

# USING TURNITIN SIMILARITY CHECK - A STUDENT GUIDE

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# 1 Basics of using Turnitin

Teacher can use Turnitin service for checking student's written reports and giving feedback to them. Turnitin compares student's submission to the international database and produces a Feedback Studio report, which shows detected similarities between the submitted text and the database, and teacher's feedback (if given). Please note that similarity IS NOT ALWAYS plagiarism. Look for more in the section 4 Interpreting the report.

Student work can be saved to the database (setting by the teacher), but student has the right to decline from saving the work. Student must negotiate with the teacher about secondary way of submission in that case. Saving the text and checking the text are different things. Checking won't save text into Turnitin database. Publications submitted to LUTPub or Theseus will be automatically indexed to Turnitin database after some time.

A teacher can provide Turnitin for practicing academic writing and for feedback purposes. Teachers can also use Turnitin in evaluation and supervision of students.

*All thesis works need to be checked with Turnitin before publishing them. The checking doesn't require saving to the database.*

## 2 Using Turnitin and submitting a paper

Log in to Moodle and go to that course's page where the teacher has added **the Turnitin assignment**. Turnitin check can be also used together with basic Moodle Assignment or Forum activities. It is recommended that the teacher will inform students in advance for the usage of Turnitin.

*Students cannot use Turnitin if the teacher has not created the assignment in Moodle.* The submitted work should be in text format, but it can include images. You will find a more detailed list of file formats that are supported for similarity check in [Turnitin help page](#).

For example, for PDF files, Turnitin declares to accept only PDFs created with Adobe Acrobat and which include text (not just images of the text). It is possible that the PDF created with Word is also accepted, as long as it contains text. You can try to copy the text from the PDF to some other place – if this won't work, the file most probably doesn't contain text, but instead images of text. Word's "Print to PDF" feature may save the work as an image, causing Turnitin to be unable to generate a report.

Also, a PDF created by LaTeX can result to the error (non-standard). The submission that includes only images, will be rejected by Turnitin.

It is possible that the teacher has allowed the submitting of all types of files (e.g. images), which can be commented by the teacher. The similarity can be checked only with text files.

## 2.1 Submitting to the Turnitin assignment 2 activity

The logo of Turnitin assignment 2 activity in Moodle looks like this:



By clicking it, the assignment view (shown below) opens. It shows start, due and post dates on the *My Submissions* tab. It might be that late submissions are not accepted. The teacher can also create the assignment in a way that students have the possibility to fix the work on the basis of the report, and submit the fixed work in the same assignment.

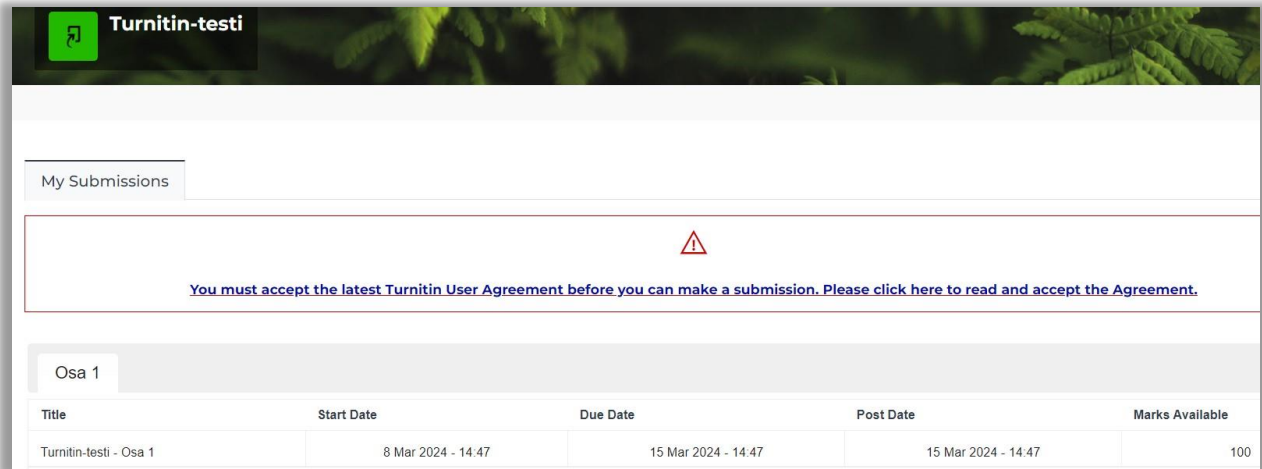
Submission can be set in parts. Each part has a separate tab and separate report will be produced

Submission starts on **Start Date**. After **Due Date** submission may not be allowed, unless the teacher allows it concerning the first submission. After **Post Date** the comments and grades are visible.

