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Turn it in Handbook

A practical guide for training teachers on how to use the Turnitin Program.

Turnitin Handbook
A practical guide for teachers.

Purpose of this Handbook...

Turnitin is an academic integrity and plagiarism detection platform widely used by schools, universities, and research institutions. Turnitin is commonly used to promote academic honesty, improve students' writing skills, and maintain academic standards rather than simply to penalize misconduct.

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Why does NIS use Turnitin?

The school uses Turnitin to promote academic integrity and ensure originality in student work. It also supports students in developing proper research, citation, and academic writing skills, while enabling teachers to provide constructive feedback and maintain fair and consistent assessment standards.

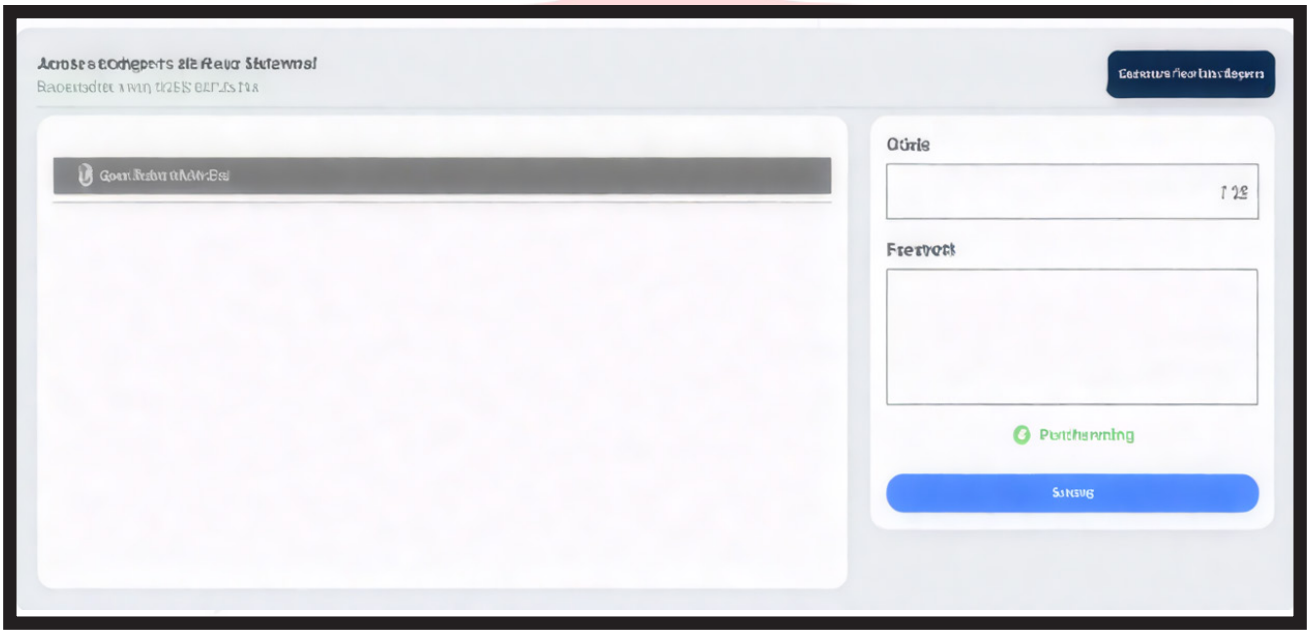
What are the current Turnitin features offered at NIS?

Currently, NIS gives teachers access to two types of reports: a Similarity Report and an AI Percentage Report.

Where can I access these reports?

Log into your teacher account. Open the assignment you wish to grade.

Click on the "Generate Turnitin Report" button. It will open the report in an external page.



