

The use of Turnitin at Oxford University

... for Tutors and Administrators



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1 Introduction to Turnitin

Turnitin is an electronic text matching system that can be used to find text matches between students' submitted work and existing electronic sources, including extensive databases of electronic articles, other student assignments, and the internet. Since Turnitin is a web-based system, student **papers**¹ (essays or assignments) need to be made available in electronic format (Turnitin cannot be used for submissions (or comparison) with material in printed format).

Oxford University has a subscription to the TurnitinUK service, which is supported and informed by JISC. IT Services manages the service and creates **instructor** accounts on request. IT Services provides ongoing support and training in using both the direct TurnitinUK service, and the WebLearn-Turnitin integration.

After student papers have been submitted and compared to various repositories and databases, an **Originality Report (OR)** is produced for each submission. The OR highlights parts of the student's text which match with text already held in the Turnitin and other online databases. An overall score (the **similarity index**) is assigned recording the percentage of the submitted work which is found elsewhere. Scores can be adjusted to take account of properly quoted text and bibliographies.

“Originality Reports should not be taken as an indication that plagiarism has occurred. They are simply a tool to help an instructor find sources that contain text similar to submitted papers. The decision to deem any work plagiarised must be made carefully, and only after in-depth examination of both the submitted paper and suspect sources in accordance with the standards of the class and institution where the paper was submitted.” (Turnitin Instructor Manual, 2010, p. 48).

¹ Words appearing in this font style have descriptions in the **Glossary** at the end of this document.

2 Using Turnitin as a teaching tool

Education Committee supports and encourages the use of Turnitin, not just by the Proctors for work submitted for an exam (to help detect intentional plagiarism), but also as a formative tool for tutors to help students learn good referencing and paraphrasing, and to acquire the necessary skills and judgement to apply to their academic work and publications.

In 2009 Education Committee agreed in principle that students could be provided with access to Turnitin for formative use under the supervision of their tutor/supervisor, for work that would *not* eventually be submitted for a University Examination. This can assist in the development of students' information literacy skills – identifying, finding, evaluating and synthesising resource materials – and emphasise good practice, rather than focusing on rules and penalties.

The WebLearn-TurnitinUK integration allows students to submit their essays after the tutor has created an 'assignment' in a suitable WebLearn site in which the students are site members. The tutor can decide whether the students can view their **Originality Report**, and whether they can make more than one submission of a piece of work.

