South Nottingham College - Using online assessment

Summary

A tutor at the College has successfully adopted the use of an online resource, Turnitin, which allows the tutor to check at a glance which learners have submitted their work; who has met the deadline; and obtain a plagiarism percentage report for each submission. It also allows online marking and feedback.

About South Nottingham College

South Nottingham College is a general FE college with a range of further and higher education courses and training opportunities for business and industry with a mission statement of "Success Through Learning".

It maintained its position as one of the region’s top FE Colleges following an impressive OFSTED inspection in November 2008, in which all curriculum areas were graded as good (Grade 2) and inspectors agreed that curriculum provision was outstanding and met the needs of learners, employers and the community exceptionally well.

The challenge

Ed Whiteley teaches across a range of Music Technology courses at South Nottingham College and was looking to promote an e-resource where the learners could track their progress online whilst at the same time dealing with plagiarism.

With about 60-70 learners varying from school-age learners, to BTEC courses, to those undertaking HNDs, Ed needed to find a suitable way that would meet the needs of the different levels of learners.

The activity

Ed attended an introductory session run by library staff to a piece of software called Turnitin (www.submit.ac.uk). This is a website that allows the tutor to check at a
glance which learners have submitted their work, who has met the deadline and gives an indicator for plagiarism for each submission.

After seeing it Ed was eager to introduce this initiative to learners because of the benefit it would have on their future in education. Not only would it be a good way of monitoring originality of work, it could be used for:

- Citing
- Correcting work
- Giving comments and feedback
- Marking
- Revision assignments

Ed found setting-up his students on Turnitin “incredibly easy and fast”. He just registered as a tutor, set-up a new course and then added in his students by supplying first name, surname and email address for them all.

He introduced the online tool to the learners via a PowerPoint presentation to demonstrate the ease of use and how the learners could log-in and set-up. This was accompanied by a handout which they downloaded for use at a later date should they ever need to recap.

**The outcomes**

The adoption of Turnitin has brought numerous benefits to the learners:

- They can submit their work online which saves them print credits;
- They can read comments and feedback online at any time;
• It tackles plagiarism head-on as learners have to undertake an originality report prior to final submission;
• It logs progression of assignments, so learners can see what they have submitted and if anything is outstanding;
• It improves their English because the tutor can comment and highlight errors throughout the assignment; and
• It allows them to become used to writing in their own words and keeping to deadlines.

“I have used the revision tool to give the learners an initial deadline for a short word count to ensure they are progressing in the right direction. I can then comment on their work at an incomplete stage and suggest opportunities for improvement.”

Ed Whiteley, Music Technology lecturer

Learners can engage with a discussion group using the same website to debate a chosen topic. The administrator ensures that appropriate questions or comments are submitted, and learners benefit from group working.

The impact

Across all the courses Ed teaches on, he is the only tutor who is engaging with this online resource. So initially there was some resistance from the learners because they didn’t have to submit their work in this fashion for other tutors.

Ed explained to them that it would be of great benefit for them in future as becoming accustomed to submitting work online is a requirement within many universities and plagiarism is a serious violation of college/university policy.

After a short period of use, plagiarism is virtually non-existent. As the website itself offers students the opportunity to check their plagiarism report prior to the submission deadline, this allows the learners to make any corrections before the final submission.

Learners also engaged with the PeerReview software where they responded to a range of questions relating to their fellow student’s assignments. Ed either chose pairings for learners to review each others work, or on some occasions he allowed the software to automatically assign pairs.

This had an evident benefit because the learners had to analyse each other’s work in order to respond to the questions, thereby promoting deeper learning.

This also provided Ed with the opportunity to allow learners of different levels to engage with each others work, which helped raise the quality of work across the group.
“The resource is fantastic for both the learner and the tutor - it allows learners to become accustomed to digesting information and writing in their own words.

“The software won’t necessarily be appropriate for every course. Although there is a lot of practical work on our Music Technology courses, there is an element of essay work, which is where Turnitin has really helped.”

Ed Whiteley, Music Technology lecturer

Unfortunately at present the grading matrix only allows grades of integer multiples whereas the majority of Ed’s courses are graded using Pass, Merit and Distinction. He is in touch with Turnitin, to see whether this could be a future addition.

Ed put forward his work with Turnitin to an internal awards process in the College that was facilitated by the Jisc Regional Support Centre for the East Midlands.

He won this award as managers in the College were impressed by the results that Ed had achieved. They are now keen to see Turnitin used on other courses and Ed has been asked to run some internal training sessions for other members of staff so that they can adopt it too.

Useful links

South Nottingham College

Turnitin

Jisc RSC East Midlands website

Disclaimer

Disclaimer: Jisc Regional Support Centres work with more than 2,000 UK learning providers helping them to improve performance and efficiency through the use of technology. Case studies may refer to specific products, processes or services. Such references are examples and are not endorsements or recommendations and should not be used for product endorsement purposes.