The Similarity Report

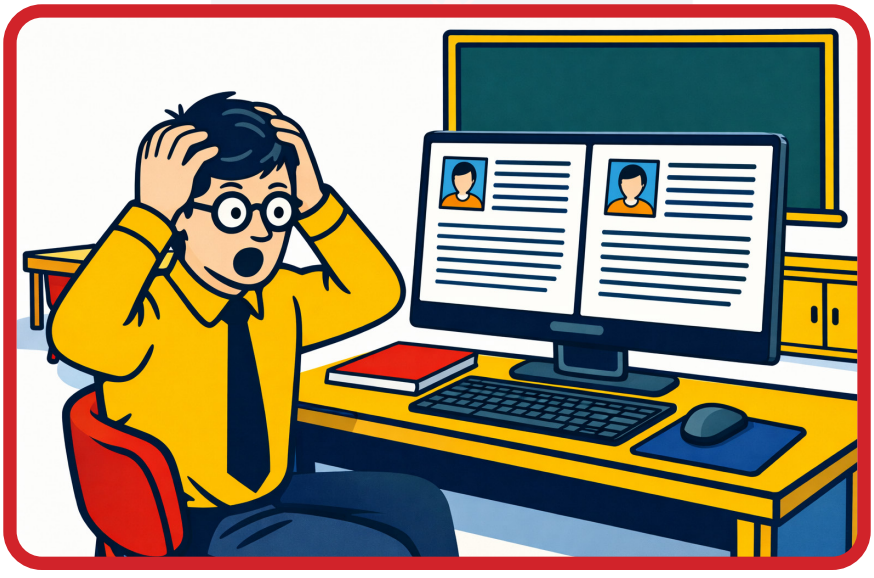
The similarity percentage in Turnitin indicates how much of the submitted text matches existing sources in Turnitin's database, such as published articles, websites, and previously submitted student papers. It highlights overlapping or matching text but does not, by itself, confirm plagiarism; the matches must be reviewed in context.
Turnitin generates a Similarity Report that highlights text matches and provides a similarity percentage. This percentage indicates how much of the document matches existing sources in the Turnitin Database; however, it does not automatically mean plagiarism. Educators must interpret the report to distinguish between acceptable similarities (such as quotations, references, or common phrases) and problematic copying.

How can I tell if the similarity report indicates plagiarism?
To determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not, the educator must assess multiple factors. These include the assignment type, requirements, genre, as well as patterns and student intent.

Educators should always consider:

- Does this work align with the knowledge/skill level of my student?
- Is the assignment properly cited and referenced?

A high similarity score does not always mean plagiarism has occurred. The main function of the similarity report is to highlight any existing matches in the existing database, and how much of the student's submitted work matches this other content. This may include sources from the internet, academic publication, or even the students' current or previous work.
Interpreting a similarity score correctly requires an understanding of the context in which the student's work was produced. For instance, a high similarity score may result from improperly cited quotes or references.
Several factors can influence a Similarity Report, including (but not limited to):



