Using Grademark in the FHSCE

Abstract

Overall the implementation of Turnitin GradeMark has moved forward from the pilot stage to all first year text-based modules and, from the students’ perception, appears positive, not only for ease of submission, but the value of an Originality Report and the opportunity to resubmit work to check right up to the hand in date. The evaluation from students in February 2012 and June 2012 were able to highlight areas of concerns some of which were specific to Turnitin GradeMark, such as logging in and seeing an overall percentage and others such as feedback which relates to the amount of specific feedback markers give students. The inconstancy of feedback needs to be addressed with markers to ensure that all students receive standardised feedback across the module. This needs to be followed by pathway and programme leaders and within individual module teams.

Keywords

turnitin, grademark, marking, feedback
Introduction
The background to this project stems from an e-feedback project deployed within FHSCE during January / February 2011 that allowed students to receive their feedback directly to their student e-mail account. This project received very positive feedback from students, both anecdotally and via the Student Union. We have built on this to improve the student experience by utilising Turnitin GradeMark to provide students with standardised electronic feedback and administrators and academics with a more efficient e-submission, e-marking and e-feedback cycle. We anticipated that this would make it easier and more convenient for students to submit their assessable written work without the need to travel to University. For academics this means that scripts are received electronically sooner on the day of submission.

This allows greater efficiencies in accessing marking, reduced travel time, removes the need to carry weighty loads of essays and other course work and assists staff in keeping to the deadline to complete marking and moderation within 20 days. The marking process is also streamlined, consistent and transparent, encouraging parity of marking and moderation. Furthermore mark sheets that are generated by GradeMark can be imported into SITS through the use of a macro and this will support more timely and accurate release of marks to students. The process for evaluating Turnitin GradeMark included exploring both the academic and administering experience for staff and students. For the FHSCE the evaluation process started with the pilot in summer 2011, when eight modules were assessed summatively using GradeMark, with a sum of 163 students. In September 2011 there was an implementation of a larger number of modules, 63 across the faculty with 3,441 submissions of work via Turnitin GradeMark.

Specific Aims of the Project to Evaluate the Use of Grademark
- To investigate the effectiveness of students submitting written assignments to a web portal using e-submission functionality;
- To explore with academic and administrative colleagues their experiences of reviewing, editing, assessing and marking submitted work online;
- To review students’ comments for future practice.

Process, Viability and Evaluation
It was felt by the GradeMark task team (made up of both administrative and academic staff) within the faculty that an evaluation of the experience should be undertaken to ensure that any challenges that arose in the process could be reviewed and resolved wherever possible. The process for this was a questionnaire via SurveyMonkey to all staff within the faculty; this was undertaken twice during the academic year. This report offers a comparison of the two surveys and also the plans for the future using GradeMark as an online assessment tool.

Comparison of January 2012 and June 2012 Evaluation
Data Collection
Academic and administrative staff from the support services, including iCentre and Faculty Student Advisors (FSA), were encouraged to complete an online questionnaire about their experiences in February 2012 and June 2012.

Students were also encouraged to fill in an online questionnaire about their experiences.

Other Sources
Quantifiable data was obtained from exploring the administration processes required to enable students to submit their work online and comparing this to previous experiences of administering module submission manually.
Sample Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>06/02/2012</th>
<th>13/06/12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students undertaking survey</td>
<td>148 (4 used txttools)</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of academic staff undertaking survey</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of administrative staff undertaking survey</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of FSA staff undertaking survey</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The themes are explored initially for specific groups, then compiled into general themes and a way forward is suggested. Where appropriate, comparisons are made between the February and the June surveys.

Themes from Faculty Administrators

In February the sample was small and was therefore incorporated with the June survey. Some concerns were raised about support when problems arose both for students and academics, especially just before hand in. When students accessed central services for support they were often referred back to the module administrators without simple queries being dealt with such as log-in issues. Issues have also been raised from the administrators about dealing with extensions and the macro to ‘fetch’ marks. The administrative staff, who, to date, have filled in the questionnaire, highlighted their belief in the system; however they believed that more support is required especially at peak times of hand-ins where the workload is seen to be the most challenging. A process of logging issues is being developed to encourage a standardised response to frequently asked questions.

Themes from FSAs

In February the sample was small and was therefore incorporated with the June survey. Most FSAs in the FHSCE had dealt with up to 50 students using the e-submission process. Most felt that the guidance given was relevant but a member of staff from the iCentre was concerned about the through-put of students for next year.

Also highlighted:

‘The issue of one-day extensions remains, as this clashes with the Academic Regs, and clarity within the Regs would be very useful to FSAs.’

‘Doesn't appear to have enough support in place for students with IT issues’.

Themes from Students

February Survey

83% of students preferred the process to paper submission:

- **Ease of submission**: this was a common theme that the process worked well and was straightforward.
- **Originality Report (OR)**: most students valued the formative learning they received by having the OR report.
- **Log in issues**: a few students had log-in issues, but this did not seem to be a common occurrence.
- **Formatting issues**: a couple of students highlighted their concerns that the work did not stay in the format they had on their file.

