



Using Turnitin more effectively

Student Resource Booklet

Credits

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The Turnitin Program which is copyright **Turnitin, LLC**, and The University of Newcastle Website and the implementation of its LMS

The Documents used in this resource:

The documents used as examples for the Turnitin screenshots were written by Greg Preston and Michelle Douglas

Using Turnitin More Effectively: Student Resource Booklet

What is Turnitin?



Turnitin is an internet-based text matching system which is used by many higher education institutions to assist staff and students deal with issues surrounding academic integrity. The primary purpose of Turnitin at the University of Newcastle is to assist students with their academic literacy. Additionally, the Turnitin software may be of use to students in ensuring that submitted work conforms to the standards of academic integrity outlined within university policy, and expected within your specific discipline.

The Turnitin system allows students to submit electronic files to be checked against electronic resources held within the Turnitin database. The files submitted are usually text-based files and are accepted in many common formats, such as Microsoft Word, PDF, Word Perfect etc. Work is submitted through an assignment portal that is associated with a specific Canvas course site. The work submitted is compared to the information already held within the database, and against material which is generally available on the Internet. A report is generated, and the report is then visible to both the student who submitted the material and the course owner. The report details areas that have been matched to previously available work and gives an “overall” percentage of match for the document in its entirety.

Students can then identify any areas where they may have failed to conform to the standards of academic literacy required and make appropriate changes and resubmit the work in order to generate a new report. Once a final submission is made, staff are able to view the report as a tool to assist them in assessing the work submitted.

It is important to note that Turnitin is not a plagiarism detection system. The Turnitin software can only identify text matches - it cannot exercise academic judgement as to whether or not any specific piece of work has breached the academic conventions expected within a specific context. Therefore, a “high level of match” does not automatically mean that a work is problematic, and a “low level of match” does not indicate that a work submitted is free from errors. The Turnitin system is a guide which directs the attention of students and staff to specific areas of the work to allow them to exercise their academic judgement.

Submitting a Turnitin Assignment

The basic process for submitting a Turnitin Assignment consists of the following steps:

1. **Log into Canvas and access the relevant course site.**
2. **Navigate to the area in which the Turnitin Assignment submission link is located** (For example within the relevant Module or in the “Assignments” area – if you are unsure where the link is located, check with your Course Co-ordinator or Lecturer)
3. **Click on the assignment link.**
4. **Follow the steps on screen to upload your document.**

Each of the above steps are shown in detail in resources which can be found in the Canvas Support Centre. The Support Centre can be accessed by clicking on the Help button in the Global Navigation Menu on the left-hand side of Canvas.






Viewing a Turnitin Report

The basic steps for viewing Turnitin Reports for a submission are:

1. **Navigate to the Grades area of your course**
2. **Find the relevant assignment and click on the coloured indicator to open the originality report**

Name	Due	Status	Score	Out of
Assessment 1 Assessment 1	28 Feb by 23:59		80.5	100
Quiz 1	22 Mar by 3:00		0	20

The colour of this indicator will reflect, at a glance, how similar your submission is to other sources. Click the coloured indicator to open the originality report to see the specific percentage score and where the matches have occurred.

-  **Blue:** No matching text
-  **Green:** One word to 24% matching text
-  **Yellow:** 25-49% matching text
-  **Orange:** 50-74% matching text
-  **Red:** 75-100% matching text

What does a Turnitin report look like?

The screenshot shows a Turnitin report in a browser window. The main text area on the left contains a paragraph about computer access and a list of references. The right-hand panel shows a 'Match Overview' table with a total match percentage of 10%. Callouts provide detailed explanations of the interface elements.

