

## POLICY ON TEXT-MATCHING SOFTWARE

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| Approved:<br>Senate<br>Board of Governors | December 1, 2004 (Minute 13)<br>December 13, 2004 (Minute 7) |
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*Full legislative history appears at the end of this Policy.*

### The Use of Text-matching Software at McGill

McGill is committed to promoting the highest levels of academic integrity, which is fundamental to achieving our mission of the advancement of learning. In promoting academic integrity, McGill strives to provide information about the meaning of integrity, about how to foster it, and about the consequences of breaching it.

Because plagiarism is a serious attack on academic integrity, universities are increasingly taking steps to deal with it. Any solution must include providing students with information about proper citation and about how to avoid plagiarism (see "Student Guide to Avoid Plagiarism" at [www.mcgill.ca/integrity/studentguide/](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/studentguide/)) as well as providing instructors with suggestions about how to prevent plagiarism, such as designing assignments that are difficult to plagiarize (see "Strategies to Reduce Cheating and Plagiarism" at [www.mcgill.ca/integrity/strategies](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/strategies)).

[...]

In light of the foregoing, Senate, on December 1, 2004 (D04-32) and the Board of Governors on December 13, 2004 (GD04-29 "Appendix D") approved that:

- a) McGill University should obtain an institutional license for the use of text-matching software that meets the approval of the CSA. In selecting the software, McGill University shall assure itself that the intellectual property rights of users are protected.
- (b) The Policy and Procedures for Use of Text-matching Software as a Means of Investigating Suspected Plagiarism shall be followed at McGill (D04-33).
- (c) The Policy and Procedures for the Use of Text-matching Software in Courses shall be followed at McGill (D04-34).
- (d) The University shall not oblige instructors to ask their students to submit written work to text-matching software.
- (e) Instructors who require the use of text-matching software in their courses shall follow the Policy and Procedures for the Use of Text-matching Software in Courses.

[...]

- (h) McGill University will review the use of text-matching software two years after the start of the contract.

### The Use of Text-Matching Software as A Means Of Investigating Suspected Plagiarism

[...]

#### Policy

[...]

When the University has reasonable cause to suspect that a student has represented the work of another person as his or her own, the University may take any reasonable means to verify the originality of the work. Information from text-matching software can be used as admissible evidence, either to initiate or corroborate an investigation or a charge of plagiarism under Section 15 of the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

[...]

## **Procedures**

Upon receiving an allegation of plagiarism, Disciplinary Officers who have reasonable cause to suspect that a student has, in the submitted written work, represented the work of another person as his or her own may submit the suspicious portion(s) of the student's work to text-matching software, as one means of verifying the originality of the student's work. The Disciplinary Officer may ask the student to provide an electronic copy of the work, or may scan the work, for submission.

## **The Use Of Text-Matching Software In Courses**

### **Policy**

Instructors may adopt the use of text-matching software to verify the originality of student's written course work.

### **Procedures**

- 1 Instructors, at the beginning of the course, shall take reasonable steps to inform students of the following:
  - a) the reasons for which academic integrity is important (e.g., core values; social contract; level playing field; value of degree; value of education; basis of advancement of knowledge, etc.);
  - b) what constitutes plagiarism;
  - c) what constitutes appropriate footnotes, citations, and bibliographic references for the course.

Although students can be referred to the web—e.g., <[www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity)>—for some of this material, the issue of academic integrity shall be discussed in class to reinforce its importance.

- 2 Students shall be informed in writing before the end of the drop/add period that they are expected to submit written work in the course to a text-matching software service, which is meant to assure students that everyone will be evaluated on the basis of their own work and to warn students that plagiarism is likely to be detected.

Students shall also be informed in writing before the end of the drop/add period that they are free, without penalty of grade, to choose an alternative way of attesting to the authenticity of their work. Instructors shall provide students with at least two possible alternatives that are not unduly onerous and that are appropriate for the type of written work, and the alternatives shall be chosen from the following:

- a) submitting copies of multiple drafts;
- b) submitting an annotated bibliography;
- c) submitting photocopies of sources;
- d) taking an oral examination directed at issues of originality;
- e) responding in writing to a quiz or questions directed at issues of originality;
- f) providing a written report regarding the process of completing the work; other alternatives devised by the instructor, provided that they are not unduly onerous, that they are meant to attest for authenticity of the written work, and that they meet the approval of the Dean or Disciplinary Officer in the faculty in which the course is offered.

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*Legislative History:*

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Senate  
Board of Governors

December 1, 2004  
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Minute 13  
Minute 7