Title	Start Date	Due Date	Post Date
Report submission (Part 1 - Draft 50%)	22 May 2017 13:12	29 May 2017 13:12	29 May 2017 13:12

Submit your work

To submit your work to Turnitin, you must accept the latest Turnitin User Agreement (EULA) from the selection shown in the image below. If you have previously accepted the most recent license agreement in LUT Universities' Moodle, this option will not appear, and you can proceed with submitting your work. (Please note that the end user license agreement functions slightly differently in Assignment and Forum activities. For more details, refer to the next sections 2.2. and 2.3.)



By clicking the link "Submit Paper", the submission box opens:

The screenshot shows the "Submit Paper" form. The form includes the following fields and elements:

- Submission Type:** A dropdown menu currently set to "File Upload".
- Submission Title:** A text input field.
- File to Submit:** A file upload area with a "Files" section and a dashed box for dragging and dropping files. Below the box, it says "You can drag and drop files here to add them."
- Terms and Conditions:** A checkbox with the text: "Käyttämällä tätä tehtävänpalautusta vahvistan, että palaatus on oma työni ja otan vastuulleni mahdolliset vertailun tuloksena ilmenneet korkeakoulun vilppikäytännön seuraukset sekä annan luvan mahdolliselle tallennukselle vertailutietokantaan. LAB: https://elab.lab.fi/fi/opintojen-suorittaminen/opintoja-ohjaavat-saadokset-ja-ohjeet/opiskeluvilppi LUT: https://elut.lut.fi/fi/opintojen-suorittaminen/opintoja-ohjaavat-saadokset-ja-ohjeet/leittiset-peisaannot By using this assingment submission, I confirm that this submission is my own work and I take full responsibility for this submission, and I approve possible saving of my submission to the database LAB: https://elab.lab.fi/en/completing-studies/rules-and-regulations/misconduct-studies LUT: https://elut.lut.fi/en/completing-studies/rules-and-regulations/ethical-guidelines-guidelines-handling-misconduct".
- Submit Button:** A blue button labeled "Add Submission".

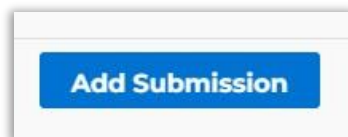
Annotations in red boxes and arrows point to specific parts of the form:

- A box on the left says: "You must accept the terms by clicking the box" with an arrow pointing to the terms and conditions checkbox.
- A box on the right says: "Choose the **submission type**, if selectable (file upload or text submission)" with an arrow pointing to the "File Upload" dropdown.
- A box on the right says: "Give a **title** for the submission" with an arrow pointing to the "Submission Title" input field.
- A box on the right says: "Search from your computer or **drag and drop** a file" with an arrow pointing to the file upload area.

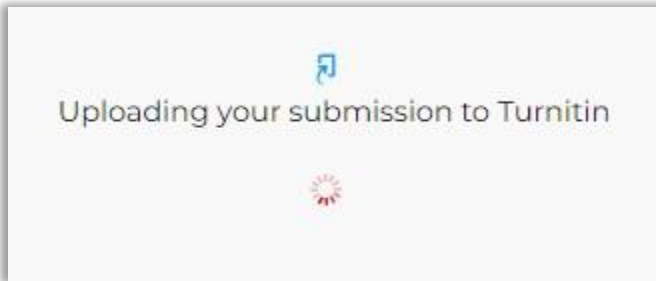
At the bottom of the form, there is a note: "There are required fields in this form marked".

In the terms of use **you confirm to take responsibility for possible consequences for misconduct if plagiarism is detected** and approve the possible saving of your submission to the database.

After that, click the *Add Submission* button. Scroll the view down if needed to reach the button.