Assignment Title and Student Name

Overall percentage of text found in Turnitin sources

Original assignment with Matched text highlighted

Highlighted text that has been flagged by Turnitin as matching another source. Click the highlighted text to see the matched text in the source material

Key for Colour coded and Numbered sources in matched text

Additional features of the Turnitin report are available here. For example, you can filter the report to exclude specific matches, exclude the bibliography, or ignore small matches

Match Number	Source	Match Percentage
1	www.groverproctor.us Internet Source	3%
2	ro.uow.edu.au Internet Source	1%
3	www.allbusiness.com Internet Source	1%
4	mod.iig.uni-freiburg.de Internet Source	1%
5	Fred S. Forsyth. "Girls..." Publication	1%
6	Pauline... body, Alan... Publication	1%
7	support.sha... Internet Source	1%

Interpreting a Turnitin Report

What does 'match' mean?

The percentage of match reported by Turnitin is an indication of how much of the material that has been submitted in an assignment has a degree of similarity to previously created material that the Turnitin program has been able to access. The material which Turnitin checks includes previously submitted student assignments, certain journal articles and database repositories, and material which is generally available on the internet. The program uses a "text-matching" algorithm that identifies text patterns, strings of repeated words, and direct word sequences to calculate an overall match for the work.

Levels of match

The level of match is expressed as a percentage of the material that has been located in the previously published material which can be accessed by Turnitin.

At first glance it might seem that a high level of match means that the work submitted is likely to have been copied from another source or has otherwise breached the academic integrity guidelines of the University. Similarly, a low level of match might be taken as an indication that the work submitted is free from any academic integrity issues. This is NOT the case. There can be legitimate reasons for student work to have high levels of match to previously published material, similarly, work which has a low level of match might be completely plagiarised from a source which Turnitin cannot access. So objectively the "level of match" really doesn't mean a great deal. However, when the "level of match" is considered in relation to a specific assignment, the student's knowledge of both the subject matter and the expectations of their discipline come into play. For example, it could be expected that an original poem submitted to a Creative Writing course, would have a lower level of match than an 1st Year assignment on characterisation in Hamlet. In either case the level of match is a guide to the student's exploration of the specific matches, rather than an indication of, or exoneration from, anything else. Consideration of both the "type" of match and the "source" of the match in relation to a specific assignment items are much better indicators of academic integrity issues.

Types of match

Once a Turnitin report has been generated, students can view the Turnitin report (see above) to look at the items that Turnitin has identified as "matching sources". One of the dimensions of students' consideration could be the type of match that is being reported. The following are some common types of match students may see in their Turnitin reports.

i Block match

In this type of match a large section of text has been directly matched to material in the Turnitin repository. The text is a “word for word” match to existing material. If this material comes from a “publication source” or “Internet source” it *may* mean that the material has not been referenced correctly. If the material matches to a previous student submission the material is often more problematic, however it might be that one student and another student being matched to, have both used the same source which is not available to Turnitin (eg a book). In either case these “block” matches need to be carefully reviewed.

The screenshot displays the Turnitin Feedback Studio interface. On the left, a student submission is shown with several paragraphs of text. A block of text is highlighted in red, indicating a match. On the right, a 'Match Overview' panel shows a total match percentage of 10%. Below this, a list of sources is provided, each with its corresponding match percentage. A callout box with a black border and white background points to the highlighted text block, containing the text: 'Block of text matched “word-for-word” to existing material'. The interface also shows navigation controls at the top, a page number of 5 of 6, and a word count of 2242.

Source	Match Percentage
www.groverproctor.us (Internet Source)	3%
ro.uow.edu.au (Internet Source)	1%
www.allbusiness.com (Internet Source)	1%
mod.iig.uni-freiburg.de (Internet Source)	1%
Alfred S. Forsyth, "Girls..." (Publication)	1%
Pauline Lightbody, Alan... (Publication)	1%
support.sharp.net.au (Internet Source)	1%
T.J. McGill, S.E. Volet, V... (Publication)	1%
Submitted to Laguna C... (Internet Source)	1%

Block of text matched “word-for-word” to existing material

ii. Scattered words match

This type of match usually indicates that an attempt has been made to paraphrase an existing source. How well this has been done is a matter for academic judgment; however, the source of the match is again important. A “scattered word match” to a previous student submission, combined with a high overall percentage from that work may indicate that this segment may need some reviewing.

