

Originality Checking for School Internal Assessment Activities

General Notes

To promote academic integrity and to deter students from copying other's work, schools and teachers should always provide guidance to students and advise them on how to use the information retrieved from the Internet and other sources properly and acknowledge the sources in their work.

With the advancement of technology, online software/tools are now available to assess the similarity between a piece of written work and the documents available on the Internet or collected in the databases linked to the software/tools. Schools/teachers may make use of technology to help their students on work improvement and provide more evidence on work originality for teachers' further interpretations and follow-up.

The use of technology to check the originality of students' work is not compulsory. If a school considers that the use of such technology is beneficial to their students' learning, the school can acquire such service with its own resources, taking into consideration the readiness of their teachers and the understanding of the students and parents. To protect the interest of students and school, school should obtain the authorization from the students and parents involved, regardless of the technology to be used.

Frequently Asked Questions

Technical aspects of originality checking tool

1. What is the working principle of originality checking tool?
 - The working principle of these tools is similar. Firstly, the teacher/ student uploads the electronic copy of a written assignment through the Internet to the school's designated detection service provider. The service provider then store the assignment in its data repository and compare with other documents stored in the repository, its subscribed databases and the Internet to identify any text sources having a certain degree of similarity with the assignment. The findings will be reported to schools/ teachers / students for follow-up.
2. Does the originality checking tool work on all kind of work assignments?
 - The design of most of these tools will work for written assignments presented in common computer text format, while the detection capability for plagiarism in non-written work such as graphics, charts and pictures etc is limited.
 - There are still other limitations of the tool. For instance, it cannot identify plagiarism from text sources that have never been posted onto the Internet or sent to the supplier of originality checking tool.

3. For the same document, are the findings produced from different originality checking tools similar?
 - As each tool has its unique design and technology, the findings on checking the same assignment by different tools may be different.
4. How can schools find suppliers from the market?
 - There are a number of local or oversea vendors on the market. Schools can always search from the Internet or other sources to find suitable suppliers.
5. Can school purchase the tool directly from a vendor?
 - Public-sector schools should follow the procurement procedures as stipulated in relevant circulars and guidelines. Besides, schools can make reference to the attached template in the website in preparing their own invitation of quotation for provision of plagiarism detection.

Handling of suspected plagiarism cases

6. Can schools use the findings of the originality checking tool to penalize students?
 - To promote academic integrity, schools should provide guidance to students on how to use the information retrieved from the Internet and other sources properly and acknowledge the sources in their work. Moreover, schools should advise students on what are expected and the consequences of malpractice.
 - Teachers should know their students well and can always exercise their professional judgment in detecting malpractice. To follow up suspected plagiarism cases, schools should formulate its own policy in consultation with its stakeholders.
 - Any technology for originality checking should only be used to provide an evidence of suspected plagiarism. In all cases, further investigation is needed.
7. Is there any provision from EDB of additional resources for schools adopting originality checking tool to perform the extra work induced?
 - No additional resource will be provided to schools on using / procuring originality checking tool, as schools can use the existing resources to cover relevant expenses.
 - It is not necessary to use the tool to check all assessment tasks. School should have a good planning on the scope of the checking (e.g. decide on the levels, subjects and number of assignments involved), administrative procedures and staff deployment at various stages of checking (e.g. account and submission management, initial scanning, further investigation of suspected cases).

8. Should schools seek consent from parents and students in using the tools for originality checking for students' work?

- According to the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, authorization from students and parents is necessary. School may make reference to the attached templates to prepare an authorization form and to seek legal advice.