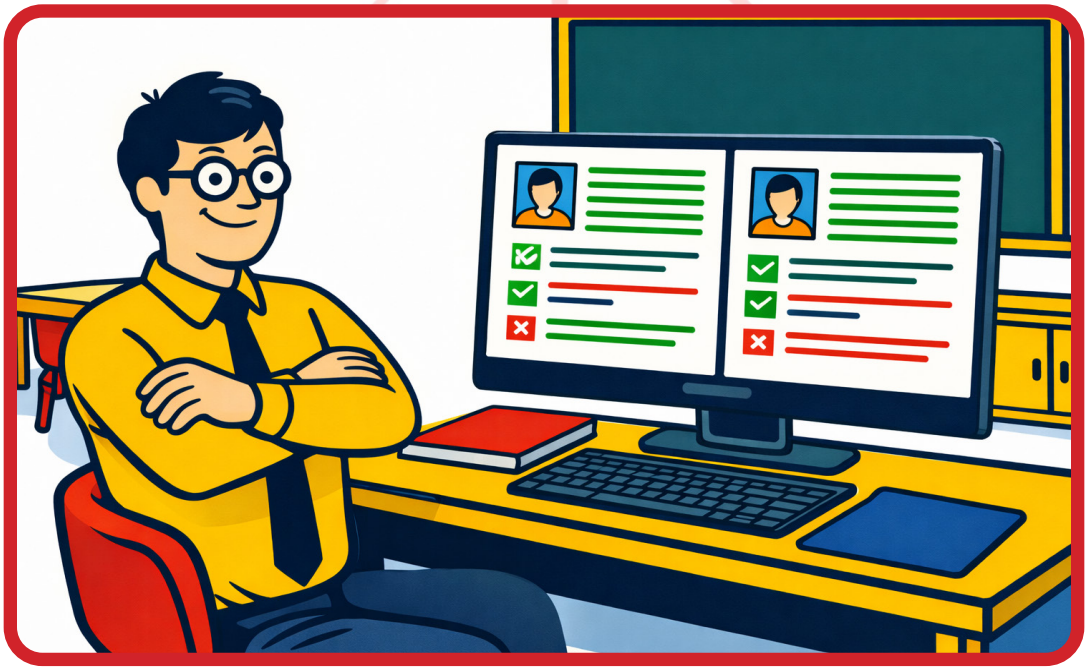
https://www.turnitin.com

- Longer assignments tend to have higher similarity scores due to the larger volume of text.
- The nature of some assignments (like research papers or literature reviews with high levels of quotes and citations) will naturally yield higher scores.
- Students who are new to academic writing may struggle with correct citation or paraphrasing practices, leading to unintentional plagiarism.

Genre and task expectation also have an impact on whether text similarity is expected in a submission.

Similarity expected		
Genre	Research writing	Yes
	Argumentative / Analytical / Informative, etc.	Yes
	Narrative / Creative writing	No
	Reflective writing	No
Task expectations	Research included	Yes
	Reference to provided source material	Yes
	Balance of evidence and original ideas	Yes
	Creative or reflective writing	No

https://guides.turnitin.com/hc/en-us/articles/23435833938701-Understanding-the-similarity-score

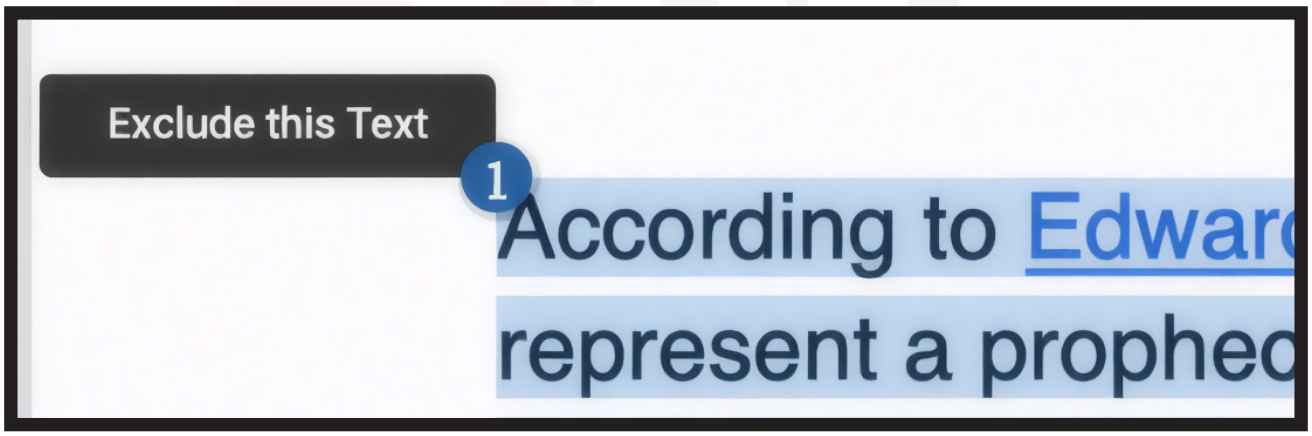


How do I exclude matches from the similarity report?

