UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

TOOLS FOR THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper provides an update on the digital tools that have been piloted during the AY 2022-23 to support the delivery of Education, two of which were funded through the "Tools for the Delivery of Education" strand of the Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) budget.

These digital tools are:

- Respondus LockDown Browser, for enhancing the integrity of online assessments.
- Individualised Peer Assessed Contribution (IPAC), for supporting peer evaluation in group work.
- Authorship, a tool developed by Turnitin, for supporting the investigation of suspected cases of contract cheating.

This paper is for discussion and for approving the recommendations set out further below, before approaching DSC with cases to secure funding for such tools in AY 2023-24 and beyond.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	**Date**
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	
Further consideration/ approval required by	Digital Strategy Committee	Email circulation

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The University Education Committee is invited to approve the following:

- Recommendation 1: The submission of a business case to DSC for procuring Respondus LockDown Browser, for the following 3 years.
- Recommendation 2: The submission of a business case to DSC for procuring a tool to support peer evaluation in group work, for the following 3 years.
- Recommendation 3: The approach to developing a business case for continuing to pilot Authorship, a tool developed by Turnitin, to support the investigation of suspected cases of contract cheating, for a further year.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 RESPONDUS LOCKDOWN BROWSER

The return to on-campus teaching has provided the opportunity to run invigilated online assessments delivered through MyAberdeen. In these situations, it is desirable to enhance the integrity of the assessment process by locking down the online assessment so that students are not able to access other applications during the test or examination.

In February 2023 the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) started a free trial of Respondus LockDown Browser, a custom browser that is deeply integrated within Blackboard Learn (MyAberdeen), which locks down the testing environment. Respondus LockDown

Browser is used by over 2000 higher educational institutional worldwide to enhance the integrity of invigilated online assessments.

The key features of Respondus LockDown Browser are:

- Limited Toolbar - Only has Forward, Back, Refresh, and Stop buttons.
- Assessment Mode - Assessments are full-screen and can't be minimized or closed until they're submitted.
- Disabled Controls - Printing, certain keyboard shortcuts, screenshots, function keys, and right-click menus can't be used.
- Blocked Features and Applications - Some usual features like the Start button (for Windows users), system tray, and menu bars are removed. Several screen capture, messaging, screen-sharing, and network monitoring applications are also blocked.
- Advanced settings – access during the online assessment to a list of specified web domains can be enabled

CAD liaised with colleagues in the Directorate of Digital & Information Services (DDIS) to install the Respondus LockDown Browser in managed PC classrooms in the Old Aberdeen campus and in the Doha campus, for courses that were trialling Respondus LockDown Browser.

Academic staff trialling the Respondus LockDown Browser said it was easy to use and it performed as expected. Evaluations of students' experiences were run by CAD and by Dr Nigel Beacham, both of which concluded that students found it easy to use.

The Classroom Support Team that installed the Respondus LockDown Browser in specific classrooms PCs confirmed that it was straightforward to install and could be incorporated into the classroom build for AY 2023-24, thus ensuring it was made available in all classroom PCs in the future.

The alternative open-source solution, Safe Exam Browser, was reviewed but it did not enable an individual assessment to be locked down in MyAberdeen, nor did it provide options for specifying specific web domains that students could access during a test.

The expected benefits of implementing Respondus LockDown Browser institutionally are:

- Enhance academic integrity by preventing cheating during on-campus online assessments.
- Increase staff confidence in on-campus online assessment security.
- Reduce the administrative burden of monitoring and addressing academic misconduct in on-campus online assessments.
- Ensure continuous updates and maintenance of the software.

In addition, it provides an opportunity to explore options for students to use their own devices for invigilated online assessments, as they can also install the software on their computers.

For information, the costs for procuring Respondus LockDown Browser institution wide are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Costs for Procuring Respondus LockDown Browser (LDB), excluding VAT

	Cost of Respondus LDB in USD	Cost of Respondus LDB in GBP
Year 1 – AY 2023-24	$5,045	~ £4,000
Year 2 – AY 2024-25	$5,221	~ £4,135
Year 3 – AY 2025-26	$5,403	~ £4,280

On the basis of the above, the committee is being asked to approve Recommendation 1, which recommends the submission of a business case to DSC for procuring Respondus LockDown Browser, for the following 3 years, based on the costs in Table 1.

4.2 Peer evaluation in Group Work

Collaborative learning through group work has been shown to enhance learning and develop teamwork skills which are highly valued by employers. However, one of the challenges with group work revolves around ensuring fairness, when it comes to assessment. An effective approach to this involves incorporating peer evaluation into the assessment process. This involves students in a group assessing the contribution of their peers to the group work, which can then be used to provide individual grades for the group work.

On the 13 October 2022, funding (£7,500 excluding VAT) was approved by the Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) to pilot the peer evaluation tool IPAC (Individual Peer Assessed Contribution), a tool developed and maintained by University College London (UCL), in order to assess the institution's requirements and potential usage for such a tool, and to inform a business case for procuring this type of peer evaluation tool for a period of 3 years starting in AY 2023-24.

