Turnitin - Plagiarism Detection Tool

INTRODUCTION

Whether teaching in the classroom or online, instructors are rightfully concerned with the potential for students to plagiarize the work of others. One way to combat this is to design the course activities to discourage plagiarism (e.g., instruct students to write essays based on the info they provided in an earlier activity that had asked them details about their individual background). Even with well-designed activities, however, students may still be tempted to take shortcuts, and instructors would benefit from ways of sniffing out plagiarism, whether the intent is to penalize students for their misconduct or to guide them toward more virtuous approaches to the work they submit as their own.

Fortunately, there is a tool available to instructors in D2L called Turnitin, which is designed to detect plagiarism in papers submitted to folders in the Dropbox area of D2L.

A CLOSER LOOK

In the most common configurations, Turnitin will monitor the Dropbox folder in D2L for submissions and will automatically take a student's submitted work to compare it with existing content online, in professional publications, and in Turnitin's own database. Turnitin will then produce an Originality Report, which will provide a breakdown of any matching content along with direct links to the sources of existing content. The Originality Report includes (see screenshot below):

1. In the top-right corner, the overall percentage of unoriginal content in the student's submission
2. Just below that percentage, a Match Overview section that has a list of links to the source of each piece of unoriginal content and the percentage of the total submission that came from each source
3. In the main panel, highlighted content in the student's submission that reflects the content found in the external sources (with the highlight color and the small number that appears above each highlighted section corresponding to the Match Overview link with the same color and number)
How to Access Originality Reports

In each Dropbox folder that has Turnitin enabled, a Report column will appear at the top of the list of the student submissions inside the folder. Once a student's submission has been evaluated for plagiarism, you will see in the Report column a percentage that corresponds to the amount of the submission that is unoriginal content along with a color associated with that percentage, as shown in the screenshot below. Note: If a report is pending, you will see “In-progress” instead of the percentage and colored box.

To view the detailed report shown on the first page of this info sheet, click on the block of color next to the percentage. The report will open in a page on the Turnitin site.

Turning On Turnitin

If you do decide to use Turnitin, you will need to enable the Originality Check feature, which is relatively simple. When setting up a Dropbox folder, you simply go to the Originality Check section under the Properties tab and check the “Enable for this folder” box, as you can see in the screenshot.

Important notes:
• Once you enable Turnitin for a Dropbox folder, it cannot be disabled.
• You must manually re-enable Turnitin for each folder each semester. When a course is copied from one semester to the next, Turnitin is disabled by default.

Advanced Features

Once you enable the Originality Check, the Show Advanced Plagiarism Detection Options section will appear. As you can see in the screenshot, you will have the following options:

1. Let students see the plagiarism report
2. Have Turnitin detect plagiarism automatically on all submissions or set it up to allow you to manually select individual submissions to be evaluated
3. Select different domains for Turnitin to scan through to compare student submissions with existing content
4. Upload your students’ work to the Turnitin user paper database to help you and other instructors detect plagiarism in all courses that utilize the Turnitin Originality Check

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Getting Started with Turnitin: http://turnitin.com/en_us/training/getting-started
Admin Training with Turnitin: http://turnitin.com/en_us/training/administrator-training
Resources to Help Students Avoid Plagiarism: http://owl.wisconsin.edu/plagiarism.aspx

Recommendation: Use the Originality Reports as a method of raising flags for potential suspicious activity and not as a definitive indication of plagiarism. Like any automated tool, it has the potential to make mistakes.