

Electronic submission of assignments via VeriGuide

The (Provisional) Academic Board decided that all student assignments in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes should be submitted via VeriGuide with effect from September 2014. This applies to assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based (i.e., excluding calculations in science, brief laboratory reports, drawings in fine arts and architecture, etc.) VeriGuide is developed by teachers in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, CUHK. It will archive all papers (in English or Chinese) and provide comparisons with web resources, previous term papers and term papers submitted in the current assignment, as data for the teachers to evaluate the originality of the submission. It will also generate alerts for the teacher and where appropriate the thesis committee.

Why has CUHK(SZ) decided to employ VeriGuide?

Introduction

Given the ever greater availability and manipulation of e-format text sources, educational institutions around the world are experiencing a growing need to discern the difference between original and unattributed work submitted by students for academic credit. CUHK(SZ) is no different and has, in order to meet this need, adopted VeriGuide, a system developed by CUHK. VeriGuide is similar to commercial systems adopted by many universities, but has two major advantages: first, it is bilingual; and second, by linking to CUHK(SZ)'s learning management system, it does not require input from the course teacher.

Why does CUHK(SZ) employ VeriGuide as an aid to measure the originality of student work?

Plagiarism detection engines can all too often be viewed as a negative step taken to 'police' students. However, VeriGuide and its counterparts should instead be experienced by educational institutions and their students as a learning tool and a force for quality assurance.

The various benefits arising from the adoption of a system such as VeriGuide can be set out as follows:

1. **Fairness:** VeriGuide ensures that all students are treated in the same way. Assessments are judged on the basis that students have submitted their own work. It would be unfair to the students who have worked hard and presented their own work for assessment, if the University did not distinguish between students who have worked hard to comply with the assessment rules and those who have not complied with the assessment rules. VeriGuide protects students who have done what was asked of them in the assessment.
2. **Learning experience:** By ensuring the submission of students' own work, VeriGuide encourages students to engage in deep learning, resulting in true consideration and understanding of the topic, rather than a surface appraisal of sources.
3. **Good scholarship:** In addition to promoting deep learning, VeriGuide requires students to demonstrate their scholarship self-consciously by organizing and attributing relevant sources, thus encouraging students to develop good research and presentation skills.
4. **The good reputation and the prestige of the degree earned by our graduates:** By putting in place a system such as VeriGuide which ensures that students engage in deep learning, demonstrate their good scholarship and create their own responses to assessment questions, the reputation and the prestige of the degree earned by our graduates are enhanced.

What about privacy?

1. Students should ensure that their names appear on the paper only in a designated place on the front page. This will then be removed when the paper is stored for future reference.
2. Students should discuss with their course teachers the appropriate way to handle writing assignments that may contain personal information, for example, personal accounts and self-reflections. In most such cases, the teachers would be expected to exempt such assignments from VeriGuide, since personal accounts and self-reflections are unlikely to be plagiarized.
3. Students should exercise care in protecting the privacy of third parties that may be cited. For example, clinical studies should identify patients not by name, but say as 'a 35 year-old male'. Social Work field placement reports should identify the agency as 'Agency A'. If identifying information is needed by the teacher, that should be separately provided on a sheet attached to the hard copy of the paper, submitted to the teacher but not to VeriGuide.

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