

# Memo

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To: David Hutchinson, Chair, IT&IC

From: Rajiv Jhangiani, Vice Provost, Teaching and Learning

Date: April 27, 2023

Subject: **Turnitin Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tool**

[brocku.ca](http://brocku.ca)

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Dear Dr. Hutchinson,

Over 20 years ago, Brock University procured Turnitin, phrase matching software that has since been used by instructors to assist them in the detection of plagiarism during the course of evaluating essays, assignments, and other work that is required for a given course.

On April 4, 2023, Turnitin [launched a new Artificial Intelligence detection tool](#) which they have pledged to provide at no additional cost until December 2023. This is the first additional service Turnitin has added to their originality reports since ETS Grammar Check was added in 2012. However, this new tool is distinct from ETS Grammar Check or other Turnitin tools such as PeerMark in that it is not configurable by individual instructors or at a course or assignment level.

The company's rush to release this new tool has raised concern across the global post-secondary community (e.g., [Financial Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#)) that a unilateral decision by a third-party vendor to add a new, unevaluated technology would potentially circumvent our usual checks and balances (e.g., privacy impact analysis) and University governance processes.

The timing of this quickly-scheduled release also coincided with the end of term here at Brock, which generated an additional set of concerns about the negative impact on both faculty and students of introducing a new tool without sufficient clarity or guidance.

Brock University has hosted several discussions about the rapid emergence of generative AI and the associated challenges in responding to its impact on authorship. There is no doubt that instructors need support in responding to this change. However, Brock's Centre for Pedagogical Innovation (CPI) has also heard from several members of our faculty who voiced their skepticism of Turnitin's response, including those with significant expertise in the areas of artificial intelligence and pedagogy. CPI has shared [guidance on generative AI](#), including [guidance on the current state of AI detection tools](#).

Following communications between the University and Turnitin, I can confirm that this new experimental tool has *not* been activated for Brock University, as is also the case for many other universities across Canada, the United States, and Europe. As Turnitin refines this new tool we would like to ensure that the University is able to properly evaluate it, including in terms of its efficacy (e.g., false positive rate) and budgetary implications. This will require Turnitin offering some of the controls that it offers instructors and administrators for current functionality. Notably, the University's current contract with Turnitin expires on May 31, 2024, which offers an additional motivation to re-evaluate this software (and evaluate this new tool) along with our relationship with this vendor.

This issue was discussed at the Teaching and Learning Policy Committee meeting on April 14, 2023 and I am bringing this to the attention of IT&IC members to ensure that the appropriate University governance structures are fully engaged in a discussion that carries strategic implications for educational technologies and technology-enhanced teaching and learning at Brock.