Your submission will be uploaded to Turnitin service:



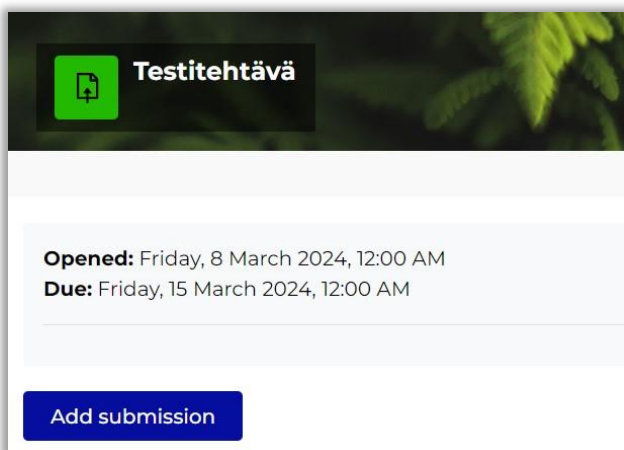
A user account to Turnitin is created during the first submission. After the submission you will get a digital receipt to the screen.

## 2.2 Submitting to the Moodle's Assignment activity

The submission to Moodle's Assignment activity, which uses Turnitin checking, can be done in a pretty same way as normally.

To submit your work to Turnitin, you must have the latest Turnitin User Agreement (EULA) accepted. If you haven't accepted the latest EULA before, you can do it as follows. (If you have already accepted the latest EULA agreement in LUT Universities' Moodle, the selection described below will not appear.)

Begin the submission by clicking the "Add submission" button.



The submission view opens, and the selection to accept the Turnitin EULA appears to the top of the view. If you have already accepted the latest EULA agreement in LUT Universities' Moodle, the selection will not appear. You can submit your work and a Turnitin report will be generated for it, if the agreement has been accepted.

**Please note!** If you don't accept the EULA and return a submission, the submission will be successful, but the Turnitin report won't be created for it. However, according to the degree regulations, your teacher may require a Turnitin check and report.

If the submission can still be edited, you can subsequently accept the license agreement by opening the Assignment activity and clicking "Edit submission". A menu opens, and at the top of it there is a selection to accept the Turnitin EULA. It is enough to accept the EULA with the button and exit the menu, you should not edit the submission or click the save button.

## 2.3 Submitting to the Moodle's Forum activity

The submission to Moodle's Forum activity, which uses Turnitin checking, can be done in a pretty same way as normally. In the Forum activity, Turnitin checks both the text of the sent message and attached files.

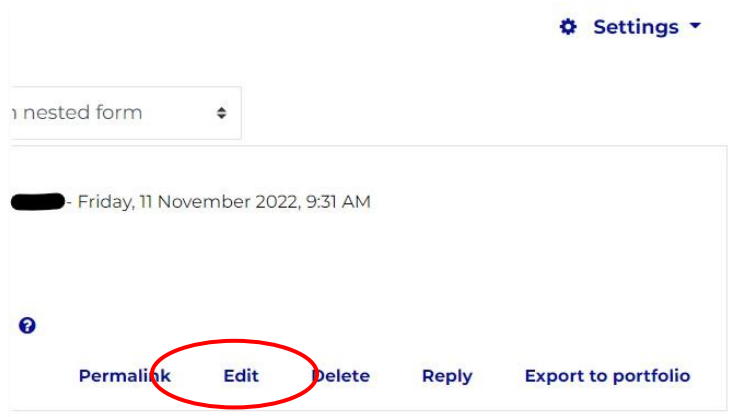
To submit your message and/or attachment to Turnitin, you must have the latest Turnitin User Agreement (EULA) accepted. If you haven't accepted the latest EULA before, you can do it as follows. (If you have already accepted the latest EULA agreement in LUT Universities' Moodle, the selection described below will not appear.)

Start adding a new message or reply. Please note that you must click the "Advanced" button to accept the EULA. The selection does not yet appear in the "Add a new discussion" menu.

A menu opens, and the selection to accept the Turnitin EULA appears to the top of the view. If you have already accepted the latest EULA agreement in LUT Universities' Moodle, the selection will not appear to this "Advanced" menu. You can submit your message and/or attachment, and Turnitin reports will be generated for them, if the agreement has been accepted.

**Please note!** If you don't accept the EULA, it is possible to add a message or/and an attachment, but the Turnitin reports won't be created for them. However, according to the degree regulations, your teacher may require a Turnitin check and reports.

You can accept the EULA of the already sent message/attachments afterwards by clicking your message open and selecting "Edit" under the message.