3 The process of using Turnitin

3.1. Formative or summative use?

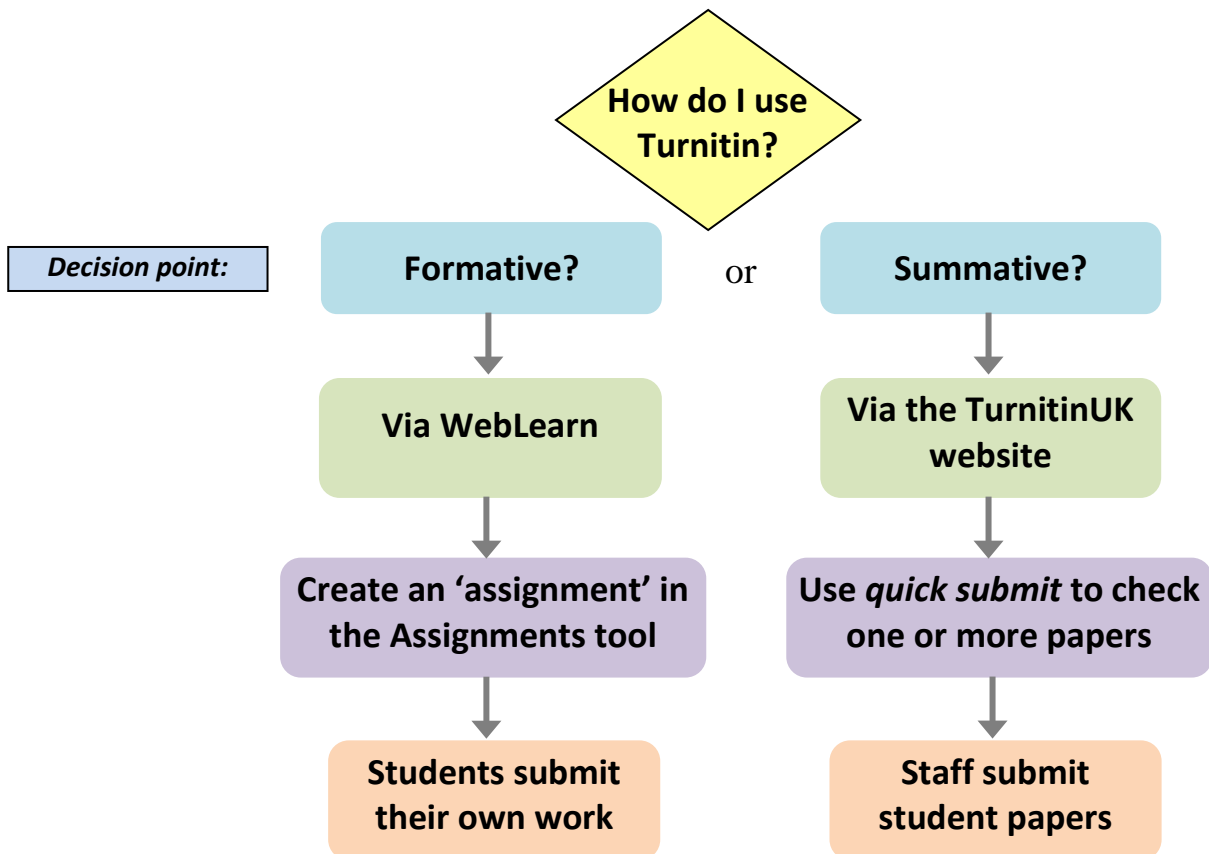
Turnitin can be used in two modes (see diagram below):

- **formative**, which focuses on a tutor or supervisor working with a student to encourage and develop acceptable academic writing and citation skills; or
- **summative**, which checks a piece of examined work to measure the extent of text matching between the student’s work and other electronic sources.

The University of Oxford encourages the use of Turnitin as a teaching tool (*formative* – see Section 2). If administrators, examiners or moderators wish to use Turnitin to check work submitted for examination purposes (*summative* – see Section 6), this no longer requires prior permission from the Proctors. Contact headofexams@admin.ox.ac.uk if you wish to set up a special WebLearn site to display Oxford candidate numbers (to authorised parties) instead of student names, for purposes of anonymity.

Turnitin is integrated with the WebLearn Assignments tool, which is the recommended route for students to submit their own work. The submissions are time and date stamped.

- If using the **WebLearn Assignments tool**, the assignment must first be set up by the staff member (‘maintainer’ in the WebLearn site). Students should already be enrolled as site members, and then they can submit their essay to the relevant ‘assignment’. Their essay goes ‘behind the scenes’ to Turnitin and the resulting originality report is automatically returned to the WebLearn assignments area.
- The quick submit option via the TurnitinUK website (<http://www.turnitinuk.com>) allows a staff member to submit one or more student papers for a quick check for text that matches existing electronic sources.



3.2. Comparative steps in the two submission routes

Using the WebLearn-Turnitin integration	Using TurnitinUK
Add the Assignments tool to your site and tick the box for Turnitin integration	Request a Turnitin instructor account from turnitin@it.ox.ac.uk
Students should already exist in the WebLearn site. If not, it is easy to add participants by importing course groups from the central database	Enable quick submit (once off), and then select this option
Staff member creates an assignment in the Assignments tool, specifying closing date and closing time, and selecting the required Turnitin options	Staff member submits one or more student papers, or a zip file of papers
Students login using their Oxford single sign on and submit their essay to the assignment area	
Other site maintainers, such as administrators and examiners can see the assignment and Originality Report , depending on permissions in the WebLearn site	Only the staff member who submitted the paper/s can view, print or download a copy of the Originality Report from the Turnitin quick submit list
At the end of the term or academic year, do a bulk download of all assignments in the WebLearn site for archival purposes (the assignments will be removed when current students are removed from the site). The downloaded data includes the individual student submissions, as well as the date and time of submission.	

