

Turnitin at Pepperdine University

What is Turnitin?

Turnitin is an online plagiarism detection service. The service provides a detailed *assessment of originality* on any submitted work by performing a search for textual similarities to other works in academic journals, on the Internet, and in the Turnitin paper repository (a database of submitted work). Pepperdine University has licensed the Turnitin service for the benefit of its faculty and students in order to *educate* students about academic integrity, *detect* instances of academic dishonesty, and *deter* plagiarism.

Documentation is available at: <http://community.pepperdine.edu/techlearn/tools/courses/turnitin/>

Pepperdine University subscribes to Turnitin's originality check plagiarism detection software only.

How do I access Turnitin?

The Turnitin service is accessible through the University's learning management system (LMS), whether Courses or 2PEP. In Courses, it is integrated through the Assignments tool, allowing faculty members to create Turnitin assignments within their class sites.

Submission Options:

Faculty members are not required to use the Turnitin service. If a faculty member elects to use the service, it is strongly recommended that the faculty member requests *all* students to submit assignments through Turnitin. When creating an assignment in the LMS, it is easy to enable Turnitin for all submissions. Doing so for all students establishes a culture of fairness by holding all students to the same ethical standard.

When using Turnitin, all faculty must notify students of its intended use through a course syllabus statement. It is important to provide students with the following submission options:

1. **Voluntary Submissions (Recommended):** The University recommends that faculty members incorporate *voluntary* submissions through Turnitin. Voluntary submissions involve two elements:
 - Provide a method of digital submission through an LMS Turnitin assignment
 - Provide an alternate method of submission, such as hardcopy with supplemental evidence of original work

If a student chooses the digital option, he/she voluntarily agrees to use the Turnitin service by agreeing to the Turnitin Terms of Service (https://guides.turnitin.com/Privacy_and_Security#Terms_of_Service) and submitting the work through the LMS platform. If the assignment is set to save their work to the Turnitin repository, the student acknowledges that Turnitin may retain a copy of submitted papers for the sole purpose of detecting plagiarism in

further submitted works. *If a student volunteers to submit their work, then no changes are required prior to submitting the assignment.* Of course, the student may elect to remove his/her name and any personally identifiable information before submission of the document if desired.

In the voluntary approach, if a student chooses not to use Turnitin, the student would opt-out in writing to the instructor. The instructor would then provide an alternate submission process. For example, a hardcopy of the paper along with hard copies of sources and other evidence to document the originality of the work.

2. **Mandatory Submissions:** Additional steps may be required if a faculty member wants to mandate the use of Turnitin for one or more assignments. Mandatory submissions do not allow students to opt-out. If the professor intends to save student submissions to the Turnitin repository, then in order to comply with FERPA, faculty members must ensure that **no** personally identifiable information is included within the submitted assignment. Prior to submission, this requires the student or instructor to *remove* any instances of the following:
 - Student's Name
 - Campus-Wide ID (CWID)
 - Network Username (e.g. “jdoe2”)
 - Email Address
 - Mailing Address
 - Phone Number
 - Or Similar Data

TABLE 1. Comparing Voluntary and Mandatory Submission Approaches in Turnitin and When Changes to Files are Required

| | VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION (Students voluntarily submit work to Turnitin) | MANDATORY SUBMISSION (Students mandated to submit work to Turnitin) |
|---|---|--|
| Assignment will NOT save student work to Turnitin paper repository | No changes necessary to the student file. | No changes necessary to the student file. |
| Assignment will save student work to Turnitin paper repository | No changes necessary to the student file. | Students must remove all personally identifiable information from their work before submitting the assignment. |

Limitations of Turnitin:

By itself, Turnitin should not be viewed as conclusive proof of plagiarism. The originality report could contain *false positives* where a passage is flagged as a warning but is not plagiarized due to proper citation. Alternatively, Turnitin may not flag papers that are indeed plagiarized, such as purchased original papers written by someone other than the student. Ultimately, it is up to the judgment of the faculty member to critically review the originality report and determine whether or not an assignment is plagiarized. Faculty can always perform their own research for plagiarism by using common Internet search engines like Google.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Does Turnitin need to be a part of the course syllabus?

Yes. The course syllabus must inform the students that Turnitin will be used by the instructor. The syllabus should include: (1) the University's Academic Integrity statement with links to learn more about Academic Integrity at Pepperdine University; (2) an explanation of *how* Turnitin will be used within the course; (3) an explanation of the consequences of plagiarism and how the division, program, or school will investigate alleged offenses with links to the school's academic integrity information; and (4) links to guides for proper citation and information literacy to promote ethical scholarship. *If the use of Turnitin is introduced after the distribution of the syllabus, then the faculty member should provide written notice to the students.*

The following is a sample syllabus statement regarding the use of Turnitin for the Voluntary Submission strategy:

"This course may require electronic submission of essays, papers, or other written projects through the plagiarism detection service Turnitin (<http://www.turnitin.com>). Turnitin is an online plagiarism detection service that conducts textual similarity reviews of submitted papers. When papers are submitted to Turnitin, the service may retain a copy of the submitted work in the Turnitin database for the sole purpose of detecting plagiarism in future submitted works. Students retain copyright on their original course work. The use of Turnitin is subject to the Terms of Use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com website. You may request, in writing, to not have your papers submitted through Turnitin. If you choose to opt-out of the Turnitin submission process, you will need to provide additional research documentation and attach additional materials (to be clarified by the instructor) to help the instructor assess the originality of your work."

Can faculty members mandate the use of Turnitin?

Yes. However, if the faculty member also chooses to have students submit papers to the Turnitin repository, then additional actions are required to adhere to FERPA guidelines (see "Mandatory Submissions" above). To address any concerns, the university recommends that faculty members provide an alternative method of submitting work. For example, faculty members may require students to opt-out in writing and then require additional printed documentation to address any concerns or questions about the originality of their coursework.

Can faculty members scan a single student paper with Turnitin?

While possible, this is strongly discouraged. Instead, it is recommended that the faculty member requests *all students* to submit assignments through Turnitin. Doing so establishes a culture of fairness by holding all students to the same ethical standard.

These guidelines were originally adopted and approved by the Pepperdine Dean's Council on November 14, 2007. This document was reviewed by the TechLearn Faculty Steering Committee and updated in January 2019.