E-SUBMISSION FAQS

KEY FACTS

AIMS

- To provide the students with one consistent system (where possible) for submitting their assessments (stage 1).
- To provide electronic feedback to students for the majority of their assessments (stage 2)
- To provide staff who wish to, the means to mark online and give electronic feedback.

TIMESCALE

- Stage 1 - Online submission will apply to all students and all relevant modules from September 2014.
- Stage 2 – Electronic feedback for all students on all relevant modules

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GENERAL

WHY ARE WE NOW USING ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION?

Electronic submission (e-submission) refers to the process by which a student submits work online for storage and retrieval by academic, administrative or other staff for marking and feedback. This can also include plagiarism checking using Turnitin*. It provides an efficient method for collecting assessed work from students:

- It allows for flexibility and convenience, e.g. students can submit assignments or access marks and feedback from anywhere without being restricted by office hours.
- It also offers a wide range of opportunities for staff to provide rich feedback to students (including audio feedback).
- It allows for archiving of assignments, feedback and marks for future reference e.g. for external examiner access.
- Students already engage online with the university in other areas such as using AberLearn Blackboard and the online timetable.

* TurnItIn is a third party service licensed by the University. It allows for electronic submission of assessments through Blackboard and provides originality reports
http://nexus.aber.ac.uk/xwiki/bin/view/Main/turnitin

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO STUDENTS OF USING E-SUBMISSION AND FEEDBACK?

- One system throughout the University for all text-based, word-processed assessed work.
- No printing for students.
- Feedback can be typed rather than handwritten.
- Students can view their feedback at any time through AberLearn Blackboard, which allows them to easily act upon the feedback to improve performance in future assignments.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING E-SUBMISSION, MARKING AND FEEDBACK TO THE ACADEMIC MEMBER OF STAFF?

- Staff can start to mark as soon as the submission deadline has passed (no need to wait for the office to process the coursework).
- Staff can mark in or away from the office on a desktop computer, laptop or tablet.
- There are a number of mechanisms for improved feedback on student work. Turnitin makes it easy for staff to record short audio clips with verbal feedback. Staff can build up their own customised sets of comments, which can be dragged and dropped directly onto student scripts. Scripts can be marked up online, reducing problems with students reading handwriting.
- Using the system to its full potential can reduce the number of emails from students, because students can directly access their own feedback without intervention by the tutor.
- External Examiners will be able to view a clear audit trail of the moderation process. The process will be evidenced via the online system.
- Cost, time and sustainability efficiencies (photocopying and filing of feedback sheets)
- Academic staff can build up a 'bank' of frequently used comments and insert the most appropriate comments into the feedback sheet
- The potential for improving the quality and usefulness/timeliness of feedback
- A reduction in uncollected student assessment feedback

- Several academic studies have shown better engagement with electronic feedback. An Education Department pilot project with e-feedback showed increased engagement with feedback.
- Parity with colleagues in other universities. Most other universities in the UK and Wales are using e-submission systems.

HAVE STUDENTS BEEN CONSULTED?

Yes, the Students' Union has been involved in the implementation of this project.

HAVE DEPARTMENTAL STAFF BEEN CONSULTED?

There are several academic members of staff on the Task and Finish Group. The Group has also met with the Directors of UG and PG Studies to discuss the project and its work. A member of the group met with administrative staff from every department and a presentation with Q&A was made at the Admin Forum. We will endeavour to get a short presentation delivered by an academic member of staff to departmental meetings during March, April and May 2014.

WILL THE SYSTEM BE REVIEWED?

Yes, the system will be under constant review once Stage 1 has been launched for September 2014 and improvements will be made where appropriate.

WELSH

DOES TURNITIN RECOGNISE WELSH?

Yes. It is used by all the other HEIs in Wales, and therefore the database of Welsh language assignments in significant. This means that the Originality Check feature will check against Welsh language material submitted in other institutions.

WILL THE SYSTEM BE BILINGUAL?

Not at the moment. The issue has been raised with Turnitin. We are lobbying the company along with other Welsh universities. All 'editable' text will be bilingual. Text controlled by the software provider will be in English only, but we are lobbying Turnitin to provide a bilingual interface for the entire system.

SUBMISSION ONLINE

WILL ONLINE SUBMISSION APPLY TO ALL MODULES AND STUDENTS?

It is intended that online submission will apply to all students and all relevant modules from September 2014. All text-based, word-processed assessed work produced by both undergraduates and postgraduates will covered by this policy. Departments have the opportunity to request exemptions for certain modules or elements of assessment by approaching the Director of UG or PG Studies in their Institute.

