



# A student guide to Turnitin



**Turnitin is a piece of software used by the university to check the electronic submission of every assignment to see how much original work it contains. The Turnitin software checks every assessment against a database of existing literature and previously submitted assignments to see if anything within the assignment is like previously published or submitted work.**



# What is a Turnitin report?

- A report is automatically generated when submitting an assignment via Turnitin.
- The report will highlight text that is similar to another source or previously submitted assignment.
- The report includes a similarity score and shows you a list of which sources match with your work.
- Turnitin reports do not identify plagiarism but rather flag up problems that markers may investigate, which could identify potential academic misconduct.

# How do I get a good Turnitin report?

- There is no “safe” Turnitin score. However, a very low or very high score is probably not good.
- Submitting a draft assignment to Turnitin can be a good way to check if you have forgotten to reference correctly or see if you haven’t used the source in the correct way (be aware not all modules will allow draft submissions).
- By following good academic practice, you won’t need to worry about the Turnitin score. [CAW \(The Centre for Academic Writing\)](#) can help you with good academic practice and writing.
- Normally, your similarity score will show how much of your work is similar to other sources. So for example, when you get a 50% similarity score, this means 50% of your work matches existing literature or previously submitted assignments.

# What does highlighted text mean?

If words, sentences or paragraphs are highlighted, they are very similar to text in sources or previously submitted assignments in the Turnitin database. Matches happen when:

- Text is directly copied and pasted into your own work (this needs to be quotes or paraphrased and referenced).
- Your paraphrasing is too close to the original wording (it needs rewording and a reference).
- You have included direct quotes (a few are OK with a reference, if you also include original content and critical thinking).
- The same references are used by other people - this is OK.
- Two or more student submit the same group work assignment.
- Two or more students copy from each other or work closely on an individual assignment.
- You include words or phrases that are "common knowledge" - this is OK and does not need to be referenced.



**Paraphrasing is writing someone else's ideas in your own words without changing the meaning. When paraphrasing, you need to acknowledge the source with an in-text citation and avoid using words too similar to the original.**



# Has Turnitin made a mistake?

Probably not!

Turnitin similarity does not always mean there is plagiarism, but it is important to understand the reasons for matches so you can put right any mistakes.

Take the [Good Academic Practice Quiz](#) to check that you are paraphrasing, referencing and citing correctly.

# I have a low Turnitin score, why have I been invited to an ACO meeting?

Some academic misconduct may not appear on a Turnitin report and here's why:

- Turnitin does not have access to all published sources, therefore they may be evidence of plagiarism Turnitin has not highlighted.
- Copied pictures or diagrams.
- Significant similarity to another persons work (arguments, structure etc.) when the words are not exactly the same.
- Contract cheating – this is where a student gets somebody else to complete their assignment for them.

Turnitin can only compare work to sources and assessments already submitted. If Student A's work is very similar to Student B's, but Student A submits first, A may have a low Turnitin score as Turnitin could not compare their work to B's. But B's score may be higher as Turnitin will compare their work to A's work.



# I've been accused of academic misconduct. What should I do?

- You can access advice and support from Your Students' Union Advice Service to better understand the academic misconduct process and get support for meetings where possible.
- [Your Advice Service's website](#) has lots of useful information about the academic misconduct process and tips on how to prepare for meetings.
- If you need further information or would like support in the meeting, complete our enquiry form at [yoursu.org/advice/getadvice](https://yoursu.org/advice/getadvice). When submitting your enquiry, please upload your meeting invite letter and any evidence (like the Turnitin report). This will make it easier for both you and the advisor!

# Where can I find more information?

- [University guidance on Turnitin.](#)
- [How to reference in academic writing.](#)