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**GUIDELINES FOR USING THE TURNITIN SOFTWARE TO
DETERMINE PLAGIARISM IN UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale for Use of Turnitin Software in University of Ghana

Following the approval of the UG Plagiarism policy, the TURNITIN software was introduced in University of Ghana (UG) to facilitate the implementation of the policy. The introduction of the software at UG is one of the means to encourage faculty members, staff and students to abide by one of the core values of University of Ghana, which is Integrity.

The use of the software is not intended to be punitive, but rather to provide faculty members, students and staff with the opportunity to identify portions of their work that can be deemed as plagiarized so they can effect the necessary corrections. It is intended to facilitate the process of ensuring academic integrity, which includes duly acknowledging the work or ideas of others. Its use will allow academic staff, students and other members of the University community to gain confidence that work which they submit as original meets the criterion of having a high level of originality.

1.2 Overview of the Turnitin Software

The TURNITIN software is to be used primarily as an educational tool. The software compares the similarities of academic or any other written material/work against a wide range of databases of published and unpublished materials of other writers that are available online, and provides a report detailing the extent of text matching as represented by the colour coded similarity index.

As TURNITIN is essentially a text matching system, the report generated identifies those sections of the text that matches another text source in the TURNITIN repository. The overall total of text match will be expressed as a percentage (Similarity index) in each report. This percentage is for guidance only. TURNITIN does not indicate the acceptable level, and would therefore not indicate that plagiarism has occurred. The judgment as to whether plagiarism has occurred is based on Institutional norms.

The reported similarity index should therefore not be used as the only basis for action. The decision to consider any work as plagiarized must be based on an in-depth examination of the submitted material and the suspected plagiarized material.

1.3 Limitations of TURNITIN

- a. TURNITIN does not offer a ready solution to plagiarism. Its use is therefore not a substitute for good academic writing practices, for example, correct citation and referencing.
- b. There are significant gaps in its search base. For example, TURNITIN may not be able to accomplish the following:
 - i. detect plagiarized work from books or sources which are 'old' and not available on the Internet
 - ii. detect work which is plagiarized by translating from one language to another, for example, French text translated to English
 - iii. search all electronic journals
 - iv. detect images, graphs, mathematical equations that may have been plagiarized.

2.0 GUIDELINES

2.1 Scope

1. The guidelines are limited to the use of the TURNITIN software to check plagiarism in student work at University of Ghana.
2. The guidelines address the following common sources of plagiarism.
 - a. **Text matching** (unacceptable percentage of text matching).
 - b. **Cut/ Copy and Paste** material from the Web, textbooks or journals (lifting phrases, sentences and paragraphs of someone's work (published and unpublished) beyond an acceptable number of words)
 - c. **Quotation** (Direct quotes not duly acknowledged). For example, using the APA format, present quotation in 'block form' when the direct quote is more than 40 words. Conversely, use quotation marks for quotations of less than 40 words and provide the source and page number accordingly. Also, quoting extensively from a single source (even if duly acknowledged) despite the availability of several other sources.

- d. **Paraphrasing** (paraphrased views of others without acknowledgement)
 - e. **Copying** the work of another student
 - f. **Copying from course material**, and lecture notes
 - g. **Copying laboratory data** or other forms of data
3. Reviewing the Originality reports of students' work e.g. graduate thesis/dissertation/long essay

2.2 Implementation Guidelines

These guidelines are meant specifically for student work.

2.2.1 Use of the TURNITIN Originality report

1. Students must be required to submit all theses and long essays through the University Learning Management System (presently SAKAI), which will be set to generate a TURNITIN originality report with a similarity index.
2. Instructors (Faculty) are encouraged to use the SAKAI LMS and to be familiar with the Assignment Tool in Sakai LMS since it provides the easiest means for students to submit their work online
3. Text matching (unacceptable percentage of text matching using TURNITIN colour coding). For University of Ghana, the following similarity indices are to be used. These similarity indices are not exclusive of each other though they can be applied individually.
 - i. Overall Similarity index: Should not exceed 20% (24% and below gives the colour code – Green, in TURNITIN, indicating that it is within the acceptable range).
 - ii. Single source similarity index: Should not exceed 2%
 - iii. Acceptable number of words in an unbroken string (phrase or sentence): Should not exceed 10 words.
4. Notwithstanding the above indices, the following should be applied when deciding whether plagiarism has occurred or not.

- i. Faculty should be mindful of the limitations of TURNITIN (See section 1.3) and review the originality reports carefully;
- ii. Faculty should document in detail the processes leading to a student being charged with plagiarism and hence being sanctioned. Such documentation will be essential if there is an appeal.
- iii. The overall similarity index should not be used as the only basis for determining that plagiarism has occurred. Each work should to be reviewed thoroughly through visual inspection of the matched text, irrespective of how high or low a similarity index is. Similarly, the single source index and the number of words in a string that have been flagged should be examined.
- iv. Where direct quotations have been properly acknowledged they can be ignored.
- v. In the event where there is limited information in the research area, similarity index from a single source exceeding 2% should be further investigated before taking action.
- vi. Self-plagiarism. In the event where a portion of a thesis has been published by the same researcher/author it can be overlooked after careful visual inspection has confirmed this.
- vii. Bibliography and extensive direct quotations, although duly cited, could present a high percentage match. The TURNITIN software could be set to ignore such material.
- viii. Cover page and declaration information will be similar for all students submitting their long essays/thesis and this can inflate the similarity index. This should be ignored during the visual inspection.

