



Using Turnitin Effectively in Your Course

What Faculty Need to Know

Guidance from the Online Learning Advisory Council

Supporting Fair, Consistent, and Responsible Use

At HCCC, Turnitin is the approved tool for plagiarism detection and related analysis. Use of unapproved third-party tools may introduce inaccuracies, bias, inconsistent standards, and data privacy concerns. Only institutionally approved tools should be used to support academic integrity review and reporting.

Turnitin is a tool designed to support academic integrity, student learning, and faculty review of written work. This guidance is intended to promote fair, consistent, and informed use of Turnitin while helping protect students from misinterpretation of results.

Turnitin can help surface potential concerns related to text similarity and AI-generated writing patterns. However, Turnitin results must always be interpreted carefully, contextually, and with professional judgment. Turnitin does not independently determine whether academic misconduct has occurred. Faculty remain responsible for reviewing results in context and making informed decisions consistent with course expectations and institutional policy.

Turnitin Similarity Reports (Primary Feature)

What the Similarity Report does

- Compares student text to websites, published sources, and student paper databases
- Highlights matching text and generates a similarity score to assist faculty review

What the Similarity Report does NOT do

- It does not determine plagiarism
- It does not prove academic misconduct
- It does not replace faculty judgment or contextual review

How to Interpret Similarity Reports

The similarity score is a starting point for review, not a conclusion. All results require faculty interpretation and contextual review. Common reasons for higher scores include:

- Assignment prompts included in submissions
- Directly quoted material
- Common phrases or discipline-specific terminology
- References and bibliographies
- Prior drafts or previous submissions

A higher similarity score **does not** automatically indicate plagiarism.

Best Practices for Reviewing Similarity Reports

- Open and review the full report, not just the score
- Examine highlighted matches in context
- Review the original matched sources
- Exclude references and bibliographies where appropriate
- Consider assignment expectations and structure
- Evaluate whether the work reflects student understanding and authentic engagement

Turnitin AI Writing Indicator (Secondary Feature)

While Similarity Reports compare writing against existing sources, the AI Writing Indicator functions differently and should be interpreted separately.

What the AI Writing Indicator does

- Estimates the likelihood that text may be AI-generated
- Analyzes writing patterns rather than matching against external sources
- Provides a predictive indicator to support faculty review

What the AI Writing Indicator does NOT do

- It does not prove AI use or determine authorship
- It does not provide verifiable evidence of AI-generated writing at the individual level
- It does not independently determine academic misconduct

How to Interpret AI Writing Indicators

AI indicators identify potential concern for further review; not a determination of misconduct. Results should always be interpreted cautiously and within the broader context of the student's work, assignment expectations, and faculty expertise. AI indicators may:

- Miss AI-generated content
- Flag human writing incorrectly
- Produce false positives or false negatives

Because AI detection is pattern-based and not independently verifiable, results should not be used as standalone evidence to make academic integrity determinations.

Best Practices for Reviewing AI Writing Indicators

- Review the student's work holistically and in context
- Compare concerns against other student work or drafts when appropriate
- Avoid relying on AI indicators in isolation
- Engage students in conversation when questions or concerns arise
- Use professional judgment and multiple sources of information before making decision

Key Takeaways

- Turnitin is a tool to support faculty review, not replace it
- Similarity scores $\neq$ plagiarism
- AI indicators $\neq$ proof of misconduct
- Faculty are expected to review reports fully and contextually
- Human judgment remains essential in all academic integrity decisions

Would you like to learn more?

- Frequently asked questions: <https://www.hccc.edu/programs-courses/col/turnitin.html>
- COL Turnitin workshops: <https://involved.hccc.edu/organization/col/events>

Questions?

- Contact the Center for Online Learning at col@hccc.edu