### 3 Feedback Studio -report

After submission, Turnitin develops a Feedback Studio report. It contains the similarity comparison with the similarity index and matches between the text and the database. It can also contain comments by the teacher. The report creation may take some time depending on the length of the text. A Turnitin check done with Assignment, Forum or Workshop activity uses Moodle's background process which is




performed every 30 minutes. That means the creation of the report can take a bit longer with these activities than with regular Turnitin assignment.

There will be status “Pending” in the Similarity section. The creation of the report will take 1 to 30 minutes depending on the length of the text. NOTE! If resubmitting is allowed, there can be a 24-hour delay in the report generation if you are doing a resubmission. You can submit to the same part four times without delay. After this, the reports of the future submissions to that part will always be generated with a delay of 24 hours to avoid overloading the system.

Note that a delay in one part does not affect the operation of other parts or other activities. If, after the delay is activated, you submit to another part of the same activity (different tab in the submission view) or to another activity, you can submit four times without the delay.

	Submission Title	Turnitin Paper ID	Submitted	Similarity	Grade	Overall Grade	
<a href="#">View Digital Receipt</a>	<a href="#">Test</a>	1783991211	14/03/22 13:53	 Pending	N/A	--	<a href="#">Submit Paper</a>   --

After the report is created, a **similarity percentage** will appear.

	Submission Title	Turnitin Paper ID	Submitted	Similarity	Grade	Overall Grade	
<a href="#">View Digital Receipt</a>	<a href="#">Test</a>	1783991211	14/03/22 13:53	0% 	N/A	--	<a href="#">Submit Paper</a>   --

The report can be opened by clicking the percentage.

If the teacher has allowed students to view similarity reports, you can open the similarity comparison in Feedback Studio by clicking the percentage or the submission title.

There is an example of a similarity report in Feedback Studio shown below. The **similarity percentage** is shown at the top-right corner.



The preview icon helps navigating in the report.

Percentage of one source: should not be very high.

Similarity percentage of the whole work.

The original source

Commenting Similarity

Close the side view.

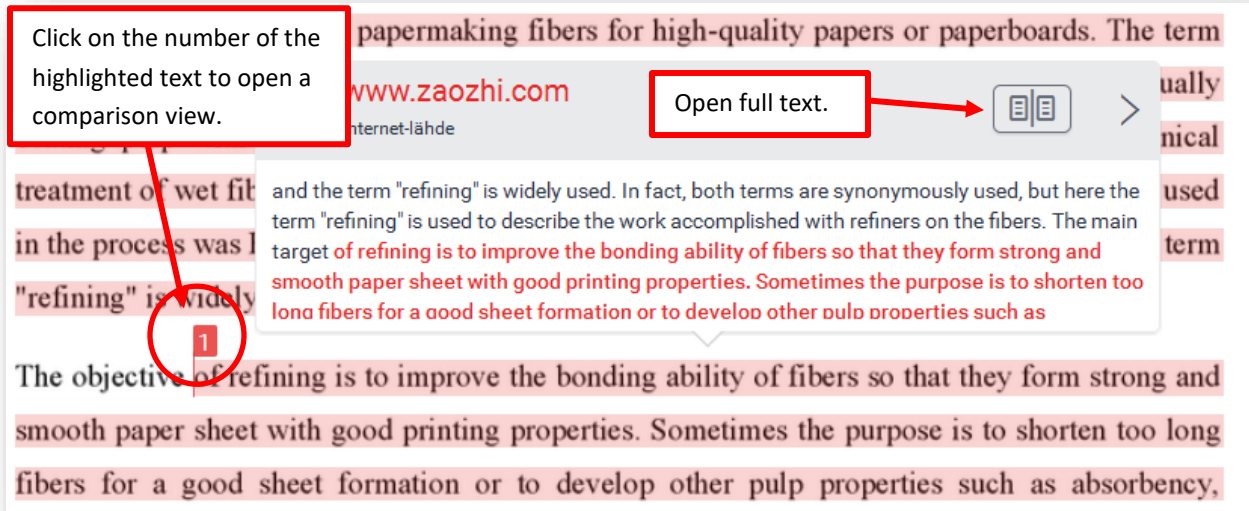
Match overview

Source:  
When clicking the marked number, a part of the text opens.