The screenshot displays the Turnitin Feedback Studio interface. The top navigation bar includes the 'feedback studio' logo, 'Student | Assignment 1', a score of '/100', and page navigation '2 of 3'. The main content area shows a document with several paragraphs. The second paragraph contains several phrases highlighted in red, indicating matches: 'the car up the street', 'first stirrings of excitement', 'panicked in a shop window', 'once grey cement', 'bustling trade', and 'tourist hotspot'. To the right, a 'Match Overview' panel shows a total match percentage of 10%. Below this, a table lists the sources of the matches:

Rank	Source	Match Percentage
1	www.groverproctor.us Internet Source	3%
2	ro.uow.edu.au Internet Source	1%
3	www.allbusiness.com Internet Source	1%
4	mod.iig.uni-freiburg.de Internet Source	1%
5	Alfred S. Forsyth. "Girls..." Publication	1%
6	Pauline Lightbody, Alan... Publication	1%
7	support.sharp.net.au Internet Source	1%
8	T.J. McGill, S.E. Volet, V... Publication	1%
9	Submitted to Laguna C... Internet Source	1%

At the bottom of the interface, it shows 'Page: 5 of 6', 'Word Count: 2242', and options for 'Text-only Report' and 'High Resolution'.

Multiple text strings matched within a single paragraph can indicate the use of a previous work as a “template” or simply the use of common terms that would be expected in the style of response.

iii. Checkerboard match

The checkerboard response is potentially the most concerning of all. While it can represent a poor attempt at paraphrasing the work of another, it can also be an indication of a potential attempt to eliminate a “block” match within the submission.

The screenshot displays the Turnitin Feedback Studio interface. The main text area contains a paragraph with several lines highlighted in red. A 'Match Overview' sidebar on the right shows a total match percentage of 10% and a list of 9 matches, each with its source and percentage. A callout box points to the highlighted text in the main area.

Match Overview

10%

Match	Source	Percentage
1	www.groverproctor.us Internet Source	3%
2	ro.uow.edu.au Internet Source	1%
3	www.allbusiness.com Internet Source	1%
4	mod.iig.uni-freiburg.de Internet Source	1%
5	Alfred S. Forsyth, "Girls..." Publication	1%
6	Pauline Lightbody, Alan... Publication	1%
7	support.sharp.net.au Internet Source	1%
8	T.J. McGill, S.E. Volet, V... Publication	1%
9	Submitted to Laguna C... Internet Source	1%

Page: 5 of 6 Word Count: 2242

High Resolution On

Close examination of these types of matches is required. Click on the highlighted text to see the original source in its context.

iv. Reference match

Reference matches can contribute to a high overall match within the work, and may, in some cases, cause unnecessary concern. It is possible to exclude reference lists from the material examined by Turnitin through the “filters and settings” icon in the similarity toolbar (see below). For the filter to work, the references list must be in a new line and not contain any other information (for example, page number and or punctuation such as a colon after the relevant word/phrase), under one of the following headings: Bibliography, References, or Referenced Work.

The screenshot shows the Turnitin Feedback Studio interface. On the left, a list of references is displayed under the heading "References". On the right, the "Filters and Settings" panel is open, showing options to exclude quotes, bibliographies, and sources based on word or percentage thresholds. The "Exclude Bibliography" option is checked. A callout box points to this option with the text: "You can use the filter settings to exclude reference list material from the Turnitin Report."

