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Madiah Jilani
Teacher of Health & Social Care

Success Story: Leyton Sixth Form College - Improving student outcomes through effective feedback

Turnitin Feedback Studio is designed to support efficient assignment submission, meaningful feedback and the development of academic integrity. By providing staff and students with the information and the tools that they need, Turnitin supports the feedback process, upholds originality and promotes original writing skills.

Background

Located in East London, Leyton Sixth Form College serves a large and ethnically diverse student population, drawn from Waltham Forest and the surrounding boroughs. With the majority of its students aged between 16 and 18, the College provides a wide selection of both academic and vocational study programmes, including A-level and BTEC qualifications.

The performance indicators for learner destinations from Leyton Sixth Form College are very positive, with a high proportion of Level 3 learners progressing to university. As a sixth form provider, the College works to provide students with academic support at all levels and equip them with the skills they will need for later in life.

In the words of Madiah Jilani, a teacher of Health and Social Care at the College:

“We teach our students that, ultimately, we want them to be happy and successful with whatever they choose as their next step.”

Madiah, winner in the Academic Integrity for UK Secondary and Further Education category in the 2016 Turnitin Global Innovation Awards, explains that a large part of her role is to prepare her students to be successful both in their chosen courses and beyond.

The challenge

As a sixth form provider, most Leyton Sixth Form College students arrive from secondary school with minimal knowledge of digital literacies or accurate academic citation.

This can present a challenge, since many are enrolled onto courses that are predominantly or entirely coursework-based, such as BTECs or the EPQ (Extended Project Qualification).



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Staff at the College therefore have some knowledge gaps to fill if their students are to flourish. When Madihah arrived at the college, she soon discovered some inconsistencies in her new department's approach to academic integrity and assignment submission. Delivering courses consisting of 100% coursework, Madihah was keen to improve her students' academic literacy skills and give them the self-confidence to produce original assignment submissions. Madihah explains:

"Whether students are completing an assignment or taking an exam, it's important for them to know that they've got there on their own."

Implementation

Turnitin Feedback Studio offered Madihah the opportunity to develop the academic skills of her new cohort, while enhancing her own assessment feedback. She was already familiar with the platform, as she had successfully used it when teaching at her prior college in Croydon.

At the beginning of the academic year, students are given detailed training in academic skills, such as accurate referencing, with the expectation that they will submit their assignments electronically using Turnitin. Madihah explains that, "Students can upload the work and teachers can mark it, adding in comments and feedback." She adds:

"When students start at the College we do a session with them, that focuses on plagiarism, the importance of academic integrity, and how to use Turnitin. Turnitin is very well embedded and they know it's part of their learning process from the very beginning."

Many teachers and students working in other departments across Leyton Sixth Form College, across a range of A-level and BTEC programmes of study, have similarly embraced the range of tools, and resulting benefits, Turnitin Feedback Studio offers.

Creating teachable moments

A higher-than-desired originality score, explains Madihah, can present a valuable opportunity to sit down with a learner to talk through the result and together discuss how the submission can be improved next time.

Looking at the Originality Report together is an opportunity for meaningful student-teacher dialogue, rather than a 'telling off' Madihah emphasises, adding, "I think it sometimes encourages much deeper feedback."



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Jemma Coleborn, a fellow teacher in the Health and Social Care department, uses Turnitin specifically as a tool to support the feedback and marking of BTEC coursework. She requests the coursework from her students, then feeds back directly onto the assignment after having run an originality check. Jemma then sets aside a lesson or two for her to spend time with each individual student to review that feedback in conjunction with the BTEC rubric. The student will have had time to privately review Jemma's marking online at home, self-reflect, and then see how this related directly to the BTEC marking standards.

Preparing students for their next step

Students enrolled on some courses now routinely use Turnitin Feedback Studio for the submission of all academic assignments. One third-year student within the Health and Social Care department, aspiring to study Education at university, explains that she prefers submitting her work electronically and receiving feedback online, as this means she doesn't have to "pester" her teacher for feedback or worry about it getting lost.

Another student working towards BTEC Level 3, comments that she enjoys receiving her feedback and marks via Turnitin in advance of a lesson or her one-to-one feedback session. She feels reassured that her teacher takes some time to review comments on a one-to-one basis in class to check understanding and next steps. What's great, she says, is that the short time between receiving written feedback and later discussing it with a teacher helps her to reflect on her learning. This student says having that private time to think and reflect, coupled with the personalised feedback from her teacher, has built her confidence immensely.

Turnitin Feedback Studio has also helped students to develop greater academic autonomy and self-reliance:

"You realise you can't leave your work until last minute. You've nowhere to copy from and you've got to use your own brain. It's a barrier to prevent you from copying and to avoid failing."

The students say that the introduction of Turnitin has alleviated a lot of anxiety surrounding their digital literacy skills and emphasised the importance of original writing. They report feeling more independent, confident and better prepared for university life: "I have friends who were with me at school who have gone off to other colleges, who have asked me how to reference. We were taught in the first year here how to reference. If you didn't cite properly then it would be highlighted via Turnitin there and then, rather than being taught how in the last year of college right before going on to uni next year!"



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A third BTEC Level 3 student wanting to study Criminology at university confidently adds:

“Now we reference the way we would have to reference at university, which makes me feel a lot more prepared for that transition.”

Results

In the 2015/16 academic year, Leyton Sixth Form College students collectively submitted 31,434 assignments using Turnitin Feedback Studio. In-year data indicates that this figure will be surpassed this current academic year (2016/17) by about 20%.

Students at the College who are using Turnitin Feedback Studio report feeling more confident in the work that they submit and better prepared for the future.

Staff report that the use of Turnitin has enhanced the teaching, learning and assessment process at Leyton Sixth Form College, resulting in better quality feedback and improved student assignment submissions. They note that more efficient administration and marking processes have saved valuable time.

Madihah looks forward to working within a completely paperless department in the near future and plans to trial Turnitin Feedback Studio voice comments for future assessments.



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