What is Turnitin Originality Check?

Turnitin is an originality check software that can be enabled in dropboxes. This software identifies text in student papers that is also found in websites, publications, and other student papers in the Turnitin database to detect possible plagiarism.

When a paper is submitted to Turnitin, a report provides a percentage of similarity to other materials as well as an analysis of the paper indicating exactly what portion of the text is unoriginal and where that unoriginal text is found in the Turnitin database.

It is essential for instructors to read and evaluate the reports from Turnitin since a high percentage of similarity in a student’s paper does not necessarily indicate plagiarism. For instance, Turnitin may have found quoted or bibliographic material or a student may have copied and pasted in a standardized assignment prompt. These can raise flags even if plagiarism did not occur.

Instructors are encouraged to notify their students when Turnitin will be used and offer them the option to remove their names from their papers. It is helpful to include information about Turnitin in the course syllabus to inform students about the software. The following is suggested syllabus wording you can use or adapt:

Student papers in this course may be checked by Turnitin for text that matches websites, publications, and other student papers in the Turnitin database, potentially indicating plagiarism. Students have the right to remove their names from papers before uploaded to Turnitin-enabled dropboxes to protect their privacy. If you have questions about Turnitin, please contact me. If you would like more information about academic misconduct, please visit the Dean of Students’ website.

Enable Originality Checking on a Dropbox

You can add Turnitin on new or existing dropboxes.

New Dropbox

All submissions will be automatically checked.

1. Select Dropbox on the top navigation pane under the desired course.
2. Select New Folder.
3. Select the Turnitin checkbox.
4. Click Save.

Existing Dropbox

You will need manually run reports if students have already submitted to the dropbox before you enable Turnitin

1. Select the drop-down arrow next to the folder name and select Edit Folder.
2. Select the Turnitin checkbox.
3. Click Save.
Advanced Originality Check Options

There are several advanced originality check options available. To find these, scroll to the bottom of the dropbox settings. Select Show Advanced Originality Checking Options. All the options will open beneath this option.

Display

Select the checkbox to enable this feature. When enabled, this feature allows students to see their Originality Reports.

GradeMark Available to Students

Instructors can set grading feedback via GradeMark to be available at a certain date and time.

Frequency

Instructors can choose whether to submit all papers to Turnitin or just certain papers such as large research papers or final projects.

Check Submissions Against

These options identify which sources Turnitin checks.

Index Files for Originality Checking

This allows files to be checked against other files in the same dropbox (e.g., fellow classmates). If this option is enabled, students will not be able to see each other’s papers. By default, this option is enabled.

Grammar Check Options

Turnitin offers automated grammar checking associated with the GradeMark feature. When this feature is enabled, select the level of difficulty for the content to be graded, the desired dictionaries, and specific grammar categories.

View and Interpret Turnitin Reports

After a student submits a paper, the submission appears as “In Progress” while being matched against the Turnitin database. It can take 10-60 minutes for a report to become available depending on the length of the paper.

*Example Essay.docx (26.92 KB)*

Once the report is complete, the document is assigned a percentage and color in the Reports column. The color indicates the level of similarity.

- Blue: 0-19% match
- Green: 20-39% match
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NOTE: A high percentage may not indicate plagiarism if the paper contains quotes, reference list entries, the assignment prompt, or other aspects that match sources but are not actually plagiarized. It is essential to view the report to determine if academic misconduct is occurring.

Select the colored portion next to the percentage to open the report. The Turnitin website will be opened in a new window or tab. The student’s document is displayed on the left side of the screen with any matching text highlighted. The color of the highlighting corresponds with the course on the right side.

If you have concerns about a student’s paper being plagiarized, the Dean of Students’ website provides valuable information.