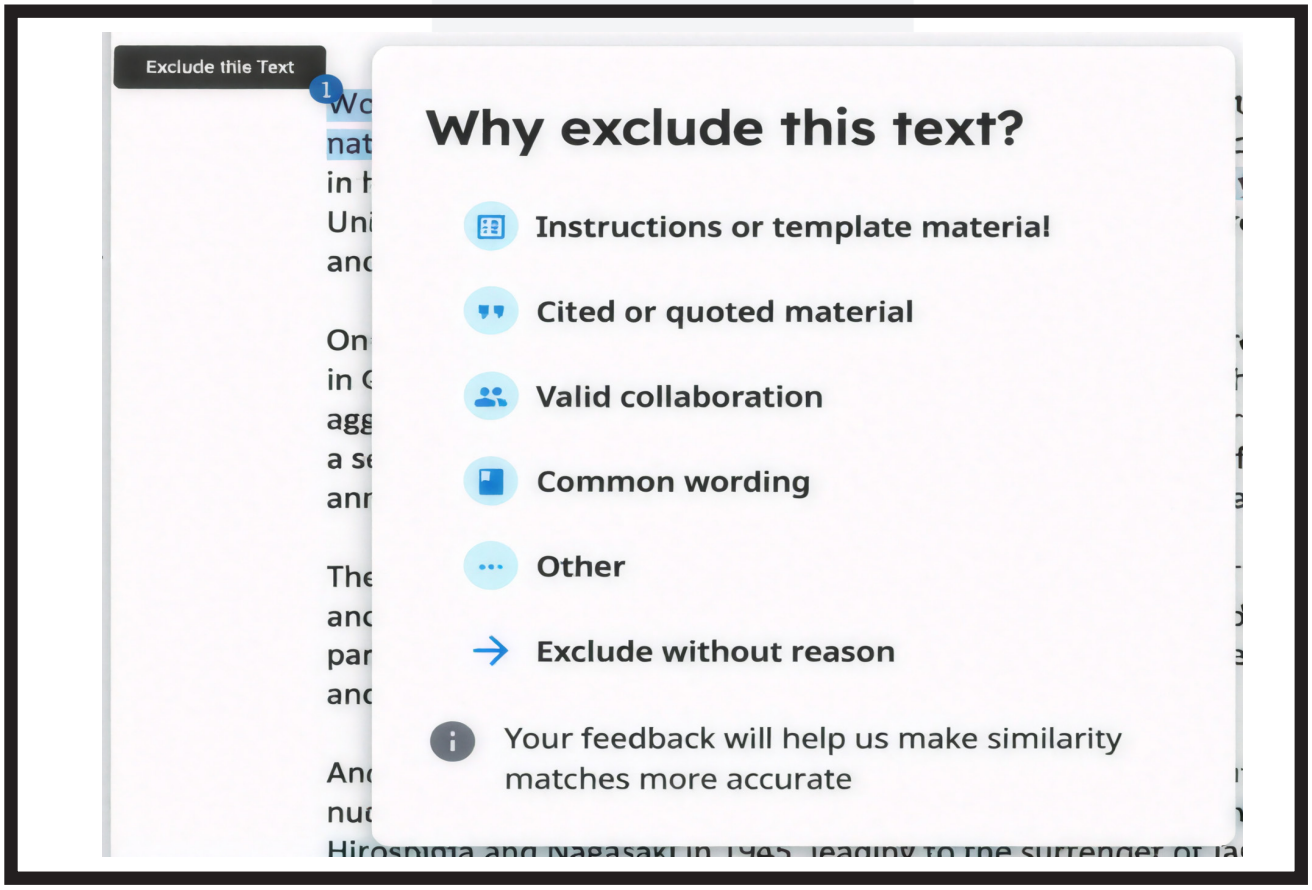
If a text is increasing the similarity percentage in a report, without including actual plagiarism (a reference, the school's mission and vision, etc.) you can choose to exclude that text. Follow the steps below:

Excluding Text:

1. Exclude text directly from the paper text by selecting the highlighted text and then the Exclude text option that appears by the start of the passage.



