

Using Turnitin with large classes to support student writing

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This paper describes an initiative at a University in the west of Ireland to use Turnitin with large class sizes to support student writing. The Centre for Learning and Teaching is a central unit within the University, responsible for a wide range of activities. In particular, we provide support to academic staff on good practice in the use of technology for teaching, learning and assessment.

Here we describe a pilot study involving 3 case studies across 3 disciplines in the College of Arts and Social Sciences. These case studies involve large student groups, from 120 to 600 students, and address the use of Turnitin to support student writing and offer formative feedback, rather than focus purely on plagiarism detection.

In embarking on this initiative, we had a number of questions to be answered. Given a shift in focus from policy, procedures, detection and penalties, can Turnitin be effectively used to support learning and teaching? In particular, is it possible to use the service to support teaching of large students groups? And can this be done in a formative manner, to support student writing? Further, what are the implications for teaching teams in terms of administrative overhead, and for our Centre in terms of academic staff development, training and support?

Turnitin was found to be a useful teaching tool, and to support teaching teams in their assessment practices. Moreover, when students are given direct access to their originality reports on draft submission, accompanied by support from tutors, student writing is enhanced.