3.2.1. Advantages of using the WebLearn-Turnitin integration

- You do not need to request a separate Turnitin account
- Your students can be easily added as participants in your WebLearn site by importing the course group from a central Oxford University database (**Add Participant Group**)
- Students make use of their existing Oxford single sign on (SSO) login details
- Students submit their own work using the WebLearn Assignments tool
- Turnitin **Originality Reports** are delivered back to the WebLearn Assignments tool, for analysis and discussion with the student
- The environment is familiar to students and staff who already use WebLearn

3.2.2. If anonymity is required via the WebLearn-Turnitin integration

- Students are usually identified in the Weblearn site by their Oxford single sign-on (SSO) login details. Anonymity for examined (summative) work can be enabled by requesting a special WebLearn site – contact headofexams@admin.ox.ac.uk.
- An alternative (or additionally) an administrator can act as intermediary: After students have submitted to a WebLearn assignment, the course administrator downloads the files and checks them for anonymity prior to emailing them to the assessors.

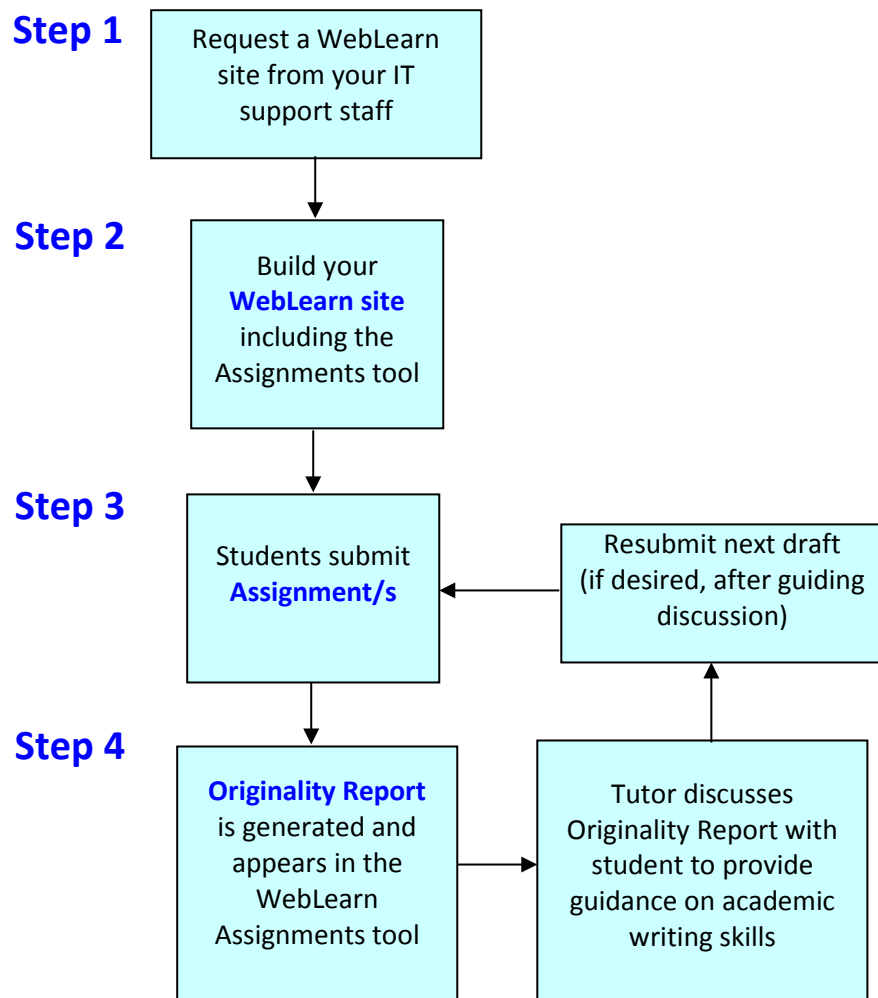
3.3. Setting up a WebLearn assignment


Step 1: Request a WebLearn site from your IT support staff if you don't already have one (Note: if anonymity is required, request a special WebLearn site from Head of Exams)