References

1. Sutton, R.E., (1991). Equity and Computers in the Schools: A Decade of Research. *Review of Educational Research*, Winter, 61, 4, pp 475 – 503.
2. Chen M., (1986). Gender and Computers: The beneficial Effects of experience on attitudes. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 2,3, pp 265-281.
3. Miura, I.T., and Hess, R.D., (1984). Enrolment differences in Computer camps and summer classes. *The Computing Teacher*, 11, 8, p 22.
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5. Clarke, V.A., and Chambers, S.M., (1999) Gender-based factors in computing enrolments and achievement. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 5,4, pp 409-429.
6. Francis, L.J., (1994) The relationship between computer related attitudes and gender stereotyping of computer use. *Computers in Education*, 22, 4, pp 283-289.
7. Kay, R.H., (1992) *Understanding Gender Biases in Computer-Related Behavior: Are we using the wrong metaphor?* in Martin, C.D. and Murchie-Beyma, E. (eds) *In Search of Gender Free Paradigms for Computer Science Education*, ISTE Eugene, Oregon, pp. 9-14.
8. Makrakis, V. (1993) *Gender and computing in schools in Japan: The "We can, I can't" paradox*. *Computers in Education* 20(2) pp. 191-198.
9. Lage, E., (1991) *Boys, girls and microcomputing*. *European Journal of Psychology in Education* 6, pp. 29-44.
10. Gressard, C.P., and Loyd, B.H. (1986) *Validation studies of a new computer attitude scale*. *Association for Educational Data Systems Journal* 18(4) pp. 295-301.

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Filters and Settings

Filters

- Exclude Quotes
- Exclude Bibliography
- Exclude sources that are less than:
 - words
 - %
 - Don't exclude by size

Optional Settings

- Multi-Color Highlighting

Apply Changes New Report

High Resolution On

v. **Trivial match**

It is important to note that assignments can build-up a significant percentage of match simply by using phrases which are common to academic work. In the example below, these words are quite “standard” for the field, and may not be cause for great concern when you see these matches

The screenshot displays the Turnitin Feedback Studio interface. The main document area shows text with several phrases highlighted in pink, indicating matches. A callout box points to the phrase "significant differences between male and female..." with the following text:

Turnitin has identified that the words “significant differences between male and female...” as having been used in previously submitted work.

The Match Overview panel on the right shows a total match of 10%. Below this, a list of sources is provided:

Rank	Source	Match Percentage
1	www.groverproctor.us Internet Source	3%
2	ro.uow.edu.au Internet Source	1%
3	www.allbusiness.com Internet Source	1%
4	mod.iig.uni-freiburg.de Internet Source	1%
5	Alfred S. Forsyth. "Girls..." Publication	1%
6	Pauline Lightbody, Alan... Publication	1%
7	support.sharp.net.au Internet Source	1%
8	T.J. McGill, S.E. Volet, V... Publication	1%
9	Submitted to Laguna C... Internet Source	1%

Sources of match

The source of the match of material can be a useful consideration when looking at the originality report of submitted work. Large matches from previous student work, for example, might be flagged by instructors as problematic, whereas a large match from a common internet source might simply be seen as matched text which has been correctly (or incorrectly) referenced. Likewise, large matches from a single source are more likely to be seen as more problematic than a similar overall level of match which is derived from a large number of sources.

The screenshot displays the Turnitin Match Overview interface. At the top, a red header bar contains the text "Match Overview" and a close button (X). Below the header, a large red "10%" indicates the total match percentage. A list of sources is shown, each with a rank number, the source name, the source type, and the percentage of match attributed to that source. Callout boxes provide additional information for several sources.

Rank	Source Name	Source Type	Match Percentage
1	www.groverproctor.us	Internet Source	3%
2	ro.uow.edu.au	Internet Source	1%
3	www.allbusiness.com	Internet Source	1%
4	mod.iig.uni-freiburg.de	Internet Source	1%
5	Submitted to University...	Student Paper	1%
6	Pauline Lightbody, Alan...	Publication	1%
7	support.sharp.net.au	Internet Source	1%
8	T.J. McGill, S.E. Volet, V	Publication	1%
9	Submitted to Laguna C...	Student Paper	1%

Callout boxes provide the following information:

- Identification of Source (points to the source name in item 1)
- Percentage of match attributed to this source (points to the percentage in item 2)
- Source is an Internet site (points to the source type in item 4)
- Source is a previously submitted student paper (points to the source type in item 5)
- Source is a publication - usually a journal available electronically (points to the source type in item 8)

Common Questions and Issues – FAQ

My Originality Report matches are never over 20% - does this mean my submissions are always ok?

