Technology Integration Practical Solutions
Originality with Turnitin

Introduction

Dictionary.com defined plagiarism as follows:

> **Plagiarism** [**play**-j*uh*-riz-*uh* m]   *noun*
>
> An act or instance of using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization and the representation of that author's work as one's own, as by not crediting the original author.
>
> Source: Dictionary.com [https://www.dictionary.com/browse/plagiarism]

Students and faculty typically agree on the definition of plagiarism. However, students struggle with how to apply the concept to their work for class.

A tool like Turnitin, can be used as a policy enforcement tool to "catch" students and reprimand them for violations of academic integrity guidelines. However, it can **also** be used as a teaching element in the course to help ensure students fully-understand the academic integrity guidelines.

A Few Quick Notes

1) Turnitin does NOT detect plagiarism. It only detects and reports similarities between the submission to other documents on the internet and in its document repository.

2) There is no minimum or maximum "good score" in Turnitin. Depending on selections made by the instructor, a "good score" in Turnitin could be anything below 70% or nothing higher than 20%. It all depends on selections made by the instructor for a specific assignment.

The Problem

Many students coming from high school, even if they were enrolled in advanced academic courses (e.g. AP, dual-credit, concurrent enrollment), have a somewhat skewed view of plagiarism due to two main factors:

1) Many have never been formally taught what plagiarism is and common occurrences
2) Many have never been held accountable to academic integrity standards for plagiarism

Many instructors at the college-level operate under the assumption that students have been taught about plagiarism and know how to avoid it. Regretfully, many students only have a foundational concept of the definition of plagiarism and very little beyond that.

Students will say they know about plagiarism and understand it, but they really don't. Students know about cardiac bypass surgery from their high school biology classes, but they don't really know how to apply that knowledge, nor should they.

Yes, students should have been taught in-depth to successfully apply their understanding of plagiarism to their own works, but they were not. This situation now lands in our classroom and we must respond.

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The Solution

Introduce students early to Turnitin. Explain to them how to read and use the Turnitin Similarity Report.

Give your students the opportunity to submit their written works multiple times before the due date to check for similarity. This is done by creating two separate assignment dropboxes. For this example, let's say it is September 1st and the assignment is due by 11:59 p.m. on September 21st.

Assignment Dropbox #1	Assignment Dropbox #2
Assignment Name: Research Paper Originality Check	Assignment Name: Research Paper Final Submission

Turnitin Settings:
     Open Date: 01-September
     Due Date: 21-September (11:59 p.m.)
     Allow Multiple Submissions
     Release Similarity Reports to Students
     Compare to Document Repository – No Store
	Turnitin Settings:
	     Open Date: 16-September
	     Due Date: 21-September (11:59 p.m.)
	     Allow Single Submission
	     Release Similarity Report to Students
	     Compare to Document Repository and Store
	     Allow Late Submissions

Assignment Dropbox #1 could have instructions similar to the following:

> Use this assignment dropbox to check the originality of your work against the Turnitin document repository. You can submit multiple times up until the due date. After your first 3 submissions, you can only submit once every 24 hours.

> Use the report to verify your citations and the originality of your paper. Remember, it's OK to have similarity in your paper, you just need to know why it is there and cite it, if needed.

> IMPORTANT NOTE: This dropbox is only for checking originality of your submission and not for final grading. Submit your paper to the "Research Paper Final Submission" dropbox for grading consideration.

Assignment Dropbox #2 could have instructions similar to the following:

> Use this assignment dropbox for the final submission of your research paper. Please note that you only get one submission to this dropbox. Make sure that the file you are submitting is the one you are wanting graded.

> A similarity report will be generated and released to you after your submission.

The Teachable Moment

Either work with students during your office hours while they are submitting work to the "originality check" dropbox or encourage them to take their similarity reports to the Writing Lab in the Learning Commons to get in-depth assistance on improving their writing skills.

Encourage students to explain, to themselves at a minimum, why each item flagged on the similarity report was flagged and is it OK. Is it something that needs no citation (e.g. page numbers, title page elements, works cited / bibliographic information) or is it something that needs a citation (e.g. direct quote, indirect quote, blockquote)?

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Academic Integrity

The University of North Texas at Dallas Code of Student's Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct Section 7.002 – Code of Academic Integrity provides information on the official stance of the institution on the matter academic integrity.

While students **should** be held accountable for their actions, teachers have a responsibility to ensure their students know and fully understand the expectations of course assignments, including originality of work and citation of the works of others.

Yes, use tools like Turnitin to ensure your students are properly citing the works of others and not submitting work that is similar to the work of others. Use it as **both** a teaching tool **and** as a policy tool.

Additional Information

Additional information can be found on the DLIT Supported Technologies page, the DLIT Turnitin Information page, and Turnitin.com.