



ONLINE FACULTY TRAINING



Turnitin: Making Intelligent Decisions about Students' Originality Reports

What is Turnitin and why do we use it?

The below section was accessed from the Turnitin website on 10/04/09 at http://turnitin.com/static/products.html#originality_checking.



Originality Checking allows educators to check students' work for improper citation or potential plagiarism by comparing it against continuously updated databases. Every Originality Report provides instructors with the opportunity to teach their students proper citation methods as well as to safeguard their students' academic integrity.

Features & Benefits

- Encourages Proper Citation
- Over 12 Billion Web Pages Crawled & Archived
- Over 90 Million Student Papers
- Over 12,000 Major Newspapers, Magazines & Scholarly Journals
- Thousands Of Books Including Literary Classics
- Printable Reports
- Side-By-Side Comparison

GCU's Philosophy on Using Turnitin

- The focus is on academic integrity and using proper citations.
- **The originality reports do NOT indicate plagiarism.** The Turnitin system only checks for *similarity* of student's text to other sources, including anything that is properly cited.
- **The instructor has to actually open the report** and view whether the similarity is expected "noise" (i.e., common words that most students are going to be using while discussing the same topic), an innocent mistake on the student's part which could be an opportunity for the instructor to use it as a teaching moment about proper citation, or a possible incident of plagiarism.
- **There is no set percentage** of similarity that GCU has established as acceptable or unacceptable since the decision rests with the instructor and the type of assignment. For example, in an assignment about their summer vacation there would be a low expectation of similarity between students' papers. However, in an assignment about the Constitution of the United States there will be a higher expectation of similarity since all of the students are referencing the same document and probably using some direct quotes from the same resource. Again, **it is the instructor's responsibility to open every report** and compare the student's words with the source that is matching in similarity. Only in this way, can an intelligent decision be made about the student's work.
- **The GCU required similarity percentage guideline is 20%.** This means that for an "average" assignment, a score of 20% or lower is the preferred score. Aside from any citation issues or potential plagiarism concerns, a score of 20% indicates that 20% of the content of the assignment submission was derived from an outside source and 80% of the content was original work written by the student. A percentage higher than 20% should be considered a red flag that the student may have relied too heavily on information from outside sources, aside from any citation issues or potential plagiarism concerns that may be evidenced by reviewing the similarity report in detail.
- **Similarity reports must be reviewed for both citation and potential plagiarism issues as well as concerns with submissions containing insufficient original content.** A submission may receive a high similarity score while the detail report does not raise concerns about plagiarism. Likewise, a submission may receive a low similarity score but a review of the detail report may indicate a potential plagiarism issue. Instructors must keep both of these concerns in mind when reviewing similarity reports.

Examples of Originality Reports

Below is an example of Originality Report information that is viewable in the Turnitin system.

Figure 1.

The screenshot shows the Turnitin interface for a user named 'Kevin Thrasher'. The page title is 'Test Paper1' and the sub-page is 'inbox'. The interface includes a navigation menu on the left with options like 'assignments', 'students', 'peer review', 'gradebook', 'libraries', 'calendar', 'discussion', and 'preferences'. The main content area displays a table of papers with columns for 'author', 'title', 'report', 'grademark', 'file', 'paper ID', and 'date'. The 'report' column shows similarity percentages: 97%, 27%, 10%, and 2%. The 'grademark' column shows icons for each paper. The 'file' column shows document icons. The 'paper ID' and 'date' columns show the unique identifier and submission date for each paper.

<input type="checkbox"/>	author	title	report	grademark	file	paper ID	date
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thrasher, Kevin	Test Paper3	97%			100998730	07-10-09
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thrasher, Kevin	Test Paper4	27%			100999224	07-10-09
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thrasher, Kevin	Test Paper2	10%			100998351	07-10-09
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thrasher, Kevin	Test Paper1	2%			100998074	07-10-09

As can be seen from Figure 1 above, there are 4 test papers in this example that range from 2% to 97% similarity with other sources.

Question: How do I access the students Originality Report?

Answer: Click on the colored tab under the “Report” category, and the Originality Report will open.

Question: Which student(s) would you consider to have plagiarized their work?

Answer: None. We cannot determine plagiarism from the information that is presented above because we have yet to open the Originality Report. Although the higher percentages might be more suspect, the instructor still has to open

and view the Originality Report and make an intelligent decision about the similarity matches. See below for exercises on interpreting Originality Reports.

Interpreting an Originality Report: It does not mean plagiarism!