Rank	Source	Similarity Percentage
1	publications.theseus.fi	12 %
2	viestintatieteet-wiki.wik...	9 %
3	kirjastot.diak.fi	
4	personnel.turkuai.fi	
5	www.sideshare.net	2 %
6	www.theseus.fi	2 %
7	www.uta.fi	1 %
8	jyx.jyu.fi	1 %

## 3.1 Similarity report actions

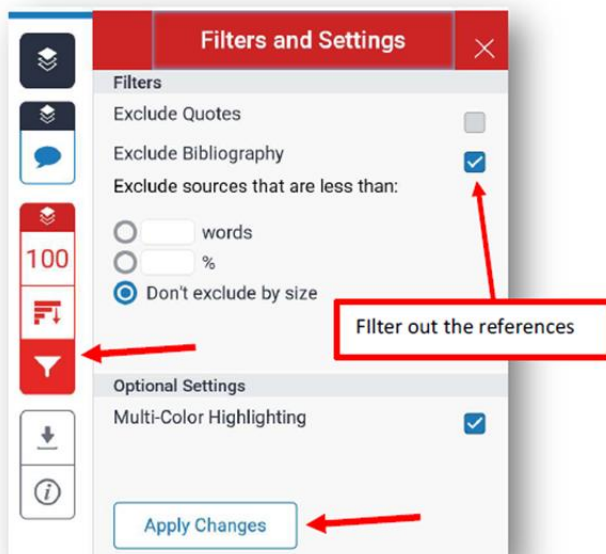
### 3.1.1 Comparing the match



### 3.1.2 Filtering

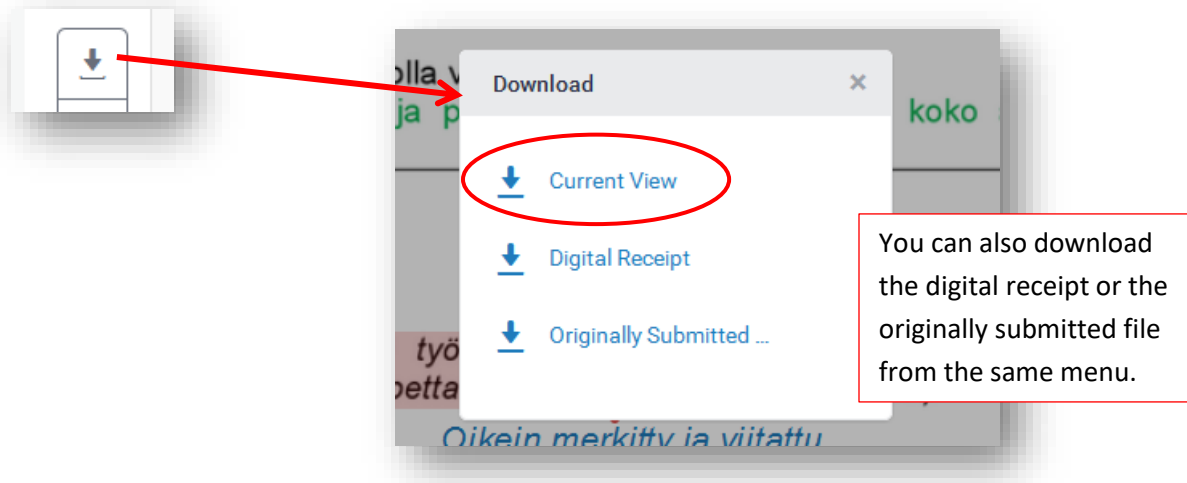
It is often necessary to filter the result. Student can filter the bibliography (references) and quotes. Reference list items are usually shown as matches and it will increase similarity. It is possible that the teacher has done the filtering in advance from the settings.

Click the filter icon to start. For example, to filter the bibliography choose Exclude Bibliography and Apply changes.



### 3.1.3 Printing the report

You can print the current view of the report to a PDF file.

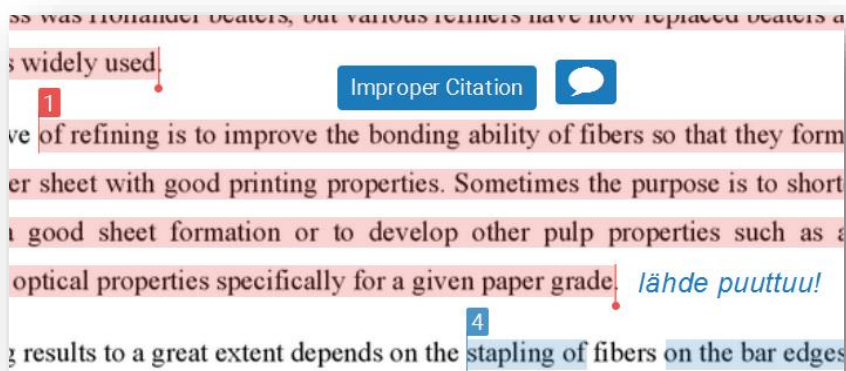


### 3.2 Teacher's comments (Feedback)

Teacher/Instructor can also give comments via the report. Click the Feedback tab to see comments.