2. This will open a menu that will allow you to select the reason for this text exclusion. Your feedback will help us make similarity matches more accurate.



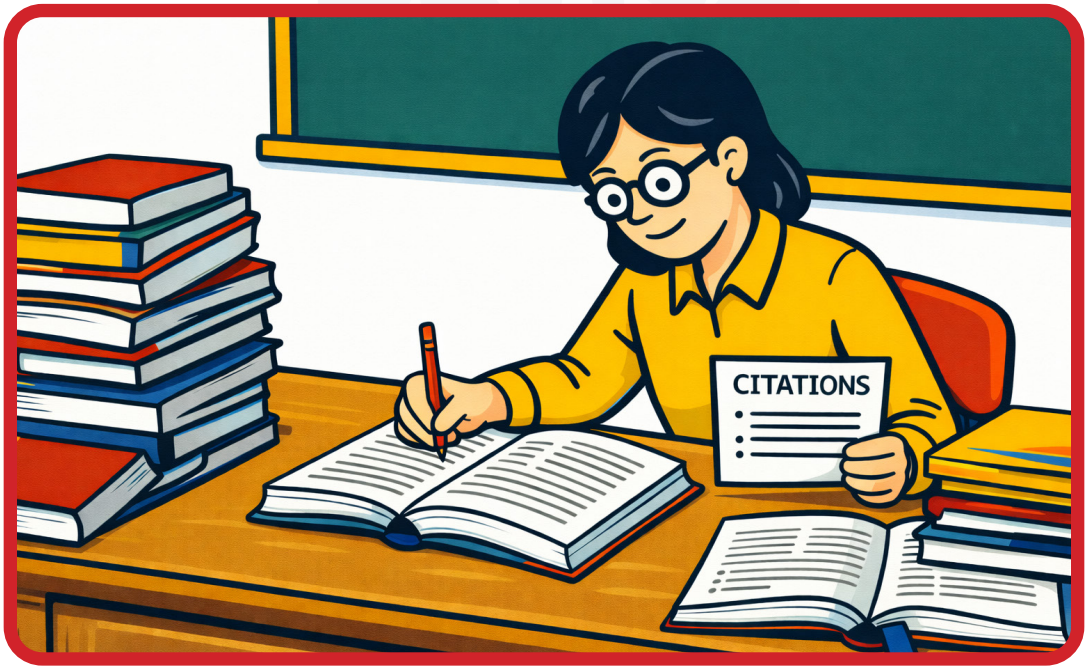
3. Choose from the available options:
   a. Instructions or template material: Has the similarity check picked up a template used by your institution? Or has the student inadvertently left in instructions at the beginning of the essay. Use this option to exclude this text. This will help Turnitin identify these sorts of matches in the future.
   b. Cited or quoted material: Has the student attempted to use quotes but the content has been picked by the similarity check? Perhaps they have used incorrect quotation marks? Use this option to exclude any content you feel should have been excluded due to citations or quotes. This is a good exercise to help teach students about correct citation style.
   c. Valid collaboration: If the similarity check has picked up valid collaboration between students or researchers, use this option to exclude this text.
   d. Common wording: Depending on the size of matches the Similarity Report has been set to ignore, the report could pick up short strings of words that are commonly used in academic writing. Exclude this text using this option.
   e. Other: If you would like to exclude text for a reason other than the available options, select 'Other' to open a text box. Here you will be able to enter your reason for the text exclusion. This information will help Turnitin improve our similarity matching in the future.
   f. Exclude without reason
4. Alternatively, select a source to expand it and view the matching text side-by-side with the paper.
5. Scroll to the bottom of the source text and select Exclude this Text.
6. You will be presented with the same exclusion options as described above. Select a response to exclude the text. The similarity score will be updated to reflect the exclusion you have just made.