- **The most critical part of using the Originality Report is the decision the instructor makes about the similarity matches.** Often, a lot of similarity refers to very small matches which are considered “noise” (i.e., common words and phrases that students use when discussing the same assignment).
- It is important to understand that **the total % indicated in the report is the accumulation of all the individual matches.** This means that there might be many 1% matches (4-5 words) of noise across 30 sources that add up to 30% total. This does NOT indicate that the student plagiarized 30% of their paper, but simply indicates that there were 30 matches of 1% each. This is exactly why the instructor needs to open the report to see what is happening in the student’s paper to determine if the similarity is noise or not.
- **To reiterate: The report only indicates similarity, not plagiarism. A human being (i.e., the instructor) has to make an intelligent decision about whether or not the similarity matches indicate a possible incident of plagiarism.**

Let’s look at some examples of Originality Reports below. In this one, there is a 27% Similarity Index (top right). What does that mean? Reflect on this for a moment.

Figure 2.

Turnitin - Windows Internet Explorer
 http://turnitin.com/newreport_frameset.asp?r=91.148072247561&svr=15&lang=en_us&oid=10099224&ft=1

Processed on: 07-10-09 10:30 AM PDT
 ID: 10099224
 Word Count: 1475
 Submitted: 1

Test Paper4
 By Kevin Thrasher

Similarity Index: **27%**
 Similarity by Source:
 Internet Sources: 23%
 Publications: 14%
 Student Papers: 24%

Match Number	Match Percentage	Source
5	2%	Internet from 04/06/09 http://www.nwrel.org
6	2%	student papers from 10/03/05 Submitted to Argosy University
7	1%	publications S. Jay Samuels, "INTRODUCTION TO AUTOMATICITY: THEORY AND PRACTICE", Reading & Writing Quarterly, 4/1997
8	1%	Internet from 03/25/09 http://www.coe.ufl.edu
9	1%	Internet from 11/24/06 http://www.flreads.org
10	1%	internet http://www.readingsuccesslab.com
11	1%	Internet from 03/15/09 http://www.hsionsden.com
12	1%	Internet from 05/04/08 http://www.fcrr.org
13	1%	student papers from 08/17/08 Submitted to Grand Canyon University
14	1%	student papers from 06/16/08 Submitted to Grand Canyon University
15	1%	Internet from 04/21/09 http://rigby.harcourtachieve.com
16	1%	publications Lara Handsfield, "Cognition and Metacognition: A Review of the Literature"

Comprehension Apprehension RDG 509 Foundation & Framework Karen L. Dickinson Assignment Five. Comprehension Apprehension Abstract

involved. Word attack skills, word recognition, fluency, strategies, making inferences, finding the main idea – all of these skills, and more are fully utilized in reading comprehension. This paper will address the factors that might affect

a student's ability to comprehend text and will propose

schedule to address those factors during a 30-minute class period each day. A Failure to Communicate According to Samuels (2002, p.167), "The

act of comprehension... depends on inference

generation...

the reader must build a coherent mental representation of what is being read."

This sounds much like the six blind men describing an elephant except that all six are in the reader's brain and, if he has good comprehension, at the end he will have produced an elephant. The teacher's responsibility is to guide the reader in the appropriate directions; much as a young mother might assist her child in pinning the tail on the donkey. We want our children to be successful but we also want it to be genuine success. In order to foster success in reading comprehension,

it is important to understand all the components of reading,

no one of which can truly stand by itself. Phonemic awareness and

In Figure 2 above, the left side of the image represents the student's paper and the right side represents the sources where there were matches found that are similar to the same words the student used. The report highlights the student's words so that they are color-coded and numbered. By matching the numbers on the left with the numbers on the right, an instructor can see where there are other sources with similar words to the student's. **A critical piece of information to consider is the % beside each source on the left.** In this example, there are many 1-2% matches.

Question: Based on the report in Figure 2 above, what decisions would you make about the student's paper?

Answer: Most of these matches are so small that they would probably be considered random noise, especially if you consider that the majority of the text on the left is black which indicates there were no matches to other sources and therefore are the student's own words. Look at match #7 above. You will notice that the student is quoting words and is correctly

citing the author, year, and page number where he got the quote (ie., Samuels, 2002, p.167).

This is not an incidence of plagiarism because the student is properly citing their source and

using quotes appropriately. This is a perfect example of why the instructor has to open the

report and view it to make an intelligent decision about any matches. Again, Turnitin only

finds similarity matches for text and does NOT indicate plagiarism. **A human being has to determine plagiarism.**

Figure 3.

