

How to interpret a Turnitin Originality Report

Turnitin is 'text-matching' software which is designed to educate students regarding appropriate citation and referencing techniques, and provides lecturers and tutors with online grading capabilities. In particular, it helps to ensure that students are completing work with academic integrity. It does this by indicating what percentage of the text in a student's assignment has been matched to text found in other sources and identifying these sources.

The results of Turnitin Originality Reports need to be interpreted carefully. This guide is aimed at assisting lecturers and students to interpret Turnitin Originality Reports and to use them in a constructive way to improve academic integrity.

Tip: there is no 'ideal' percentage threshold in a Turnitin Originality Report.

What is an 'Originality Report'?

When a student submits an assignment to Turnitin, assignments are checked against a large range of sources in order to find if there are matching text sections. Examples of resources checked are:

- Internet sites and archived internet documents and data
- A repository of papers previously submitted to Turnitin
- A subscription repository of periodicals, journals, and publications

If matches are found, the matched text is highlighted and linked to the sources identified by Turnitin. Turnitin also gives an assignment a 'similarity index', which is the total percentage of text in an assignment that has been matched to other sources.

Tip: the ANU encourages lecturers to allow students to submit draft assignments to Turnitin before final submission to give students the opportunity to assess and improve their writing.

Interpreting the 'similarity index'

A 'match' in an assignment indicates that a section of the assignment directly matches text found in the resources checked by Turnitin.

Given that students are expected to include evidence and examples from a variety of sources in assignments, it is to be expected that academic work will always contain matches resulting in a 'similarity index'.

Matches could occur for the following reasons:

- A **direct quote** has been made in an assignment.

Direct quotes included in assignments may be text-matched by Turnitin irrespective of whether the quote has been appropriately referenced. This provides students and lecturers with an opportunity to check that direct quotes have been correctly referenced.

These matches also give lecturers and students an opportunity to consider how many quotes are appropriate for the relevant assignment.

- An **indirect quote** has been included in an assignment which is very similar to the original.

An indirect quote is when someone else's words are paraphrased. If a match in Turnitin occurs due to paraphrasing, it may generally indicate that the paraphrasing is too similar to the original and needs to be rephrased. It is important to remember that when paraphrasing, the author and original work must be correctly referenced.

- **Plagiarism.**

While Turnitin provides a 'text-matching' service which may assist Lecturers and Tutors in detecting suspected plagiarism, the use of Turnitin will not identify an instance of plagiarism, and cannot determine if there has been a breach of academic integrity. Turnitin will only match text within a student assignment to text located in other sources (e.g. the internet, journals and periodicals and other assignments submitted to Turnitin), but it cannot determine the 'original' source or actually make a determination plagiarism has occurred.

If a student has copied someone else's work, be it another student's paper, recycled you're their own work, or taken material directly from some other source and made it appear to be their own; this is plagiarism. Sometimes students are tempted to use other people's words because they don't feel confident with their own writing. It is important for students to remember that their ideas, arguments and analysis are the key aspect of their writing.

Tip: a 'similarity index' produced by Turnitin must be interpreted on a case by case basis, and it is important to remember that a high 'similarity index' may not be an indication that there is any inappropriate content in an assignment.

How do I access the Report?

An Originality Report is produced when you submit an assignment for assessment through the *Turnitin Assignment* section of any Wattle course that you are enrolled in. A separate guide, *How to Submit a Turnitin Assignment in WATTLE* provides details of the submission process.

What is included in the Report?

A Turnitin Originality report includes:

- An overall 'similarity index' percentage is provided in the top right hand corner
- You can select matched text and identify the source of the matched text which is number/colour coded for analysis
- The title of an assignment is visible, but student's university IDs have been deliberately changed to protect the privacy of students
- Once a lecturer has graded the assignment and released the grades to students, the grade will also be displayed in the top right hand corner of the report
- Where a lecturer has completed marking online, lecturer comments will be visible throughout the assignment and are viewable by clicking on the 'Grademark' tab at the top

Turnitin Originality Report

(1) **Originality** — only the Originality Report will be active in this mode.