No. The overall percentage may provide a guide to certain features of the work but it isn't an indication of plagiarism. The judgement on plagiarism is an academic decision and this requires both students and academics to look at the report.

I received a 75% Turnitin match. That has to be a problem doesn't it?

It depends on the assignment. The high level of match is probably a cause for concern, however it may be related to the response style rather than the academic integrity of the work. For example, a large number of quotes have been used within an essay, the level of match could be high, even if they are correctly referenced. Similarly, within some assignments, this level of match might not be a cause for concern at all.

What is an acceptable percentage in a Turnitin report?

There is no one figure that can be defined as a hurdle for being acceptable. The overall percentage may provide a guide to certain features of the work but it isn't an indication of plagiarism. The judgement on plagiarism is an academic decision and this requires both students and academics to look at the report.

Do I have to submit to Turnitin for all of my assignments?

No. The University Policy simply states that Turnitin must be available for students to use. There is no University requirement that all assignments are submitted to Turnitin. Some schools have policies on this matter and students should check with their Student Academic Conduct Officer (SACO) if they are unsure.

I have a right to not submit to Turnitin if I don't want to, don't I?

In most cases students have signed a waiver which allows the University to require them to submit their work to text matching software. This is one of the items that is usually listed on course outlines. However, if issues arise in relation to this area, contact the University Student Academic Conduct Officer coordinator.

Additional Resources

Information about University Policy

University Policy on Academic Integrity

<https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=35>

University Student Conduct Rule

<https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=34>

Academic Integrity

The general website on academic integrity for the University is here:

<https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-students/study-essentials/assessment-and-exams/academic-integrity/academic-integrity-module>

Information about using Turnitin

Access to the training resources provided by Turnitin is available here:

<https://help.turnitin.com/feedback-studio/canvas/plagiarism-framework/teacher/teacher-category.htm>

Resources to help with referencing

The Library Info skills resource is located here:

<https://downloads.newcastle.edu.au/library/tutorials/infoskills/writing/index.html>

There is information on specific referencing styles at the following websites:

General (with links to specific styles)

<https://www.newcastle.edu.au/library/learn/referencing>

APA

<http://www.apastyle.org/>

Chicago

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

MLA

<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/mla.php>

AGPS/Harvard

<https://libguides.newcastle.edu.au/referencing/harvard>

AGLC4

<https://libguides.newcastle.edu.au/referencing/aglc>

Suspected Plagiarism - FAQ

What happens when an allegation of suspected plagiarism is reported?

The issue may be referred to the school's Student Academic Conduct Officer (SACO) who will investigate the matter, which may include discussing the matter with both the course coordinator and the student. The outcome will be determined in line with the university policy. The course coordinator or referring staff member and the student will be advised of the outcome of the investigation, and the penalty (if any) to be implemented.

Once the matter has been referred to the SACO, how long will the process take?

This is difficult to answer definitively. Most allegations will be dealt with within two weeks of the SACO receiving all the documentation. However, some cases, for example any referred to the university misconduct committee, may take considerably longer.

What are the penalties which can be imposed on work which is deemed to be plagiarised?

The full details of penalties are set out in the University policy. They range from counselling in relation to referencing, through various types of resubmission, up to exclusion from the University.

Where can I find the policies and procedures in relation to Student academic conduct?

Both documents are available on the Internet through the University's policy library

The Policy is here:

<https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=35>

The Student Conduct Rule is here:

<https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=34>

The University Code of Conduct is here:

<https://policies.newcastle.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=204>