

TURNITIN STUDENT RESOURCE

Turnitin is a powerful tool for allowing you to improve your academic practice. However, interpreting a Turnitin Originality Report is sometimes not straightforward. From this information you will be able to:

- Interpret the results of the Turnitin Originality Report
- Identify sentence matching and basic steps needed to investigate whether matching text is properly referenced or not

Turnitin matches text in your assignment with text in millions of other online sources such as books, journals, web pages, and the work of other students. The Originality Report gives you a percentage representing the amount of text in your work that matches other sources online. There is a very distinct difference between what Turnitin flags as matching text (aka: similarity index) and plagiarism. Turnitin will highlight ANY matching material in a paper—even if it is properly quoted and cited. Just because it appears as unoriginal does not mean it is plagiarized; it just means that the material matches something in the Turnitin databases.

There is no defined percentage match that indicates that your work is, or is not, plagiarized. A match of 40% may be perfectly acceptable, so long as your work is presented and referenced correctly. Conversely, a match of only 4% may indicate that your work is underpinned by insufficient sources.



Figure 1. Assignment Inbox with Score

The colored square (Figure 1) will be one of these 5 basic colors: blue, green, yellow, orange or red. Figure 2. Each color represents how much of your paper or assignment matches something already in the Turnitin database.



Figure 2. Colored Square

Interpretation of the Originality Report:

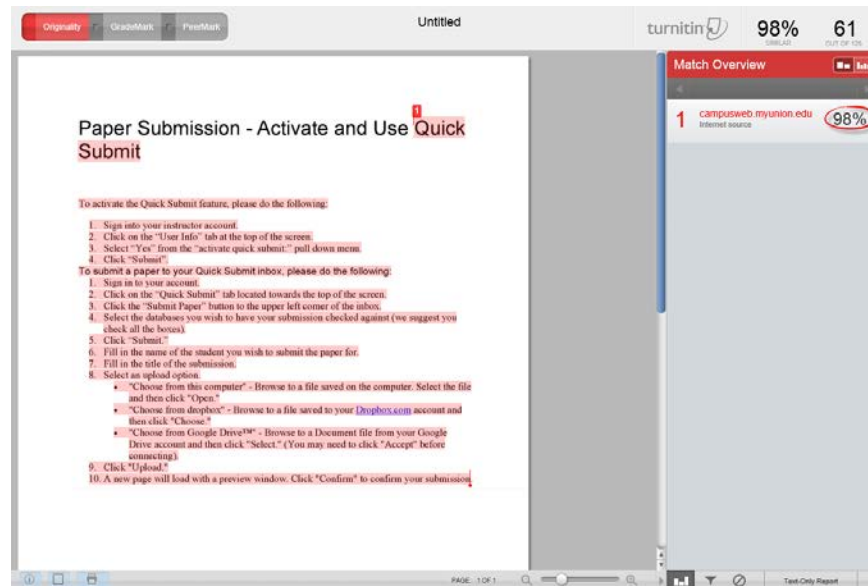


Figure 3. Originality Report Document Screen

Figure 3 shows a Turnitin Originality Report in the Document Viewer window. On the right of the image, you will see a numbered list of matched sources. Each of these is allocated a color and this color is used to highlight the matched text in the document. For example, the text highlighted in red has a small number 1 in its top left hand corner. This indicates that red highlighting is associated with matched source number 1.

More than a few words of text highlighted in **one color** indicates a significant match with one other source. If you have not placed this text in quotation marks, and referenced it, you may be accused of plagiarism. It may be that you need to improve your skills in paraphrasing - putting the ideas of others into your own words. However, even when you do this, you should reference the source of your words. Hover over the percentage and you will see 'view match breakdown'. Click to expand the detailed source information. Figure 4.