Excluding quotes, bibliography, citations, small matches:
Content exclusions can include removing any matches to the bibliography or any places within a document where the author has used quotes.

1. Select Settings from the sidebar.

2. Using the checkboxes, select the content types you would like to exclude from all future documents:
b. Bibliography: For papers written in English, Turnitin's machine learning algorithm is able to understand what elements of the paper should be excluded and dynamically remove them from the Similarity Report without the need for the uploader to specify a specific bibliography section of their paper. For papers written in a non-English language, Turnitin looks for a beginning and terminating phrase to work out where the bibliography is.
b. Quotes: Turnitin looks for all content between quotation marks and excludes this text from the report. For the list of supported quotation marks, check out our guide about how exclusions and filters refine the report.
b. Citations: Turnitin uses machine learning to check every line in a document. If we find something we can tell is an in-line citation, it won't be included in the Similarity Report. The quoted part of the citation can be removed using Exclude Quotes.
b. Small Matches: Turnitin will filter all matches that are less than or equal to the length of the number of words supplied.

3. Changes should automatically apply but select the Done button to confirm and close the sidebar.

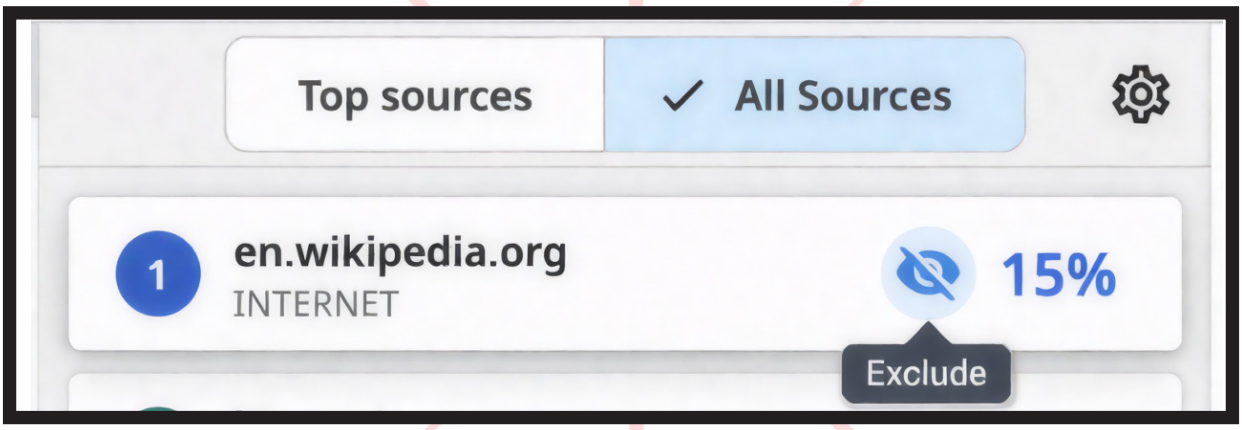


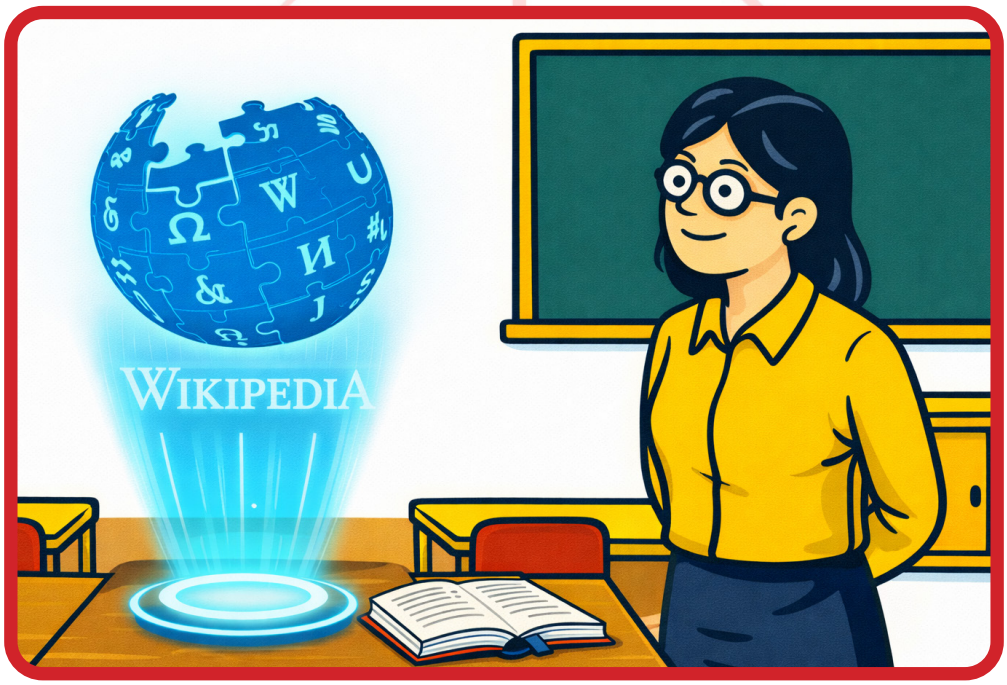
Sources

Sometimes, you may notice that a source is included in the Similarity Report that you didn't intend, or there may be a source you think was permissible, and don't want it to contribute to the overall similarity score.

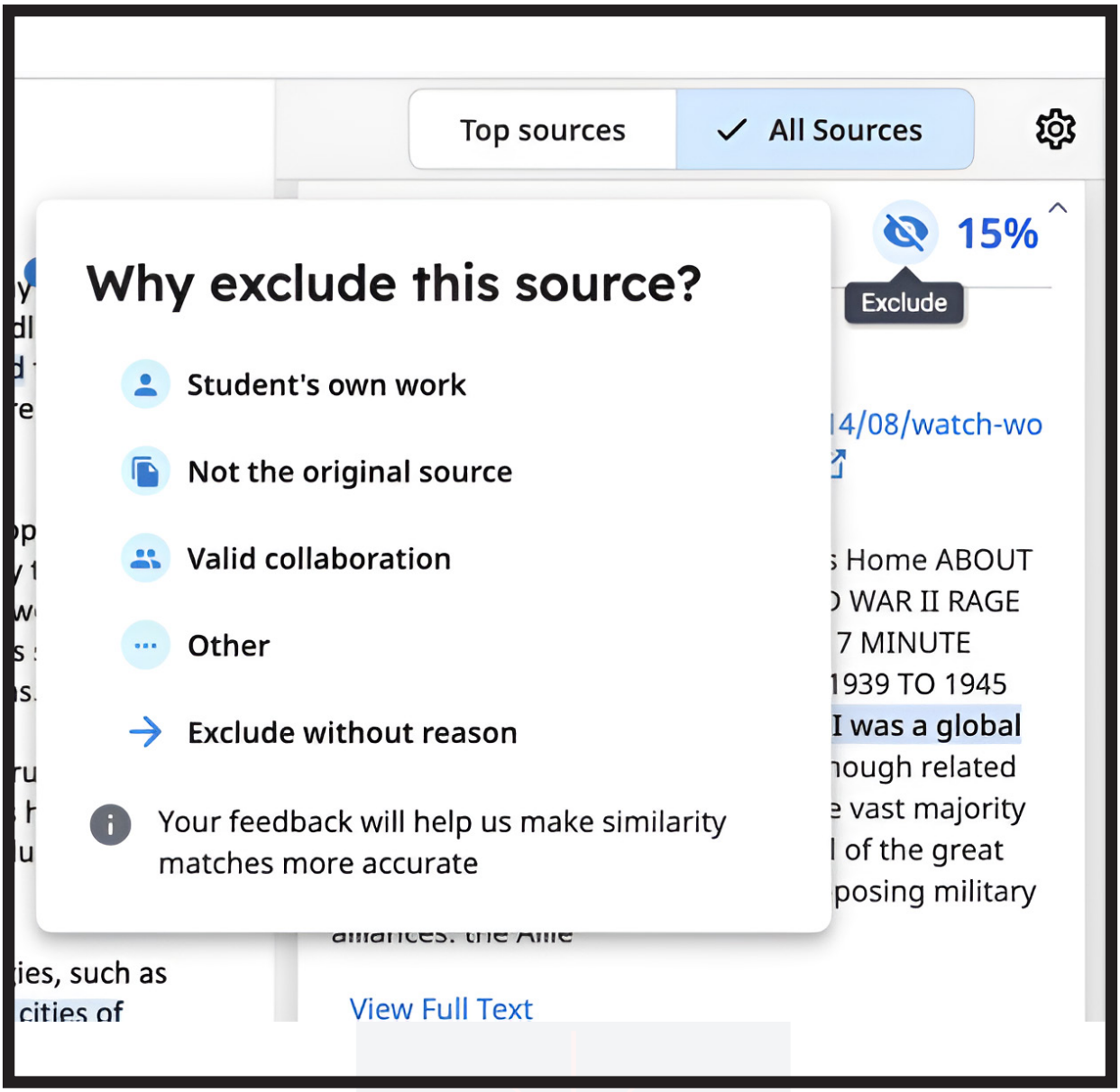
1. Select My Files from the sidebar.
2. Find the file containing the document you'd like to view and select its title.
3. From the sources sidebar, choose a source view:
   a. Sources Overview: A list of the top sources found in the document.
   b. All Sources: A list of all sources that have matched in the document.

