

Faculty of Science

Electronic Submission of Postgraduate Theses

Guidance for Students

From 1 January 2015, all postgraduate research theses submitted to the University of Bristol will be checked by a text comparison system. This is in keeping with current practice at many universities in the UK and abroad. The aim is to help ensure that all theses refer to the relevant research literature appropriately as well as to safeguard against plagiarism.

This document contains guidance for students. Guidance for academic staff is contained in a separate document.

1. Your responsibilities

As the author of your thesis, you are responsible for its content. This responsibility includes ensuring that the research literature is properly cited and that the thesis contains no plagiarised material.

The University's regulations as to what constitutes plagiarism may be found in the [Examination Regulations](#). The University's procedures for checking and dealing with plagiarism may be found in [Annex 8](#) of the Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes. You are responsible for acting in accordance with these regulations and for understanding the possible consequences in case they are not followed.

2. Learning good practice

Learning how to engage with the literature in your discipline is an integral part of research training. You will acquire this training through the following:

- a) reading papers in your discipline
- b) feedback from your supervisor and annual reviewers on your written work, including guidance about literature review and citation
- c) preparing your own research for publication with guidance from your supervisor
- d) plagiarism training sessions in your School. You should attend one of these sessions before you submit your thesis.
- e) practice submissions to Turnitin, as described in the next section.

3. Practice submissions to Turnitin

[Turnitin](#) is a text comparison system that identifies similarities between the submitted document and a wide range of electronic publications. Turnitin does not check mathematical equations in a reliable fashion nor does it check images.

Before formally submitting your thesis, you may make up to 6 practice submissions (additional practice submissions may be allowed with approval from the Graduate Faculty Education Director). These may include annual progress reports, draft thesis chapters or an entire draft thesis. You must only submit your own work.

In addition to allowing you to check for and remove material that would constitute plagiarism, practice submission may also help to improve your writing. Recognising excessive influences from other scholars may encourage you to find alternative ways to present the literature and your research. You should make at least one practice submission to Turnitin before submitting your thesis.

Accessing Turnitin. At present, Turnitin for postgraduate students is accessed through Blackboard. You will be enrolled on a Blackboard course for postgraduate e-submission in your School, with separate areas for practice submission and formal submission.

Size limit. Documents submitted to Turnitin cannot exceed 40Mb or 400 pages. The 40Mb limit may be a problem if your document contains many figures, in particular high-resolution images. Simple solutions are to remove or suppress the figures, or to reduce the image resolution. If you are unable to get your document to meet the size constraints, contact the Postgraduate Administrator in your School.

Originality Report. Turnitin generates what is called an Originality Report, which will be sent to your Assignments inbox in Blackboard. The Originality Report is an annotated version of your document in which matched text is highlighted and linked to the corresponding source. See these links for [detailed guidance](#) and a [one-page summary](#) on viewing Originality Reports.

Determining what constitutes poor academic practice and plagiarism is a matter of academic judgement. There are no set rules. Text in your document that matches standard terminology and phrasing in your research community is to be expected. Matching over a paragraph or more should almost certainly be regarded as problematic unless the material has been properly cited (Turnitin can be configured to recognise some but not all forms of citation).

You should discuss Originality Reports with your supervisor, especially if there is a high degree of matching or if you have any concerns about how a report would be viewed in the context of checking for plagiarism. Your supervisor will not automatically have access to your Originality Reports, but you can send them a pdf version or else view the report together with your supervisor from your account. In any case, you should discuss at least one Originality Report with your supervisor before you submit your thesis.

Self-matching. If portions or the whole of your document have been previously published in electronic form, then Turnitin will find matches with these previous versions. The material may still be acceptable for inclusion in your thesis provided it is properly cited. Seek guidance from your supervisor if you are not sure. "Paper chapters", thesis chapters comprised of previously published papers, are a particular example. Guidance concerning paper chapters may be found here: [LINK TO PAPER CHAPTERS](#). Some key points are as follows: paper chapters must be clearly identified as such; the paper must be authored by the student with no more input from co-authors or supervisors than would have been provided in drafting a conventional thesis chapter; additional introductory or contextual material may be required.

Submitted documents will not be stored in the Turnitin repository. There is no danger, therefore, of matching a previous practice submission.

4. Formal submission

When you submit your thesis for examination, you must submit an electronic version along with two printed versions. The electronic and printed versions are submitted independently (the printed versions go to the Examinations Office), but the submission deadline is the same for both. The electronic version will be put through Turnitin.

The electronic version is submitted through the Formal Submission area of your School's e-submission course on Blackboard. The procedure is otherwise similar to that for practice submissions discussed above.

As for practice Turnitin submissions, your thesis document must not exceed 20MB or 400 pages. The size can be reduced by suppressing images or decreasing the resolution of images. If you find these steps are not sufficient to meet the size requirements, please contact the Director of Postgraduate Studies in your School at least two weeks before the submission deadline.

You are advised not to leave electronic submission until the deadline in order to allow for unforeseen problems (eg, loss of internet access). Late submissions attributed to a lack of familiarity with the procedure will not be excused.

When you submit the electronic version of your thesis, you will be asked to confirm that the text is the same as in the printed version.

After electronic submission, you will be directed to send a confirmation email to an e-submission mailbox (this cannot be done automatically at present). It is important that you do this so that your thesis can be processed in a timely manner.

Submitted theses will not be stored in the Turnitin repository.

5. What happens next

The procedure for checking theses and dealing with cases of suspected plagiarism is described in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees [here](#). The Originality Report will be reviewed by a member of academic staff in your school (typically the Director of Postgraduates Studies, and not your supervisor or internal examiner). The review will normally be carried out within 10 working days of submission, and you will be notified of the outcome. If it is deemed there is no evidence of text plagiarism, the Examinations Office will proceed with the processing of your thesis. If there is suspicion of plagiarism, the procedures described in the link above will be initiated

Dr Jonathan Robbins
Graduate Faculty Education Director
Faculty of Science
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