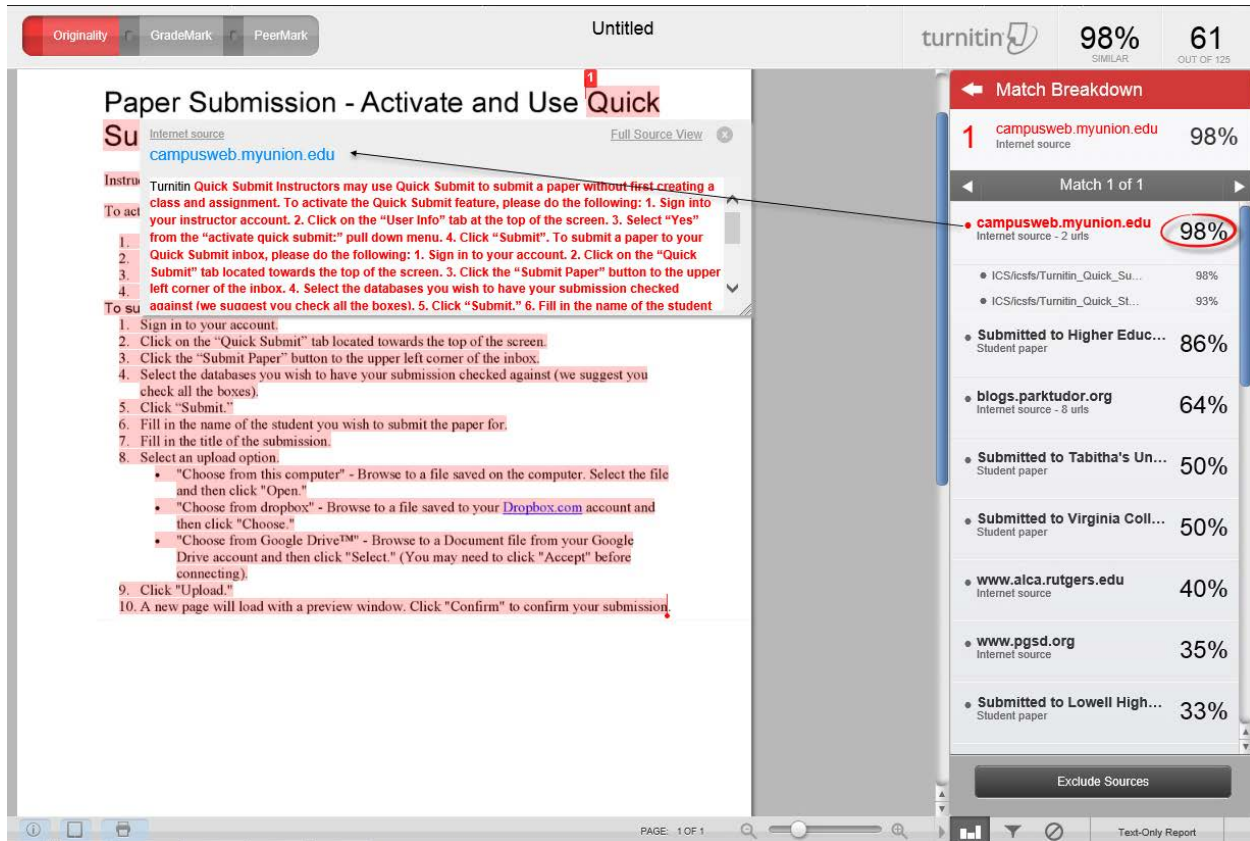


Figure 4. Match Breakdown

Work that is a response to an assignment using textbook and journal references will probably return a relatively high match percentage. This is because you will have used quotations from key authors and text books which will match with quotations used by other students undertaking the same course or program across the world. So long as you have properly referenced your quotations, the match will not be counted as plagiarism by your instructor. Check that you have enclosed your quotations in quotation marks.

Matched References:

At the bottom right hand side of the screen under the list of matched sources, you will see three small icons. The second icon, which looks like a funnel, (next to the one that looks like a bar chart) is the filters and settings icon. Turnitin will match references with reference lists on other people's work. You can use the filter feature to filter out matches with anything that follows the words 'References' or 'Bibliography'. Figure 5.

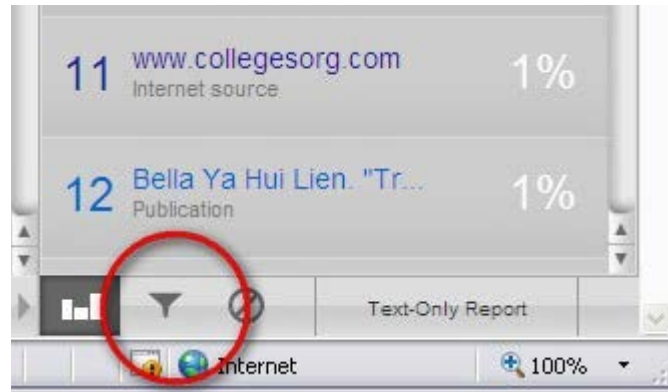


Figure 5. Filters and Settings Icon

Small Matches:

You may also be writing about something that contains professional terminology, which may be used by any author or person working in the same or similar fields. For example, you may be talking about the Census categories, or using terms such as 'patients with diabetes'. Matching with such terms is not plagiarism. Using the filters and settings icon, try filtering out small matches of 3 words. Figure 6.

