Turnitin® Guidelines for Instructors

What is Turnitin®?

Turnitin® is a text matching tool that is commonly used to help detect plagiarism, but it can be integrated into course activities as an educational tool to help students practice proper scholarly writing skills.

✓ Check

Turnitin® compares submitted document to its database and sources on the web.

Add

Submitted files are housed on the Turnitin® server, which is based in the U.S., and on our local LEARN server.

Report

For each submission, an originality report is generated which provides information about matched text.

Should I use Turnitin®?

I’m looking for a: Scholarly writing tool

Student and instructor sees originality report for student submission.

I’m looking for a: Text-matching only tool

Only the instructor sees originality report for student submission.

Draft submissions’ originality report helps students implement proper scholarly writing skills for final submission.

Single submission does not allow students to make revisions based on the originality report.

Considerations and Limitations:

Does not verify authorship

May require extra marking time

May not work for graphs, images or tables

For privacy and security reasons, must provide alternate assignment, e.g. scaffolded/annotated.

Recognize that the use of Turnitin® may control plagiarism through the threat of detection rather than by instilling academic values in students.

Preparing Students for Turnitin®

Provide rationale for Turnitin® use

Discuss discipline-specific citation conventions

Introduce the concept of original thought

Clearly define plagiarism within the context of your discipline

Discuss academic integrity and provide resources

Remember that mastering the skill of scholarly writing takes time and that students are bound to make errors along the way.

Unsure if Turnitin® is right for your course? Contact the Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE) or Centre for Extended Learning (CEL).
Implementing Turnitin®

The following statement must appear in your course outline:
Text matching software (Turnitin®) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all materials and sources in assignments is documented. Students will be given an option if they do not want to have their assignment screened by Turnitin®. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin® in this course.

Scholarly writing tool

- Number of submissions set by instructor
- Ungraded
- Dropbox closes before final deadline

Text-matching only tool

- Single submission
- Graded

Interpreting Turnitin® Reports

Check
Check Similarity Index for percentage of common phrases.

Review and Assess
Review and assess the highlighted text within the document for originality and proper citation.

Grade
Grade assignment as usual.

Similarity Index
A percentage representing the number of words found in common with database content, divided by the total number of words in the file.

Blue: ≥0 to <20%
Green: ≥20 to <40%
Yellow: ≥40 to <60%
Orange: ≥60 to <80%
Red: ≥80 to ≤100%

Note: There is no “safe” colour or percentage: no percentage or colour in the originality report can fully evaluate whether text has been plagiarized.

2. Sutherland-Smith & Carr (2005); University of Waterloo Turnitin® School of Accounting and Finance Pilot Results (2008) unpublished.
4. Ibid.

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