What is Turnitin?

Turnitin.com is a web-based service that checks a paper’s originality and helps to prevent plagiarism. When a paper is uploaded to Turnitin, it is compared against all the material already stored in the Turnitin database. This database includes current Internet documents, archived Internet data, periodicals, journals, publications and previously submitted student papers. If there is text in the new submission that matches something already in the database, the matching text will be highlighted in a Turnitin Originality Report. The Originality Report indicates by percentages how similar the submission is to other work in the database. Turnitin does not detect or determine plagiarism – it just detects matching text and provides a report for review.

Interpreting the Turnitin Report

When an assessment is submitted to Taskstream, it will automatically be uploaded to the Turnitin database and an Originality Report will be generated.

1. Click on the “Originality Report” tab in Taskstream to view the report.
2. This page will show the title of the work, date submitted, and a colored square icon with the Originality Percentage. The colored icon is linked to the overall similarity percentage:
   - Blue: No matching text
   - Green: 1 – 24% matching text
   - Yellow: 25 – 49% matching text
   - Orange: 50 – 74% matching text
   - Red: 75 – 100% matching text

   **WGU allows only a 30% or less total similarity.**

3. Click on “Full Report.”
4. If necessary, click on “Text-only Report” in bottom right-hand corner.
5. The report will open in a new window. The report has three main sections: Paper Information, Paper Text, and Matching Sources.
   a. **Paper Information**: The top section of the report shows the information about the paper, including the title, author, date of submission and similarity information.
   b. **Paper Text (Student paper)**: The left side of the Originality report shows the text only version of the submitted paper. Any text matching the text in the Turnitin database will be highlighted and numbered to correspond with the sources on the right side of the report.
   c. **Matching Sources**: Any matching sources will be listed on the right side of the report in order of magnitude.
6. Note that the source listed on the right side of the screen may not be the source actually used in writing the paper. It may be a secondary source which also matches the source actually used by the writer.

7. Click on a colored section of the work to view the matching source text.

8. Sources that have less than 1% can generally be ignored.

9. Evaluate the report.
   a. Does the paper match work previously submitted to TaskStream?
   b. Is the highlighted section cited appropriately?
   c. Is the paper paraphrased correctly?
   d. Is the majority of the text original writing (not quoted or paraphrased)?
   e. Is the match to the given information in the task directions?
   f. Is the match to the references?

10. A high percentage does not necessarily mean a plagiarized paper. However – remember that Western Governor’s University, in most cases, only allows a 30% similarity index, even if cited correctly.