Themes from both Surveys

While a slight reduction was seen from 83% to 70% of students preferring the process to paper submission, other themes were similar:

- **Opportunity to resubmit**: in both surveys nearly 90% of students submitted more than once and valued the process which enabled exploration of their OR.
- **Not having to travel**: in both surveys many students valued the fact that they could submit from home, especially if they were undertaking distance learning or lived a long way from the university.
Themes from Academic Staff

February Survey

Setting up classes: a few classes had challenges to begin with as some staff did not follow the agreed process; however the setting up of classes and adding of students evolved throughout the semester and training of staff supported the process.

Moderation: while this was a challenge for some markers the moderation process was in line with current university regulations and kept the process and forms already in place. The challenge was for moderators to see the work in the different markers’ sections.

Submission: while staff highlighted this as an issue for students this was not reflected in the student evaluation, rather the students felt on the whole this was straightforward.

Reading on the screen: a small number of staff did have problems reading on the screens, support has been offered via Heads of Departments in terms of assessment and allocation of technological resources.

Annotation on scripts: a significant number of staff wished to annotate on the scripts, a function that is offered in GradeMark.

June Survey

Nearly 90% of academics that completed the survey have marked one or two modules using GradeMark, and marked up to 50 scripts online, and felt supported in the process. The academics felt the students were also supported and had undertaken and submitted formative work. However while students did not highlight submission as an issue there were still concerns from academics about students being able to submit work. The marking and moderating process is seen by academics as straightforward, however the screen size made the marking more difficult as did the completion of the mark sheet. General comments include the need for a spell checker, and that for a few markers the screen sometimes jumps. The lock out of GradeMark after an hour is also seen as a challenge, and the restriction to 800 words of feedback was highlighted by one academic as too little. A final comment:

‘I like the system I wish we could annotate scripts but otherwise I am happy with it.’

Discussion

Overall the students’ perceptions appear positive, not only for the ease of submission, but also because of their perception of the value of the OR and the opportunity to resubmit work right up to the hand-in date. A few students highlighted an area of concern such as the amount of assessment feedback produced for their assignment. This inconsistency of feedback is not a factor related to Grademark, rather it needs to be addressed with markers to ensure that all students receive standardised feedback across the module. This has been followed up by pathway and programme leaders and within individual module teams.

There were mixed responses from academics reflecting upon their overall experience of using GradeMark. Some of the comments do appear to conflict with the positive results of previous sections within the survey. While most academics felt they were prepared for the process with the training they received, their experiences highlighted some of the challenges with the marking process. Some of these issues are linked to the use of technology in general, while others appear to be the software itself. The process is a learning one, which anecdotally from discussions with academics becomes easier with repeated use. The feedback and positive response from the students reinforces the strength of online submission, which appears to be mirrored by the administrative and FSA comments. Overall 80% of staff appeared to have felt that the training offered by FHSCE for GradeMark was appropriate, with 70% of academic staff valuing the process. The majority of the issues were resolved at the time; however as this is a developmental process the continued evaluation for the faculty will give us a clearer picture of the way forward.

Overarching Issues

- The GradeMark team within FHSCE have asked the administrative staff to keep a log of any issues which arise from either staff or students in regard to classes and access and the team can continue to ensure that the progress continues for the benefit of the students but also within university regulations.
The GradeMark team within FHSCE will also be monitoring the workload element and the peaks that arise at the beginning and end of modules.

Some of the challenges faced by both academic and administrative staff would be resolved if the e-submission system was integrated with SITS, some of the log-in and mark sheet issues (including using the ‘Fetch’ macro to retrieve marks) would no longer be a concern.

The process has highlighted problems with the current system of extensions, mitigations and appeals as there does not appear to be a straightforward or robust system in GradeMark to communicate the outcomes of these decisions across the academic and administrative groups, leading to potential student dissatisfaction.

The resources need to be assessed for future needs, especially when all text based work is going through the GradeMark system within the faculty.

Training of staff and students in using GradeMark within the faculty and across the university including central services such as the iCentre and the IT helpdesk in the library requires additional resourcing.

Conclusion

Overall the implementation of Turnitin GradeMark has moved forward from the pilot stage to all first-year text-based modules and from the students’ perception appears positive, not only for the ease of submission, but for the opportunity to resubmit work right up to the hand in date. The evaluation from students in February 2012 and June 2012 highlighted areas of concern, some of which were specific to Turnitin GradeMark, and others such as feedback which relates to the amount of specific feedback markers give students.

As the rolling out of GradeMark across all text-based, word-processed modules is an on-going process the continued development and evaluation for the faculty will give us a clearer picture of the way forward. A log of any administrative issues which arise will be collated and the GradeMark team within FHSCE will continue to ensure that the progress continues for the benefit of the students but also within university regulations. The development process has expanded in September 2012 for all text-based word-processed work to be submitted via GradeMark.

Future Developments for the 2012/13 Academic Year in FHSCE

With the exception of Portfolios, submissions through our Regional Partners and some UGMP and MP (which will be decided at course level), all text-based, word-processed assessments will go through GradeMark.

An e-assessment project lead is now in post, initially for 6 months to support this larger development of GradeMark

Students now have a new class open to them specifically for formative originality checking (called ‘Check Originality Report’ COR class).

This class is available to them for the full duration of their course and can be used as many times as required.

When students are ready to submit their final piece of work for marking, they will upload this to their module class on GradeMark (as has been the case previously).

However, as with any physical submission to the iCentre, students will now have only one opportunity to submit to their assignment for marking.

The faculty will be working with IT Services to move forward the prospect of integration of GradeMark and SharePoint.