An example of commented text:



A written or spoken feedback, or grade can also be given:



## 4 Interpreting the report

Turnitin shows the authenticity of the text but does not directly tell whether it is plagiarized. Plagiarism is therefore unauthorized borrowing or copying the work of another, also refers to the failure of telling the source. It should be noted that the misconduct means any intentional plagiarism and outrageous disregard for the scientific reference to practice. There may be consequences for the student who wants the work to be assessed, knowing that it contains plagiarism.

If plagiarism is detected, it is necessary to examine why it's found: is it coincidence or possible intentional plagiarism.

### 4.1 Origins of similarity matches

The percentage in the Turnitin report indicates how much similarities the submitted text contains.

- The similarity index is related to the length of the text. In a short text the percentage easily becomes greater than in a longer one.
- There is no unambiguous limit for which similarity is allowed and which not. There may be plagiarism even in a small percentage work.
- Correctly marked quotes and a reference list are also included in the percentage. These can be removed with filtering.
- Don't target to 0%, it might be impossible. Not all similarities are necessarily plagiarism!
- General text, professional terms etc. may increase the index even if you have written them yourself.

Check your text with Turnitin as early as it is possible to have more time to correct it. *Do not leave the check of your final work to the last minute and to depend only on one check.*

Review the report with the teacher if possible or examine it yourself. Click on the sources of the match list to see the corresponding section of your text. You can compare to the original source by clicking on

your own text in the painted and numbered section (see section 3.1.1 Comparing the match). If the text has been copied directly from the source (highlighted), it must always be corrected. Do not try to cover up the copying by changing the words or word order. Make sure that the reader knows which part of the text is entirely yours and which is source-based.

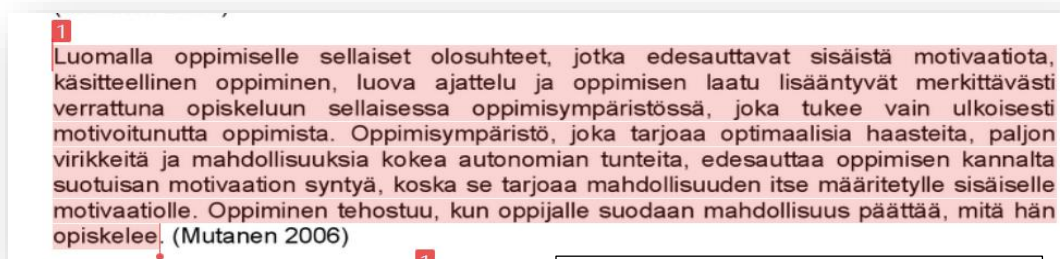
The interpretation of plagiarism misconduct becomes more severe with years of study. For first-year students, the teacher may give more time or opportunities to correct the text, but problems should no longer arise at the master's stage, as writing skills and knowledge of scientific practice is expected to increase. At the beginning of studies, plagiarism can occur purely from incompetence. Always contact your teacher for further instructions on writing or interpreting, as well as any corrections to the work.

**In the end, you as a student are responsible for your text and that it will follow the guidelines of good academic writing.**

## 4.2 Types of plagiarism

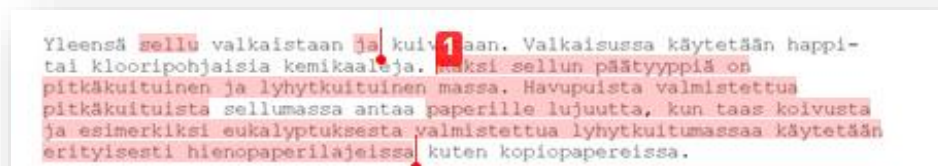
There are different types of plagiarism. Turnitin's "Plagiarism Spectrum 2.0" website (2022) introduces the Plagiarism Spectrum 2.0 which shows 12 different types of plagiarism. Couple of them are shown here:

- *Word-for-word or Copy-paste plagiarism*, where text is copied straight from the source (Turnitin, 2022). This must always be avoided. If you must take something directly, use quotation marks and refer correctly. Replacing words with synonyms or changing the word order is also plagiarism.



