Case Study 3: Norma Smurfit Library Turnitin (anti-plagiarism/student learning support) developments

Introduction and Context:

Since the introduction of Turnitin in 2018, the Library became increasingly aware that many students viewed Turnitin as something to be feared. In 2020-21, the Library further enhanced its efforts to promote Turnitin as a tool to support better academic writing and consequently, good grades for students. Below are some of the initiatives the library undertook to contribute to the above aims of changing staff and students' relationship and attitude towards Turnitin.

Summary of the Initiative: **Turnitin FAQs and the Draft Submissions function:**

One of the main methods the library uses to provide instruction to users is through LibGuides which are online guides that cover different subjects. The online guide has become more popular over time and between January 2020 and December 2021 it was viewed 8,720 times. It is particularly well used during the busy assignment submission periods, such as November 2020 when there were 1,112 views throughout the month. The guide also includes a Turnitin FAQs section where students and staff could search for questions or submit one if they do not find an answer. These Turnitin FAQs have quite high public views particularly those in relation to similarity scores or reports such as, "What does the colour on my Similarity Report mean?", which has had 3,000 views since it was added in 2019.

Students seemed to have a fixation with the Turnitin similarity scores or percentages returned, and Library staff perceived that they often misunderstood what these scores really meant. To address this, we included several FAQs and information boxes emphasising the fact that similarities do not in themselves equate to plagiarism. Rather, Turnitin simply finds similarities but does not determine whether a student has quoted or cited correctly.

The Turnitin guide also included a staff tab that facilitates staff Turnitin training, as well as instructions for setting up assignments and detecting plagiarism. Staff-specific FAQs were also made available. In an effort to help demystify the entire Turnitin process for students, we decided that both the staff and student resources should be available to all-in-one place.

Draft Submissions

The College decided to allow students to make multiple draft submissions prior to their final assignment submission. This has allowed students to check their similarity score and make changes to their assignments if needed, for example by reducing the number of direct quotations and making better use of paraphrasing. This improves the similarity scores students are getting but it should also improve the quality of their writing, and consequently their grades.

Key Findings:

It seems that students continue to be apprehensive about Turnitin. Statistics were collated on the number of draft submissions being made through Turnitin and results showed that for 2020 and 2021 the average student submitted less than one draft submission per assignment. This suggests that there are still a lot of students not utilising the draft submission option. To this end, one future development will be the availability of Turnitin's *Draft Coach* which is expected to be available for integration with Microsoft Word in 2022. This will mean that students can in future get an idea of their similarity scores

and sources <u>without</u> having to submit a draft through the Turnitin Moodle plugin. We anticipate that this will encourage more students to use the draft submission function and lead to a better-quality outcome for students.

Conclusion:

In the 20/21 academic year, the Library has been part of a wider College effort to improve student and staff understanding of Turnitin and to dispel many of the misconceptions around it. There is an effort to bring it out into the open and dispel myths and fears. We continue to highlight as much as possible that Turnitin is a tool to help improve academic referencing, paraphrasing, and academic writing in general.

The Library will continue to update its guides and FAQs to ensure that students receive accurate information about this digital learning-support service.