2.2.2 Procedures For Submission of Work to the Sakai LMS/TURNITIN

1. Instructors must let students know in advance if they are expected to submit their assignments/lab reports/long essays/theses/dissertations through the SAKAI LMS
2. Students can be allowed unlimited submissions of their works (draft) so as to enable them review the TURNITIN reports that are generated before submitting their final work.
3. The decision of how many submissions will be allowed should be determined by the individual lecturer or supervisor and communicated to the students.
4. Students must be informed in advance how many times they will be allowed to resubmit an assignment or draft long essays/dissertations/thesis through the Sakai LMS.
5. There could be high similarity index for instances where the same work (draft) has been repetitively submitted to TURNITIN with the intention of editing out the matching portions. To avoid such reports attracting high similarity indices, draft work or any work in progress should NOT be submitted to the standard repository of TURNITIN until the final submission.
6. Classwork, assignments and undergraduate project reports/undergraduate long essays can be submitted to the INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY to create a database against which works of other students who copy and submit the same work in future can be checked through TURNITIN.
7. It is advisable that any work, such as undergraduate assignments, which is meant for “internal purposes”, should not be submitted to the STANDARD REPOSITORY of TURNITIN.

2.2.3 Investigating Plagiarism

1. Investigative procedures as stated in the Plagiarism policy will apply where TURNITIN appears to indicate a breach of academic integrity.
2. In the case of graduate thesis, the Graduate Studies Committee of the relevant department must be involved in the investigation.
3. The reported similarity index should not be used as the only basis for action. Percentage levels above the recommended levels can be flagged for interpretation and investigated further. In such cases, the full report should be examined to detect the magnitude of the matching text.
4. An in-depth examination of the student's work and the plagiarized material is needed as part of the investigative procedure.
5. **CAVEAT:** TURNITIN alone cannot prove that a student has plagiarized. Nonetheless, students cannot use TURNITIN to prove that they have not plagiarized. Such judgments should be the responsibility of the individual faculty member/supervisor/Graduate Studies Committee or any other appropriate authority.

2.2.4 Departmental Level Processes

a. Graduate Level

1. During the graduate long essay/ dissertations /thesis supervision process, students must be allowed several submissions in order to check and review the TURNITIN report, to reduce the similarity index as necessary. Students' work should NOT be submitted to either the TURNITIN standard repository or the institutional repository at this stage.
2. Supervisors should assist students to interpret the TURNITIN reports in order to help them review their written material.

3. All graduate students are required to print and attach a copy of the TURNITIN report to their thesis and submit to the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee for approval before submission to the Graduate School for grading.
4. The Graduate Studies Committee must review the report and make recommendations to the student for review of the thesis if the Committee deems the thesis to have unacceptable levels of text matching.
5. The Graduate Studies Committee should allow a student one chance to resubmit their work along with a new TURNITIN report if first submission is deemed to have had unacceptable levels of text matching.
6. All graduate theses/dissertations/long essays submitted to the Graduate School for grading must be accompanied by a TURNITIN report duly signed off by the Chair of the Departmental Graduate Studies Committee. The Graduate school does not have the responsibility of doing plagiarism checks. This should be done at the Department/Institute in order to avoid submission of thesis/dissertations to the Graduate School that may be deemed plagiarized.
7. After grading and correction, the Hard-bound thesis must be accompanied by a TURNITIN Report signed by the Head of Department.
8. All final graduate theses/dissertations/long essays from UG shall be deposited in the INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY within TURNITIN.
9. The Final deposition of graduate theses/dissertations/long essays into the STANDARD TURNITIN Repository shall only be done by the appropriate Balme Library staff at the request of the Graduate School. This can be done only after submission of the final hard bound copy along with the electronic version.

10. Any work (submitted for grading or Hard Bound) that is deemed to have been plagiarized should be subjected to investigative processes as per the UG Plagiarism policy

b. Undergraduate Level

1. To reduce the incidence of copying, undergraduate students must also be encouraged to submit their long essays/project reports through the SAKAI LMS as part of the supervision process. Supervisors should assist their students to interpret the TURNITIN reports in order to help them rewrite the materials review their written material.
2. Departments may decide on the exact modalities for reviewing TURNITIN reports of undergraduate work. These must be communicated clearly to students.
3. Any final submitted work that is deemed to have been plagiarized should be subjected to investigative processes as per the UG Plagiarism policy.

3.0 SUMMARY

1. Faculty and students should familiarize themselves with the contents of the University of Ghana Plagiarism Policy
2. These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the University of Ghana Plagiarism Policy.
3. The following similarity indices are recommended.
 - i. Overall Similarity index should not exceed 20%
 - ii. Single source similarity index should not exceed 2%
 - iii. The acceptable number of words in an unbroken string should be a maximum of 10 words. Student submissions must meet all three requirements to be deemed acceptable.
4. All graduate thesis/dissertation/long essays submitted to the Graduate school must have a TURNITIN report attached. The Graduate School has the prerogative to recheck on TURNITIN

(for verification purposes) any submitted work.

5. Whenever appropriate, the academic work of students at all levels should be submitted to TURNITIN to alert students about the issue of plagiarism.
6. Each department should ensure they have clear guidelines of what is expected of students in terms of referencing of source materials. This should begin from the undergraduate level (level 100).
7. Graduate Assistants/Teaching Assistants/National Service persons trained in the use of TURNITIN and how to do the visual inspection may be used by Faculty to help check the reports whenever they cannot do so themselves.
8. Faculty are encouraged to document challenges and successes in their use of the TURNITIN software to check Plagiarism. This will help evaluate the software continuously so it can be adapted to suit the needs of UG better.
9. SAKAI Team and Academic Quality Assurance Unit will facilitate continuous Training on the use of the SAKAI LMS/TURNITIN

4.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

1. UG Plagiarism Policy.
2. TURNITN online Manual

