say “you need to support what you are saying here”. And you just slide them across. You don’t have to spend time typing or writing, which is fantastic.

It allows you to have consistency with marking. You pre-set the marking grid and on Turnitin they call it the “Rubric”. So you pre-set the marking grid; you decide what your criteria is, you decide what you are going to mark against whether it’s a learning outcome, referencing (if you want to allocate marks to referencing) or structure or specific points... whatever, you can mark to what you like. But what it means is that every marker is marking to exactly the same grid. You don’t have to write the comments as they are pre-set. So, you click on it, it puts the comment in and the student sees the comment, and that’s it, so you’re not having to type or write comments every time. The other thing is you really have a free hand in the general comment at the end, which you would normally do, so at the end you can say “this was a good piece of work” or “if you wanted to improve your mark, this is what you would need to do...” and you can put a general comment in. So, it really, really speeds up marking. It gives absolute consistency for the lecturing staff, and everything’s in the same place so you can all mark at the same time. You can have four different people marking and then the moderator can check on line. The other thing I discovered this year is that the externals like it! It gives you more time because you don’t have to post everything to the moderator and then post everything to the external and hopefully get it back in time for your panel, because it’s just there. And the other good thing is that once you have marked, that’s it. All you do is open up Gradebook, the students then have access to everything you’ve done. So every comment you’ve put on the assignment, every comment you’ve put at the end, is there and they can see exactly what they’ve got. They can see their marks and they can see all the good things or the poor things that you’ve written.

Grainne: Did you come across any challenges in implementing using this?

Jo: The marking grid is call the Rubric and when you start to use a different piece of terminology, people are like... “Oh! What’s that?”, so that scares people. When you say it’s online, people are frightened because they can’t read online for any length of time and “that can’t be good for you” and stuff like that. But I find that we are online all the time when you are looking for stuff or searching literature reviews, whatever, so I don’t find it a problem. Once people get used to it I think they will be good with it as well.

You can do this at home, at work, wherever you like – it doesn’t matter – so that really frees you up so you can choose what you do with your time. I think staff are nervous of anything new. It’s a big change. People are used to piles of paper they are used to being able to flick from the beginning to the end to the references, to be able to check things and that isn’t quite as easy online, but you can still do it. I think anything new, people are nervous of.

Grainne: So, have you had staff development sessions.

Jo: We have had some staff development. Staff are reluctant to do things in a timely manner, I would say. And when they actually start to use it is when they phone somebody to say “Help! What do I do?”, so I don’t know how we fix that. There’s lots of tutorials on the Turnitin site and they’re really easy to follow. I’ve been through most of them. And the Turnitin Helpdesk is great.

Grainne: So, are you planning to continue to use Turnitin?

Jo: I'm hoping.... I have two modules this year that are completely paperless, so everything is being done on line so would like to extend that. That would be my plan.

Grainne: Great, so do you have any tips for anyone else looking to use Turnitin?

Jo: Take your time. Look at it before the day you're marking. Plan your marking grid. Really think about what it is you want to mark against and then.... Give it a go! Just give it a go.

Grainne: As far as students are concerned?

Jo: I think traditionally students hand things in at the last minute. So, it's trying to encourage people to write a wee bit sooner, to put it in so they can check their own work. The younger students are getting better at that..... the older students, because they've always got other things they've got to do..... so, its just encouraging people to use it and see it as a helpful tool. And that will come, as long as people are positive about it, that will come.

Grainne: That's lovely. Thanks very much, that's all we have time for today.