Some types of assessments (notebooks, paintings, drawings, sculptures, performances and other physical items) aren't suitable for online submission and some assessments are already submitted via specialist software. In both cases an alternative process will be operated by the relevant departments.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH DISSERTATIONS?

Institutes will be able to decide for themselves whether students submit their dissertations on paper or electronically.

WHAT SOFTWARE WILL BE USED?

E-submission will be done through AberLearn Blackboard. Staff will be able to choose between using the Blackboard Assignment tool and Turnitin. Which tool is used will depend on the nature of the assignment. The Blackboard Team can advise on which the most suitable is. You can also look at a comparison chart at http://nexus.aber.ac.uk/xwiki/bin/download/Main/guides+-+Blackboard/esubfeatures2013.pdf

 Please note that the SafeAssign tool will be phased out at the end of summer 2014

ARE THERE FAQS FOR USING TURNITIN?

Yes, there are instructions and videos on using Turnitin available at

http://nexus.aber.ac.uk/xwiki/bin/view/Main/turnitin

IS IT SECURE?

Yes, more secure than a paper copy. All work submitted to the Blackboard Assignment tool is stored within the AU Blackboard installation and is backed up along with other materials. Work submitted to Turnitin is backed up externally by Turnitin. It is also possible for departments/Institutes to take a digital backup from Blackboard. In terms of security of data the system uses SSL encryption and complies with EU Safe Harbour regulations.

WHAT ABOUT THE ETHICAL ISSUES OF KEEPING STUDENT WORK 'ON-LINE'?

According to the Turnitin website, students retain the copyright of their work even if it is used by Turnitin by identify text matches in other work. If there is a match to a students' work at other

institutions, the student is not personally identifiable and the text of the matching submission is not visible. Both the US District Court and Court of Appeal have ruled that use of Turnitin is legally acceptable. Institutions can choose not to submit the work to the Turnitin database.

IS THIS A COST-SAVING EXERCISE BY REDUCING TASKS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF?

No. The cost to the university will not be reduced, because there are costs associated with purchasing equipment, licensing agreements, printing, and training staff to use the system. The aim is to provide students with a professional service to process and mark coursework and provide formative feedback to students in a timely manner. The cost of printing will be transferred from the student to the university.

MARKING

DO I HAVE TO MARK ONLINE / ON SCREEN FROM SEPTEMBER 2014?

No, marking is personal to the member of staff. The project aims to retain an element of choice with regards to marking. Staff who wish to mark online can do so immediately and are encouraged to start using the system with their modules before full implementation in September 2014.

WILL STUDENT COURSEWORK BE ANONYMOUS?

Yes, both Blackboard Assignment and Turnitin support anonymous marking.

With Turnitin, marking is anonymous up until the Post Date, which is the date that marks and feedback are available for students and marks are posted to the Grade Centre. Once the marks have been posted, the names are revealed within the system and there is no way to make them anonymous again.

With Blackboard Assignment, assignments can be marked anonymously online. Once the marks have been entered, they are visible in the Grade Centre next to each student's name. At the time of printing, the coursework is NOT anonymous and the project is considering mechanisms of dealing with this part of the process.

IS THERE AN APP FOR ANDROID DEVICES SIMILAR TO THE APPLE APP FOR TABLET MARKING?

At present Turnitin are only committed to producing an app for iOS (Apple). There is growing pressure for an Android app, but this is not something over which we have direct control. We will continue to lobby for an Android app.

CAN WE STILL USE COVERSHEETS OR MARKING GRIDS?

There are several ways of using marking grids or coversheets with electronic submission. It's best to consult with the E-learning Team on the best way of doing this.

FEEDBACK

DO I HAVE TO RETURN STUDENT FEEDBACK ONLINE FROM SEPTEMBER 2014?

No, staff who still want to mark on printed copies of essays and return feedback in this format can do so during the first stage of this project. Academic staff are encouraged to submit typed feedback via Blackboard Assignment/Turnitin. The project will continue to offer support and training to academic staff throughout 2014-2015 with the aim of increasing the number of staff who provide feedback electronically.   It is important that departments are clear to students about the process by which they will receive their feedback from the start of the academic year. From the discussions we have had with the Students' Union, students would prefer feedback in electronic format.

WHEN IS THE FEEDBACK RETURNED TO STUDENTS?

At a set date within the 3-week turnaround period, feedback and marks are released to students on the module. This is can be done using the Post Date in Turnitin.

HOW WILL E-SUBMISSION AND E-FEEDBACK RELATE TO UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK?