Step 2: Build your site by adding the participant group of students, and the Assignments tool, with instructions and supporting file/s if necessary, and select the Turnitin options

Step 3: Students submit their assignment by uploading it to WebLearn

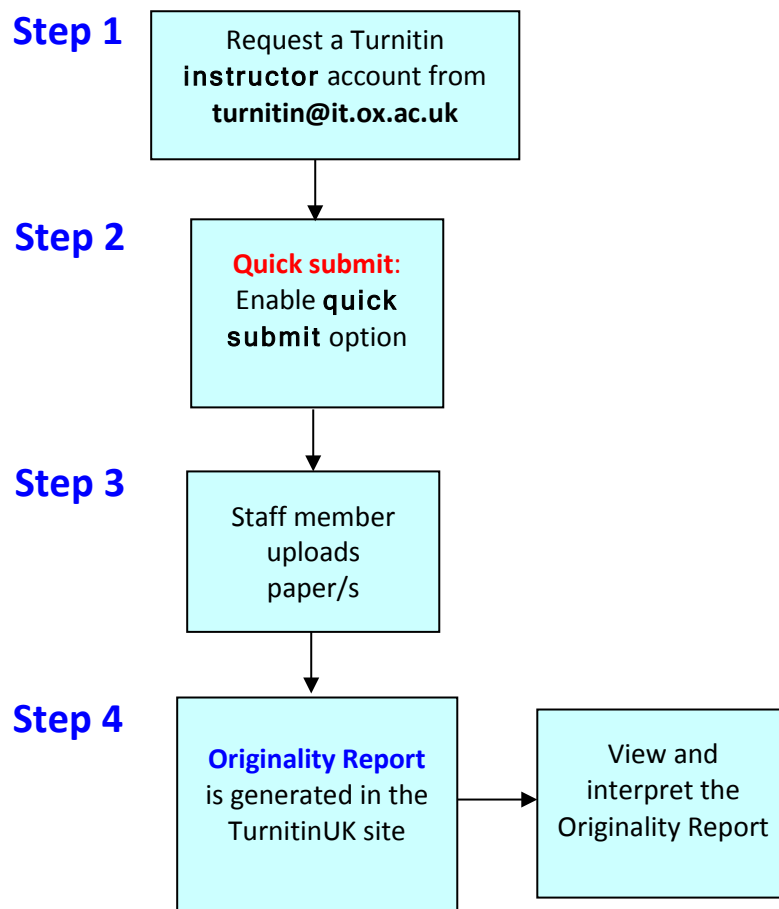
Step 4: The Originality Report is returned in WebLearn, usually within 15 minutes



 Education Committee recommends that the focus should be on developing students' academic literacy and writing skills so that they are able to evaluate their own work without relying on the software system. The Turnitin Originality Report can be used in a formative way under the guidance of a tutor, helping students to acquire proper skills in academic writing, referencing, citation, style and structure. See Section 2.

3.4. Using the TurnitinUK 'quick submit' mode

Step 1: Request an instructor account by sending an e-mail to **turnitin@it.ox.ac.uk**
Step 2: Enable the **quick submit** option for your account on TurnitinUK
<http://turnitinuk.com/> (this enables you to submit one assignment, or several, or a zip file)
Step 3: Submit the assignment by uploading it via the **Quick submit** tab
Step 4: View and interpret the **Originality Report** (download and keep a copy for future reference)



4 Using Turnitin as *preparation* for exams



Education Committee asked a small working group to consider whether or not it was appropriate to allow students access to Turnitin to check draft work for a University Examination, at the discretion of the supervisory body. The working group took the view that the use of electronic screening should *not* be permitted for work that is to be submitted for examination, although an exception may be appropriate in circumstances:

Options for examination preparation²

- in courses where you require submission very early in Michaelmas term, especially where little or no opportunity has been provided for students to practise extended writing with proper referencing: this would apply, for example, to some taught MSc courses. International students who have come from a different educational culture may not yet have mastered good referencing and paraphrasing by Michaelmas term.
- in a course where the frequent occurrence of plagiarism indicated that candidates needed more guidance.