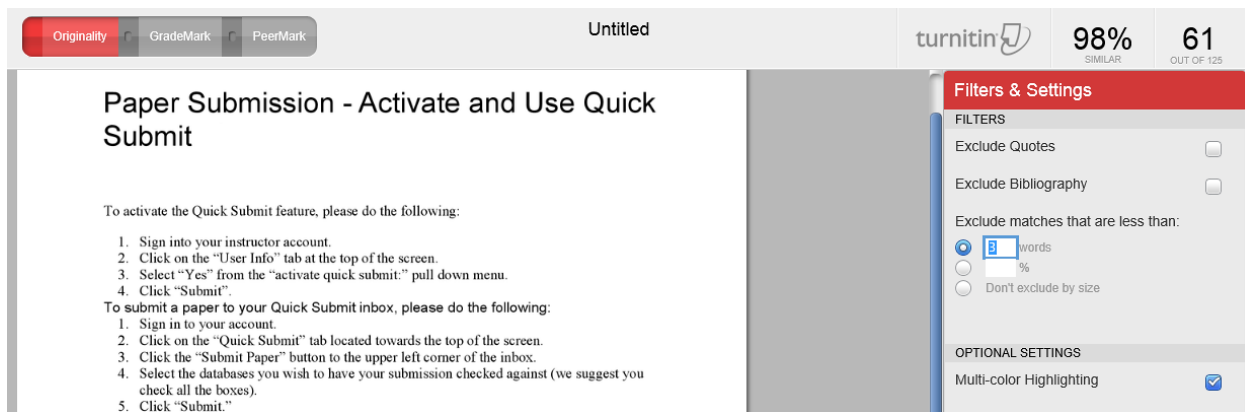


Figure 6. Exclude Small Matches

In Figure 7, the student has referenced the original source of the ideas (Babalola), but is matching with another source that has not been referenced. This indicates poor paraphrasing, since the student has changed only a few words and has retained too much of the matched source.

2.4 Significance of the study

31 Education is increasingly considered the key to economic success and investments in the Malaysian education system. 12 In spite of this increased interest, most educational investments in education are made on the basis of untested or partially tested assumptions about the cost-effectiveness of particular interventions (Babalola, 2003). In the Malaysian context, current knowledge and application about cost-effectiveness studies are extraordinarily inadequate, especially considering the amount of money that goes into teacher education. The challenge is that measuring cost-effectiveness of educational interventions is a difficult, time consuming and costly task requiring sophisticated research instruments.

Figure 7. Plagiarism

Patch Writing and Copying:

The quotations you use in your work are likely to match with quotations used by other people in their work. The key is that you have clearly identified these as quotations and have included them in your reference list. However, the text that links your quotations should not significantly match with other people's work. This should be your own.

In Figure 6, the first sentence of this paragraph contains nearly a complete sentence from matched source 31, highlighted in brown. The rest of the paragraph matches source 12, highlighted in blue. Very few words have been changed, and there is no indication of referencing or direct quotes. This would be considered plagiarism.

Percent Match Summary:

This score gives you an indication of how much text was found to be very similar to a source. Any matching should be checked because no copying is allowed.

A high percentage matching score usually indicates that you have followed your original source too closely. A score of 90% means that there is a 90% probability that these two sentences express the same idea, even if the words are not identical. However, a high match score does not necessarily mean that you copied material. For example, citations and lists of references are usually marked as matching other sources, because other sources have cited the same resources. Matching citations do not count as copying.

Alternatively, a low match score may still indicate that you borrowed a sentence or phrase, and you must edit your work to be original. Further, a 0% matching score is not a guarantee that your work is completely original, you may not have included adequate sources.

Use your good judgment! Do not copy the words or ideas of others!

In your Turnitin Originality Report, check to make sure that:

- When quoted text matches the original source exactly word-for-word, you put the quote in quotation marks and cite the original source correctly with the page number for the quotation.
- When you paraphrase or summarize ideas or facts from a source, you use your own words to explain those ideas or report those facts.
- You correctly cite the source for each idea or fact that you obtained from another source (whether or not it is an exact quotation).
- You revise and restate in your own words all phrases that match more than a few (3 or 4) words in a source.

Conclusion:

There is no straight forward answer to the question: 'What percentage of my assignment can match with other sources?' This decision is made on a number of factors and a Turnitin Originality Report forms just one part of this decision making process. Your instructor will look at the paper and the originality report to make the determination of whether or not something is plagiarism, and to what extent, i.e., intentional plagiarism, unintentional plagiarism, improper/lack of citation, or mere coincidence. Suspicious documents submitted for course credit that contain attribution issues, direct copying, and/or patch writing will be reported to Dr. Mary Ann Smith, Assistant Dean of Students for further investigation. If your Originality Report identifies any of the potential problems described in this handout, you should take steps to improve your academic practices.

References

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the american psychological association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

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