There were 19 courses that used IPAC as part of group work, which have provided valuable feedback on the requirements for using such a tool as part of the assessment of group work. In one of the courses where students were surveyed on their views of IPAC, those that responded (10 in total) indicated that the peer evaluation process was simple and straightforward, with 8 agreeing that the group peer review exercise was worthwhile and provided them with confidence in the final assessment grade.

The expected benefits of implementing a peer evaluation tool institutionally are:

- Greater student satisfaction with group work, as the assessment process is seen to be fair and transparent.
- Time-saving and increased efficiency in the assessment process.
- Enhanced collaboration and accountability among students.
- Improved accuracy and objectivity in peer evaluations.

Based on the costs of using IPAC during AY 2022-23, it has been estimated that it could cost between £7,500 and £12,500 per year, excluding VAT, for 3 years, depending on usage.

Based on the above, the committee is being asked to approve Recommendation 2, which is to submit a business case to DSC to procure a tool to support peer evaluation in group work, for 3 years, starting in AY 2023-24. An evaluation of potential solutions will take place, based on the requirements identified by academic staff involved in piloting IPAC during this academic year. This will ensure a tool is procured that meets the needs of academic staff and is cost-effective for the institution, for the following 3 years.

4.3 Authorship, a tool developed by Turnitin, to investigate potential contract cheating

The University has two tools that it uses to support the detection of plagiarism, which includes self-plagiarism, and collusion: Turnitin Feedback Studio and Blackboard's SafeAssign. These are text-matching tools, which check for text similarity between any assessments previously submitted to their databases, libraries of publications and online content available on the internet.

Following the UEC paper (UEC/230622/010) last year, on institutional approaches to addressing contract cheating in assessments, funding (£25,708.55) to pilot Authorship during AY 2022-23, a tool developed by Turnitin, was approved by the Digital Strategy Committee on the 13 October 2022.

The Turnitin Authorship tool assists staff investigating potential cases of contract cheating to gather evidence to support or contest the case(s) brought to their attention. The reports produced by Authorship provide details of document properties and writing consistency across submissions made by the student in various courses.

A Task and Finish Group (TFG) was established to provide governance and ultimately make recommendations about future University-wide implementation of Authorship. The membership and remit of the group is detailed in Appendix 1. To date there have been no potential cases of contract cheating brought to the attention of Schools piloting the Authorship tool, which has

made it impossible to conduct an evaluation of the benefits of using Authorship. The last meeting of the TFG will be on the 23 May, at which point it will make recommendations on whether the Authorship pilot should be extended by a year or not, and what governance arrangements should be put in place for AY 2023-24 and beyond.

It is proposed that the approach to developing a business case for continuing to pilot Authorship for a further year should involve the following:

- A recommendation, in May, from the TFG on whether the Authorship pilot should be extended for a further year or not.
- Approval, by the middle of June, by UEC of the recommendation made by the TFG
- If the Authorship pilot is to be extended by a year, a business case is submitted to DSC before the end of June.

The committee is therefore being asked to approve Recommendation 3, which is the approach detailed above to developing a business case for continuing to pilot Authorship for a further year.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from Professor Kirsty Kiezebrink, (k.kiezebrink@abdn.ac.uk), Dean for Educational Innovation, or Dr Sara Preston (s.preston@abdn.ac.uk), Senior eLearning Adviser.

10 May 2023

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Appendix 1

Task and Finish Group: Turnitin Authorship and Academic Integrity - Policy and Practice

Membership and Remit

Group Membership

- Dean for Educational Innovation: Kirsty Kiezebrink
- Assistant Registrar (Academic Services): Liam Dyker (acting)
- Deputy Academic Registrar: Yvonne Gordon
- Director of Education, NCS: Bill Harrison
- Director of Education, Biological Sciences: Michelle Pinard
- Director of Education, Geosciences: Josh Wright
- Director of Education, LLMVC: Shona Potts
- Director of Studies at the Qatar Campus: Lyn Batchelor
- Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement: Steve Tucker
- eLearning Team Leader: Sara Preston
- eLearning Adviser: Gavin Innes
- Student representative: Felicia Ileladewa

Remit

- Oversee the evaluation of Turnitin Authorship software, ensuring input from Schools involved in the initial pilot.
- Identify effective approaches to using Turnitin Authorship and produce guidelines to share for wider implementation.
- Develop and review current processes on how Turnitin Authorship can be used alongside current practices and systems.
- Engage more broadly with other institutions regarding their approach to gathering evidence of contract cheating and whether they use tools such as Turnitin Authorship
- To provide recommendations to QAC for incorporation into revised policies on academic integrity.
- Reporting to the University Education Committee and the Digital Strategy Committee, making recommendations about University-wide implementation of Authorship.

Last updated: 10 May 2023