An example of probable direct copying.

- *Paraphrase plagiarism*, where direct sentences from several sources are mixed preserving the original structures and words, and the references are misleading (e.g., all references only at the end of the paragraph) (Turnitin, 2022). In this case, it's difficult to ascertain which text is author's own, and which is source-based.



An example of possible paraphrase plagiarism.

### 4.3 How to avoid plagiarism

It must be remembered that not all similarities can be eliminated or avoided. Identification information of theses are often similar, and sayings and phrases (“The purpose of this work...”, “In this work it was observed...” etc.) or even long professional terminologies can produce similarity without plagiarism.

8  
In this paper, the effect of continuous evaluation on the learning outcomes of two chemical engineering courses is studied over a several year period. Average grades and

interactions with all other parameters. When comparing the flame and the corona treatment, it was found that corona treatment increases surface energy and oxidation more than flame treatment. /4/

Some scientific phenomena or professional terms may be so precise in describing that it is difficult to present them by other means, in which case similarity occurs (an image below). The student often needs help with these interpretations.

1  
Problem of primary wastewater. One wastewater treatment for textile industries m biological treatment, chemical precipitation, adsorption and membrane technology ( al, 2000). According to the result of Hoi et al. (2005), color and TOC were some

Avoiding plagiarism means that you always write your own text. According to the instructions on the Harvard’s “Harvard Guide to Using Sources” website (2022), plagiarism can be avoided simply by not copying the output of others and by understanding what is being done while writing. Research should be done systematically and carefully. (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2022.)

Harvard’s guide list e.g. the following things to help prevent plagiarism:

- keep the sources in order and print the electronic material (do not copy directly into your own text)
- keep your sources organized by topic
- do not copy text from anywhere, even temporarily, use a separate memo in which you mark the sources
- keep your own and source texts separate, even in different documents. (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2022.)

## 5 Ethical rules of the University of Applied Science

It is recommended that students familiarize themselves with the [Ethical recommendations for thesis writing at universities of applied sciences](#) published by ARENE (The Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences Arene, 2020). In addition, the LAB University of Applied Sciences' guidelines for handling misconduct can be found [from eLAB website](#).

## 6 University's ethical guidelines and plagiarism misconduct

Before you begin the writing process, read [the ethical guidelines of LUT University](#). It is assumed that each student has embraced and accepted them in their own activities.

According to LUT's Ethical guidelines for academic studies (LUT University), deliberate plagiarism (i.e. copying) and the blatant disregard of referencing practices are considered plagiarism. What makes plagiarism deliberate is that the student makes it while being aware of the consequences. Typically, this is the presentation of another text as one's own. (LUT University)

Fraud can result in a penalty:

*"Proven misconduct will lead to disciplinary measures, which may include a written reprimand, a caution and suspension for a fixed term. In the case of exchange and double degree students, the home university will always be informed."* (LUT University)

The student should also remember their right to guidance and instruction, especially in the early stages of studies. In other words, if the learning task is to write a scientific text, the teacher is also obliged to give good instructions for example on the use of references, and, if necessary, to guide the student to good practice. Using the Turnitin helps the student to learn the principles of scientific writing when the teacher uses it as a tool for guidance.

### SOURCES

The Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences Arene, 2020. Opinnäytetöiden eettiset suositukset. Website, available: <http://www.arene.fi/julkaisut/raportit/opinnaytetoiden-eettiset-suositukset/>. Referred 18.2.2022.

LUT University. Ethical Guidelines for Academic Studies. PDF document, available: <https://elut.lut.fi/en/completing-studies/rules-and-regulations/ethical-guidelines-guidelines-handling-misconduct>. Referred 22.4.2022.

The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2022. Harvard Guide to Using Sources: How to Avoid Plagiarism. Website, available: <https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/how-avoid-plagiarism>. Referred 18.2.2022.

Turnitin, 2022. Plagiarism Spectrum 2.0. Website, available: <https://www.turnitin.com/resources/plagiarism-spectrum-2-0>. Referred 5.4.2022.