In such exceptional cases the supervisory body might agree that all students due to submit work for examination should be allowed to use Turnitin, on one occasion only, to screen a draft of the work that they are preparing for submission in a University examination. This would provide an opportunity for you to support your students in skills of referencing and paraphrasing. Turnitin would therefore be used formatively in this instance. Your student should not be permitted to use Turnitin as a last-minute check on a final version. Where a course involves several pieces of submitted work, the exceptional arrangement should at most be made for the first one or two pieces of assessed work.

For each paper where screening of a draft is permitted, the supervisory body should decide whether the student has access to the **Originality Report**. All of the arrangements would have to be made clear in the course handbook.

² These recommendations are currently under review, particularly in the light of a policy being developed on feedback to students on Postgraduate taught courses.

5 Support and Training

Various sources of help and support are available in using Turnitin for both the formative improvement of students' academic writing skills and for formal detection of possible occurrences of plagiarism.

5.1. About Turnitin at Oxford University

IT Services runs the Turnitin service at Oxford University. More information about the service and support provided is available at <http://www.it.ox.ac.uk/turnitin/>. The **Service Level Description** is available from a link on the same page.

5.2. Courses for staff

IT Services offers two face-to-face sessions each term (search 'Plagiarism' on the courses website). Book a place at <https://courses.it.ox.ac.uk>.

Plagiarism: WebLearn and Turnitin

The Turnitin plagiarism detection service identifies pieces of text in student work that match with existing electronic texts. It can be used for assessed essays and also for general formative purposes to improve student academic skills. You will have a chance to submit a sample document via the WebLearn integration with Turnitin.

Plagiarism: Interpreting Originality Reports

What do the percentage matches mean? What about direct citations? Should I include bibliographies in the similarity index? This lunchtime session covers Turnitin Originality Reports and how to interpret the results. You will have a chance to submit a sample document via the WebLearn integration with Turnitin.

5.3. Staff support site in WebLearn

Visit the staff support site for information on the use of Turnitin at Oxford University, frequently asked questions, videos, case studies and quick guides:

<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/info/plag>

You can browse the material and join the site if you wish to receive email notifications, particularly about the Turnitin User Group (see 5.4), and any other issues for discussion.

5.4. Oxford University Turnitin User Group

A **Turnitin User Group** exists and has a presence in WebLearn:

<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/info/plag/tiug>

The group meets once a term to hear from Turnitin users and discuss ideas about the best way to use the software, and institutional issues of mutual interest. Each division should have at least one representative on the Turnitin User Group in order to keep informed.

Book a place to attend the meeting at

<https://oxford.imparando.com/accessplan/details/courses/course.aspx?coursedataonly=0&courseid=TE007&companyid=OXFORDXU4U>.

Discussions can be conducted or questions posed on the **Turnitin User Group mailing list** in WebLearn: tii-community@weblearn.ox.ac.uk.

5.5. TurnitinUK website

- Use the TurnitinUK website (<http://www.turnitinuk.com>) to activate your instructor account and the quick **submit** option to submit a small number of papers.
- The TurnitinUK support site (<http://www.turnitinuk.com> – click on **Services > Training**) offers detailed support for instructors and students in the form of Quickstart guides, user manuals and narrated videos and tutorials.

6 Framework for online submissions

Departments or colleges should contact Examinations and Assessment team if they plan to use the **WebLearn-Turnitin integration** for students to submit examined (summative) work. Certain conditions need to be met, including necessary changes to the course regulations prior to adopting online submission.