The screenshot displays a Turnitin report for a document titled "Test Paper4" by Kevin Thrasher. The report shows a similarity index of 27%. The matches are listed as follows:

Match Number	Match Percentage	Source
3	3%	student papers from 04/22/05 Submitted to University of Central Florida
4	3%	student papers from 01/27/09 Submitted to Walden University
5	2%	Internet from 04/06/09 http://www.nwrel.org
6	2%	student papers from 10/03/05 Submitted to Argosy University
7	1%	publications S. Jay Samuels. "INTRODUCTION TO AUTOMATICITY: THEORY AND PRACTICE". Reading & Writing Quarterly, 4/1997
8	1%	Internet from 03/25/09 http://www.coe.ufl.edu
9	1%	Internet from 11/24/06 http://www.flreads.org
10	1%	internet http://www.readingsuccesslab.com
11	1%	Internet from 03/15/09 http://www.hsionsden.com
12	1%	Internet from 05/04/08 http://www.fcrr.org
13	1%	student papers from 08/17/08 Submitted to Grand Canyon University
14	1%	student papers from 06/16/08 Submitted to Grand Canyon University

The report also shows the following text from the document:

- meet the needs of our students in
- primary purpose of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is to assess student achievement of the high-order cognitive skills represented in the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) in Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science. The SSS portion of FCAT is a criterion-referenced test.
- FCAT Reading SSS
- scores are reported in terms of five achievement levels (1-low to 5-high). The score reports distributed to schools also contain the number of points a student earned. Content scores are reported for four areas: 1) Words and Phrases in Context; 2) Main Ideas, Plot, and Purpose; 3) Comparisons and Cause/Effect; and 4) Reference and Research (ASP, 2005). The
- Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test is a group-administered, norm-referenced multiple-choice test that assesses
- phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The

Looking at Figure 3 above, we see that there are larger pieces of the student's text that have similarity to other sources on the right. Numbers 6 and 15 are probably noise since they make up common words and phrases that would be expected in a discussion about this topic.

Question: What is your analysis of #3 and #4?

Answer: Both of these similarities are probably not random noise since there are too many words to be a coincidence. The similarity report on the right indicates that both #3 and #4 have matches with student papers at other universities. In all likelihood, the students are not necessarily sharing assignments but might be using the same source. If you look at #3, the student provided a citation so this might be a good opportunity to teach the student about using quotes. For #4, it's unlikely that this is noise, but again it could be a perfect point to talk about proper citation and using quotes.

Figure 4.

Turnitin - Windows Internet Explorer
 http://turnitin.com/newreport_frameset.asp?r=91.1480772247561&svr=15&lang=en_us&oid=100999224&ft=1

Processed on: 07-10-09 10:30 AM PDT
 ID: 100999224
 Word Count: 1475
 Submitted: 1

Test Paper4

By Kevin Thrasher

Similarity Index: **27%**
 Similarity by Source:
 Internet Sources: 23%
 Publications: 14%
 Student Papers: 24%

exclude quoted | exclude bibliography | exclude small matches

mode: show highest matches together

Match #	Similarity %	Source
1	5%	student papers from 10/12/08 Submitted to Grand Canyon University
2	4%	student papers from 02/22/09 Submitted to Grand Canyon University
3	3%	student papers from 04/22/05 Submitted to University of Central Florida
4	3%	student papers from 01/27/09 Submitted to Walden University
5	2%	Internet from 04/06/09 http://www.nwrel.org
6	2%	student papers from 10/03/05 Submitted to Argosy University
7	1%	publications S. Jay Samuels, "INTRODUCTION TO AUTOMATICITY: THEORY AND PRACTICE", Reading & Writing Quarterly, 4/1997
8	1%	Internet from 03/25/09 http://www.coe.ufl.edu
9	1%	Internet from 11/24/06 http://www.fleads.org
10	1%	internet http://www.readingsuccesslab.com
11	1%	Internet from 03/15/09 http://www.hsliionsden.com
12	1%	Internet from 05/04/08 http://www.fcrr.org

Original text highlights (left side):

- 1 Duke, Nell K. and Pearson, P. David (2002) Effective practices for developing reading comprehension in Alan E. Farstrup and S. Jay Samuels, (Eds.) What research has to say about reading instruction (pp. 205-242). Newark, DE. International Reading Association. Graves, Michael F. and Watts-Taffe, Susan M. (2002) The place of word consciousness in a research-based vocabulary program in Alan E. Farstrup and S. Jay Samuels, (Eds.) What research has to say about reading instruction (pp. 140-165). Newark, DE. International Reading Association.
- 5 .pdf Samuels, S. Jay (2002) Reading fluency: Its development and assessment in Alan E. Farstrup and S. Jay Samuels, (Eds.) What research has to say about reading instruction (pp. 166-183). Newark, DE. International Reading Association.
- 6 retrieved April 18, 2005 from http://www.renlearn.com/standardsmaster/default.htm
- 2 T. (2002) Making a Difference in Adolescents' School Lives: Visible and Invisible Aspects of Content Area Reading in Alan E. Farstrup and S. Jay Samuels, (Eds.) What research has to say about reading instruction (pp. 184-204). Newark, DE. International Reading Association. Williams, Joanna P. (2002) Reading Comprehension Strategies and Teacher Preparation in Alan E. Farstrup and S. Jay Samuels, (Eds.) What research has to say about reading instruction

Numbers 1, 2 and 5 in Figure 4 above are interesting. Number 1 has a 5% match to another student's paper, #2 has a 4% match to another student's paper, and #5 has a 2% match to an internet site.