The university requires timely and appropriate feedback on student coursework, within a guiding set of principles. This can be achieved in a variety of means, not merely electronic. Face to face tutorials, for instance, will continue to be important feedback mechanisms in many departments. The use of e-feedback can, however, enable faster turnaround of marks and feedback, and offers opportunities to provide feedback in different ways which can increase effectiveness. Like any tool, its effectiveness will depend on how it is employed

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ADMIN STAFF TO MONITOR THE 3 WEEK DEADLINE FOR MARKING AND FEEDBACK?

Departmental administrators are able to have access to AberLearn Blackboard using the 'departmental administrator' role. Accessing the modules using this role will enable staff to look in the Grade Centre and see whether marks have been added. Directors of UG or PG Studies can also been given access to the AberLearn Blackboard courses in the same way. If staff are not using AberLearn Blackboard for marking and returning grades other mechanisms will be needed.

PRINTING

HOW WILL PRINTING BE FUNDED FOR THOSE STAFF WHO AREN'T MARKING ONLINE?

This is still being negotiated

IF A CENTRAL PRINTING SERVICE IS USED WILL THIS DELAY THE 3 WEEK TURNAROUND PERIOD?

We will ensure that is issue is addressed as part of the project.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE COMPUTER SYSTEMS GO DOWN?

Information Services consults widely over the timing of planned maintenance. Information Services does not undertake planned maintenance work during teaching and all work is scheduled during vacation times. Turnitin commits to keeping their systems available for "at least 98% of the time during each month … except for scheduled maintenance and repairs". Information Services will advertise any planned outage to both Blackboard and Turnitin via Weekly Email, IS news, Facebook and Turnitin, and messages on Blackboard itself. Unforeseen outages are possible and Information Services will communicate details of any problems as widely as possible.

CAN THE ISSUES WITH THE ANONYMISATION PROCESS AND TURNITIN BE OVERCOME?

This is an issue that other universities in the UK struggle with. The basis of the problem is that it isn't possible to bulk download essays when they are submitted anonymously. The solution offered is that, if staff know they will want to download all the essays for marking, the Turnitin assignment is not set to anonymous submission. This will then allow another member of staff (probably an administrator or secretary) to download the documents and print them out. This is likely to require some anonymising on the printed documents.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO STOP TURNITIN REMOVING WEB-LINKS IN STUDENT WORK?

The reason for this is that Turnitin automatically creates a version of the document for online marking. We have raised the issue with Turnitin, and other universities have noted the issue as well. Unfortunately it isn't a change that can be made locally by AU.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO ALLOCATE MARKING TO DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF STAFF INVOLVED IN TEAM MARKING?

This can be done using the Group tool in Blackboard. It can be done before the essays are marked or set up afterwards. The Blackboard Team can advise.

HOW CAN 'LOCKED OUT' STUDENTS SUBMIT WORK?

We are currently discussing this with the Finance Office and Information Services.

HOW WILL WORK BE ARCHIVED?

The best method for long-term archiving of Turnitin assignments is to download the zip file of submissions and backup locally. The AU retention period for assessed work is 6 months after progression to Part 2 for Part 1 work, and 6 months after graduation for Part 2 work. Departments will need to agree sensible storage structure and sensible file-naming conventions, as well as a mechanism for disposing of the files at the end of their retention period.

WHAT ABOUT THE HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS?

Whilst it is true that online marking will mean extra time at a computer at certain times of the year, providing the normal AU guidelines are followed this should not greatly increase the risk of either eyestrain or RSI. We would advise that staff see their departmental Display Screen Equipment (or DSE) assessor if they are experiencing any problems.

Of course, there is research to show that bad posture, poor light conditions, insufficient breaks etc when working on a computer can cause health problems for people but it is likely that the same is true (although there is little research done in this area because it is not 'new technology') of paper marking and the same checklists regarding good posture, light conditions, breaks etc that are applied to online marking should also be applied to paper marking.

There is some more AU information at:

- http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hse/proc-prac/dse/
- http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/employment-information/eyetest/
- http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/humanresources/employmentinformation/flexibleworkingpolicy/Homeworking---Self-Assessment-Checklist.pdf

There is some more general information about online marking:

- https://as.exeter.ac.uk/online-marking/
- http://www.bris.ac.uk/esu/e-learning/support/tools/e-submission/

TRAINING

WHAT TRAINING IS AVAILABLE?

The Information Services E-Learning Team will be running training sessions over the summer and the academic members of the project team will be visiting departments to discuss the system.