(2) **Student Identifier** — the visible identifier is randomly generated to ensure student privacy and security.

(3) **Overall Similarity Index** — a percentage measure indicating the similarity of the text submitted compared to information contained in the Turnitin database and other web sites.

The screenshot shows the Turnitin Originality Report interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Originality', 'GradeMark', and 'PeerMark'. The 'Originality' tab is selected. The main area displays a document titled 'International Politics Essay' by a student. The document text is highlighted in red, indicating matches. A 'Match Overview' panel on the right lists the sources and their similarity percentages. The overall similarity index is 16%.

Annotations in the image include:

- A red line pointing to the 'Originality' tab with the text: (1) **Originality** — only the Originality Report will be active in this mode.
- A red line pointing to the student identifier 'BY STUDENT F8756D076926' with the text: (2) **Student Identifier** — the visible identifier is randomly generated to ensure student privacy and security.
- A red line pointing to the '16%' similarity index with the text: (3) **Overall Similarity Index** — a percentage measure indicating the similarity of the text submitted compared to information contained in the Turnitin database and other web sites.
- A red line pointing to the 'Assignment Score' (16%) with the text: Assignment Score.
- A red line pointing to the 'Match Overview' panel with the text: Click on a source in this panel to view the matching text in your document.
- A red line pointing to the 'View options and tools' section with the text: (4) **View options and tools**.
- A red line pointing to the 'Match Overview' panel with the text: (5) **Match Overview** — Users can toggle between 'Match Overview' and 'View All Sources':

At the bottom of the interface, there are icons for 'Assignment information', 'Download/Print', 'Filter', and 'Text-only Report'.

(4) View options and tools

Assignment information – assignment information, the date of submission and other relevant transaction metadata

Download/Print – provides a PDF version of the Originality Report

Filter – provides user options for filtering an assignment to include or exclude the bibliography, quotations, and/or irrelevant matches

Text-only Report – removes any graphics to make the report easier to print and read

(5) Match Overview — Users can toggle between 'Match Overview' and 'View All Sources':

Match overview is a list of the sections of an assignment that match to existing text in the Turnitin database and other searchable web sites. Matches are colour-coded and listed from the highest to the lowest percentage of matching word area to the submission. Only the highest scores are shown in the panel, all other matches are visible through the 'Match Breakdown' and 'All Sources' modes.

View all Sources enables users to view matches between the assignment and a specific selected source in the Turnitin database. This view contains a full list of all matches found rather than the highest scored matches. This is a complete listing of matches and can be extensive.

Academic Integrity

Turnitin cannot detect any breaches of academic integrity. Students must comply with the ANU *Code of Practice for Student Academic Integrity* and are encouraged to speak directly with lecturers and tutors about the particular expectations and requirements of the courses they are studying.

Getting help

If you need further help or clarification on appropriate academic writing, referencing and citation then contact the Academic Skills and Learning Centre. Learning advisors can directly discuss assignments (including Originality Reports) and assist both lecturers and students.

Students are encouraged to talk with their lecturers and tutors about the particular expectations and requirements of the courses they are studying.

Useful documents and links

ANU Online — <http://online.anu.edu.au>

How to Submit a Turnitin Assignment in WATTLE

Academic Skills and Learning Centre — <https://academicskills.anu.edu.au>

Academic integrity - <https://academicskills.anu.edu.au/resources/listing/136>

Information Literacy Program — <http://anulib.anu.edu.au/training/>

ANU Policies - <https://policies.anu.edu.au>

Code of Practice for Student Academic Integrity

https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_000392

Turnitin — <http://turnitin.com>

About OriginalityCheck

http://turnitin.com/en_us/training/student-training/about-originalitycheck

Viewing Originality Reports

http://turnitin.com/en_us/training/student-training/viewing-originality-reports