Question: What are your thoughts about these three sources that make up 11% of the total 27% of matches in this student's paper?

Answer: These matches refer to the bibliography. These obviously would not be considered

plagiarism since many of the students in this class would be using the same references related to the target topic for this assignment. Once again, a human needs to make an intelligent decision about the report and not just evaluate the student based on a percentage that is generated by the Turnitin system.

Let's look at one last example below in Figure 5. Since the Turnitin system only searches for text matches in the student's work to external sources in its extensive database, it will include 1) appropriately quoted and cited material, 2) the bibliography page with all the references, and 3) any small matches that are considered noise. Since none of these should count against the student, an instructor can minimize the negative impact of these three areas by excluding quoted material, the bibliography, and small matches from the search comparison used by Turnitin. To do this, the instructor can click here.

Figure 5.

Turnitin - Windows Internet Explorer

http://turnitin.com/newreport_frameset.asp?eq=1&eb=1&esm=-3&oid=100999224&svr=13&r=45,265188&...&lang=en_us

preferences help

Processed on: 07-10-09 10:30 AM PDT
ID: 100999224
Word Count: 1475
Submitted: 1

Test Paper4
By: Kevin Thrasher

Similarity Index: 6%

Similarity by Source:
Internet Sources: 7%
Publications: 0%
Student Papers: 6%

include quoted material include bibliography excluding matches

the program. The

1 primary purpose of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is to assess student achievement of the high-order cognitive skills represented in the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) in Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science. The SSS portion of FCAT is a criterion-referenced test.

FCAT Reading SSS

2 scores are reported in terms of five achievement levels (1-low to 5-high). The score reports distributed to schools also contain the number of points a student earned. Content scores are reported for four areas: 1) Words and Phrases in Context; 2) Main Ideas, Plot, and Purpose; 3) Comparisons and Cause/Effect; and 4) Reference and Research (ASP, 2005). The

Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test is a group-administered, norm-referenced multiple-choice test that assesses phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The SDRT4 is now available online and provides immediate scoring and feedback, including criterion-referenced lexile scores (Harcourt, 2005). StandardsMaster from Renaissance Learning can be customized to assess state standards in reading for various grade levels. This assessment can be administered traditionally with pencil and paper or online with results immediately obtainable (StandardsMaster, 2005). The Triad Vocabulary Over 100 years of vocabulary research yielded findings that: vocabulary knowledge is an excellent indicator of verbal ability, vocabulary difficulty greatly influences text readability, students' comprehension of selected text can be improved by teaching the vocabulary of the selection, the vocabulary learned before beginning school can be severely restricted by growing up in poverty and, disadvantaged students likely have much smaller vocabulary than their more advantaged classmates, just to list a few (Graves & Watts-Tate,

1 3% match (student papers from 01/27/09)
Submitted to Walden University

2 3% match (student papers from 04/22/05)
Submitted to University of Central Florida

start Inboxes - Microsoft Out... Turnitin Training for ... Microsoft Excel - Dec ... Turnitin - Windows In... Turnitin - Windows In... 10:38 AM

As can be seen from above, once the quoted material, bibliography, and small matches are excluded the percentage of match for this student's paper drops from 27% earlier to only 6%, with two matches remaining (one of which is cited). Again, the instructor has to make intelligent decisions about the reports and not base their decision on a single

percentage score of the report. The report must be opened and the matches must be thoughtfully analyzed.

What to do if plagiarism is suspected?

- Depends on severity and breadth, but usually a warning for first offense with coaching from instructor about how to summarize, paraphrase, and use proper citation. **At all times, the instructor should make contact with the student** in order to communicate their concern and question the student about the potential offense. The instructor has the option of deducting points for a suspected assignment or making the student redo it to fix the plagiarism. A **Classroom Incident Report (CIR)** should be completed so that GCU has a record. The CIR form can be found in the Faculty Resource Center (FRC).
- Faculty should review the “**Reporting Plagiarism**” lecture prior to submission of a CIR.
- If the offense is severe, especially if it involves intentionality or if the student repeatedly commits serious acts of plagiarism, the instructor should complete another CIR and turn the case over to the Academic Appeals Board at codeofconduct@gcu.edu.