

TURNITIN ORIGINALITY CHECK - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FACULTY

What is Turnitin?

Turnitin (www.Turnitin.com) is a powerful online resource for educators and students, which offers functionality around plagiarism prevention, peer review and online grading and feedback. Here we deal with plagiarism detection only.

What does the Originality Check involve?

Submitted papers are compared to open websites on the Internet and Turnitin.com database of previously submitted papers. The results of those comparisons are compiled, one for each paper submitted, in "Originality Reports.". By default, only the lecturer can see this report.

The screenshot displays the Turnitin interface for a paper titled "To Speak or To Sign: Choosing Cochlear Implants" by John Smith. The paper is a medical essay for Sociology 101. The interface shows a similarity index of 65% and a grade of 9 out of 10. A match overview sidebar on the right lists the following matches:

Match Number	Source	Similarity Percentage
1	cochleatoday.com Internet source	36%
2	Lincoln Land Community Coll Student paper (from 2027/05)	22%
3	Norwich University Student paper (from 1252/009)	18%
4	JAMA Publication	13%
5	about.com Internet source	10%
6	Medical Examiner Publication	8%
7	Diablo Valley College Student paper (from 12017704)	5%

The main text of the paper includes the following paragraphs:

On the Rise
Sign language is a beautifully expressive, visual language using hand, body and facial expressions to convey words and meaning, however, as more and more parents are learning even as early as birth that their child may be deaf, more children are getting cochlear implants than ever before and there is fear that fewer and fewer children will learn to sign. In fact, as of May 2002, 69 percent of babies born in the United States had been screened for hearing loss as part of universal newborn hearing screening programs. Such early identification of infant hearing loss represents a dramatic change from the situation that existed only six

with hearing loss were not identified until they were 2-1/2 years of age (Sorkin 2003). It is likely that the implementation of these early screenings have lead to the growth of

Cochlear implants within the United States to 20 percent or more per year (Sorkin 2003). Many parents view deafness as a disability that with cochlear implants can be cured. They desire that their child learn language and function "normally" in society.

Some important points to keep in mind

- Turnitin can identify matching text even when a student has added, deleted or substituted significant amounts of text
- It is faster and more effective than investigating for the original sources through conventional search engines (i.e. Google), allowing for citation verification and providing documentation of any alleged plagiarism. However, like any search engine, it does not search all the pages on the internet, but only
- Turnitin stores it in its database every new submitted piece of work, but your work can not be released without the permission of the instructor who submits and/or is responsible for the class

- **All the software does is matching text, not examining citation correctness**, in other words, it is perfectly possible that a document full of quotations properly referenced returns an originality report with a high percentage of similarity with other source. Therefore, **instructors must judge, according to personal teaching experience, when the “matching text” identified constitutes actual plagiarism**. See an example below¹:

An originality report has shown a match for the following passage:

According to the authors of the Report for the Policy Center on the First Year of College at Brevard College numerous studies use Tinto's model as a springboard from which to explore further the dynamics of departure; in doing so, the authors often draw attention to several features of first-year student persistence that the model fails to fully address.

Upon clicking on the comparison link, the lecturer finds that the text is found in an on-line report, entitled “Designing an Assessment of the First College Year: Report for the Policy Center on the First Year of College at Brevard College”. This may be interpreted as an instance of poor citation instead of plagiarism. While the student tries to attribute the proper source, the citation itself is incorrectly done, and the lecturer may decide to drop some marks for this.

Good teaching practices

- Use Turnitin in a proactive way, not only after plagiarism happens. Notify Turnitin is being used, and explain your students how it works
- Present students with a clear policy that includes a definition of plagiarism, avoidance tips, conduct guidelines and disciplinary process.
- Allow for opportunities to practice referencing and quotation and help students to find ‘their own voice’
- Provide students with training and/or trial submissions in Turnitin where they can access their originality reports; and provide support to interpret it
- Be creative! (e.g. using an originality report as a tool to work with in a tutorial, using the peer review and online grading features, allowing multiple drafts of an assignment so students can edit their first draft and resubmit, etc.)
- Strongly consider [grading and feedback with Turnitin Feedback Studio](#)

UL resources

- <https://www.ul.ie/library/online-resources> (Library online tutorials on Harvard referencing style, copyright, researching with the internet, etc).
- [UL Writing Centre](#)

Other resources

- <https://www.turnitin.com/resources>
- [The Turnitin blog](#)

For further information, training and advice contact angelica.risquez@ul.ie



¹ Adapted from Instruction Technology Services of Diego State University,