A special WebLearn site needs to be set up to enable use of the candidate numbers instead of student names. Departments are responsible for managing the site and providing access to students and the Examinations and Assessment team.

For further information, consult the **Framework for the use of WebLearn to manage submission of assessment** (available from the Examinations and Assessment team): taughtdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk

7 Glossary

(Taken and modified from the Turnitin Instructor Manual, 2010)

account - a TurnitinUK account allows instructors to use products purchased from TurnitinUK (e.g. Quick submit).

administrator – the IT Services Help Desk who will set up instructor accounts in response to requests sent to turnitin@it.ox.a.uk

digital receipt - the digital receipt is a confirmation of a successful paper submission to a TurnitinUK assignment (including via a WebLearn assignment). The digital receipt contains the unique *paper ID* number, user name, submission date and time, class name, assignment title, and a copy of the submitted work, to ensure that the correct file has been uploaded.

exclude bibliography - the exclude bibliography link is an option on the TurnitinUK Originality Report. Use of this feature automatically excludes information in the bibliography section of a paper. Only an instructor can exclude the bibliography permanently. Student exclusion of the bibliography will revert when the Originality Report view window is closed. This function is an approximation and not all bibliography structures will be correctly removed. Proper usage of bibliographic information can be determined by the class instructor.

exclude quoted - the exclude quoted link is an option on the TurnitinUK Originality Report. Use of this feature automatically excludes information from directly quoted areas of the paper. Only the class instructor can exclude the quoted sections permanently. Student use of this feature will revert to normal when the Originality Report view window is closed. This function is an approximation and not all quoted material can be correctly disregarded, particularly if single quotation marks have been used instead of double quotation marks.

instructor - the term used for teachers, tutors, or administrators authorised to have an instructor account.

Originality Report - the Originality Report is a flexible document that allows students and instructors to review matches between a submitted work and the repositories scanned by Turnitin. Citations, quotations, and bibliographic material are all scanned against Turnitin's repositories to determine an overall similarity percentage as well as specific matches to similar text.

overall similarity index - the overall similarity index is a percentage indicating the similarity of the text submitted to information contained in the TurnitinUK repositories used for comparison on the assignment the submission was made in. This percentage indicates a percentage based on the length of the paper compared to the length of the areas flagged as similar during the comparison.

paper - a paper refers to the document or file submitted by a user to an assignment in a class on the TurnitinUK website.

paper ID - the paper ID number is a unique identifier that can be used to refer to a specific paper. The paper ID number can be viewed by accessing the paper in the assignment inbox for instructors. The paper ID number is also available on the paper view page and Originality Report.

quick submit - The quick submit feature allows instructors to submit papers and receive Originality Reports without creating a class or an assignment. This is ideal for instructors who would like to spot check small numbers of submissions and already have the papers in electronic format.

repository - a set of information of a specific type or types. In the specific context of the Originality Report provided by TurnitinUK, repository is used to refer to the type of information the submission was evaluated against for direct matching or high levels of similarity. Available repositories include internet, archived internet, periodical/journal/publication information, and previous submissions.

resubmit - the act of submitting a new paper in place of an existing submitted paper. Resubmission can only be done if the instructor has set an assignment to allow students to overwrite until the due date and time of the paper, or if the instructor has manually deleted the student's existing submission in the assignment inbox. This option can only be enabled by the class instructor.

similarity index (see also **overall similarity index**) – the score included in the Originality Report, which indicates the percentage of matching text that has been uncovered. The colour of the report icon indicates the overall similarity index of the paper, based on the amount of matching or similar text that was identified:

0%-----Blue icon
1-24%---Green icon
25-49%--Yellow icon
50-74%--Orange icon
75-100%--Red icon

submission - a file or files uploaded by a student or instructor user into an assignment within a TurnitinUK class. Only a single file per student user can be submitted to an assignment by a student user.

user type - TurnitinUK has three available user types. A single user profile may have access to all three user types to fulfil different functions. The user types are administrator, instructor, and student.