

Using Turnitin to avoid inadvertent plagiarism

In this course, students are required to submit their assignment on two separate occasions to *Turnitin* prior to submitting the assignment for marking. The first submission will be a draft and the second submission will be your final revised assignment (the same one that you submit for marking and feedback). The purpose of submitting your work to *Turnitin* is to allow you to redraft your work, and prevent inadvertent plagiarism.

To set up your student profile so that you can access *Turnitin*, go to:

<http://www.unisa.edu.au/helpstudents/turnitin/create-profile.asp>

If you are having difficulty with this task, please contact your Course Coordinator:

tracey.bretag@unisa.edu.au

Tips for using *Turnitin*

Turnitin will create an ‘Originality Report’, which will show you an overall ‘Similarity Index’. This is the percentage of your essay that matches other electronic sources available on the Internet, databases and other students’ submissions. If the overall text-match is **less than 10%** from any one source, you do not need to revise the essay, but you should still check that each text-match is shown appropriately with “quotation marks” and with the full reference (both in-text and in the reference list).

If the overall text-match is **greater than 10%** from any one source, you will need to go through the essay carefully, and reduce the text-match by paraphrasing and summarising. Remember to still provide the in-text reference wherever you have used ideas from another source. All direct quotations must be shown clearly in “quotation marks” with the full reference.

The overall Similarity Index might be as high as 30-40%, but this is not necessarily a problem if each of the individual text-matches are less than 10%, and are appropriately referenced. The important thing is for you to use the Originality Report from your draft submission to carefully check that you have referenced all sources throughout your essay. If your essay has a very high overall Similarity Index (eg. over 50%), this is probably an indication that you have not used your paraphrasing and summarising skills adequately. You will need to **carefully recraft the essay** so that you have not simply ‘cut and paste’ from sources without using your own words.

Please see Figure 1 (from Bretag & Carapiet, 2008) on the next page which shows how markers use *Turnitin* to determine if a student has plagiarised their assignment. Note: ‘Anomalies’ refers to text matches which are clearly not plagiarism such as a previous draft submission by the same student to *Turnitin*. Subjective judgement is needed to determine if other text-matches, such as cover sheets, prescribed reference lists, the assessment topic, etc are appropriate.

Reference:

Bretag, T. & Carapiet, S. (2008, forthcoming). Piecing together the plagiarism puzzle: Electronic detection and academic judgement. Paper submitted to the 3rd *International Plagiarism Conference*, Northumbria University, U.K., 23-25 June.

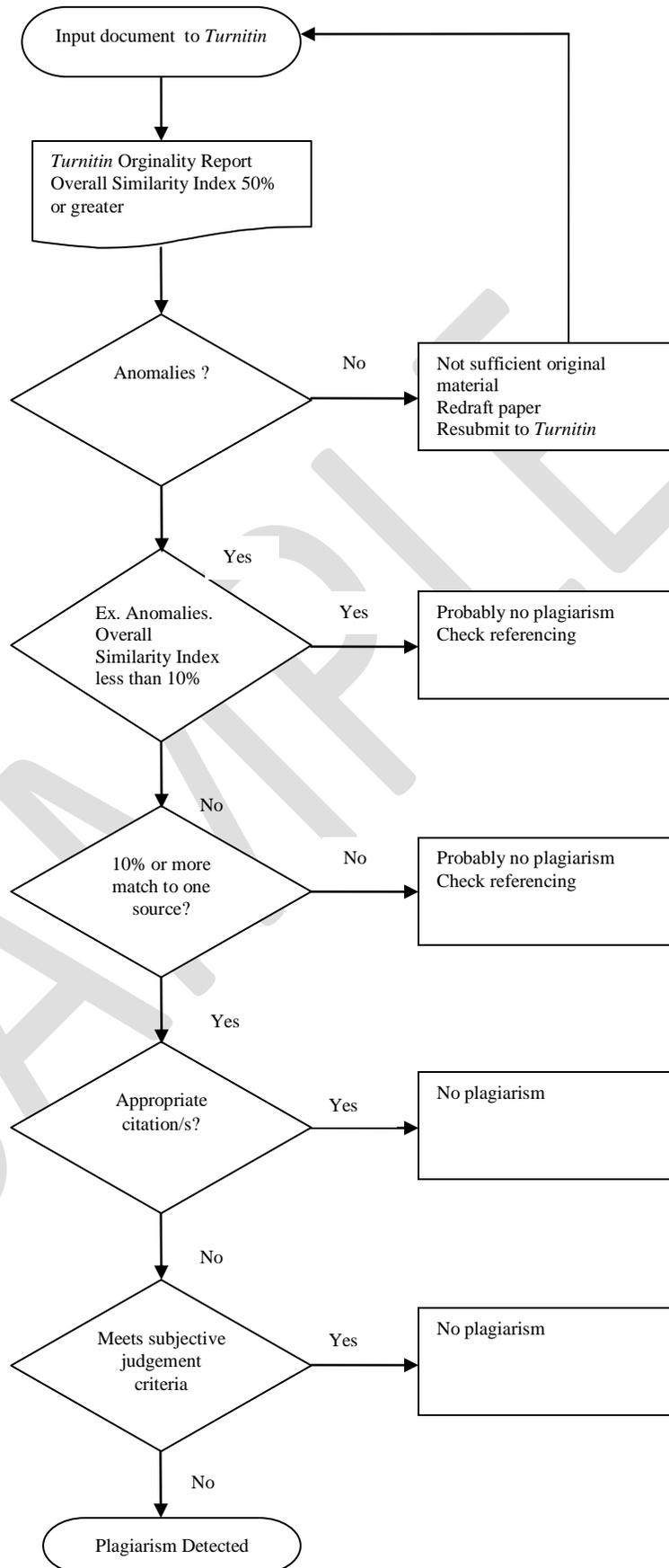


Figure 1: Determining student plagiarism using Turnitin