4. Hover over or focus on the source you would like to exclude. Select the eye icon with a strike to exclude this source.





5. You will be presented with options to state why you are excluding this particular source.



6. After selecting, the similarity score will update to reflect the exclusion you have just made.

Scoring scenarios

1. Example

A student may have submitted a paper to Turnitin in the past. If they had their name on that submission, it is entirely possible that, if you have not excluded small matches, their name is highlighted in their Similarity Report.

An instructor can rectify this issue by excluding the word number. In most cases, excluding 10 words should safely exclude a student's name from being highlighted in their Similarity Report.

2. Example

A student may have used Turnitin to submit drafts of the same paper, meaning their final draft has resulted in a score of 100%.

As the instructor is likely aware that their student has submitted multiple times, they can rectify this issue by excluding the student's previous submissions from the Similarity Report.

3. Example

A student has copied and pasted a chunk of text into their paper, due to a lack of knowledge on the topic they are covering. Their similarity score is 20%. In comparison, another student who has a firm basis of knowledge for the same assignment and knows enough to gather information from several sources to quote and reference correctly has a similarity score of 22%. Both students will be shown to have matches against our database. However, one of these students copied directly from a website, whereas the other provided properly sourced quotes.

As an instructor can opt to exclude quotes from the Similarity Report to lower similarity scores where applicable.

4. Example

A student has submitted a qualitative study to Turnitin, including a significant number of quotes and an extensive bibliography, as required for the topic of the paper. The student's similarity score is 53%; this exceeds the acceptable score set by their institution.

This issue could have been avoided if quotes and bibliography had been excluded from the Similarity Report.

AI Percentage Report

The AI percentage (AI writing indicator) estimates the likelihood that the text was generated or significantly assisted by artificial intelligence tools. This percentage is based on linguistic patterns and statistical models rather than direct text matching. It does not prove AI use with absolute certainty but serves as an indicator that requires human judgment and further review. The AI percentage is different from the Similarity Report.

Example:

- **If Turnitin shows 40% AI, it could mean parts of your essay were likely written by an AI tool like ChatGPT, even if those parts are original in wording and not copied from other sources. Human review is still needed to confirm.**

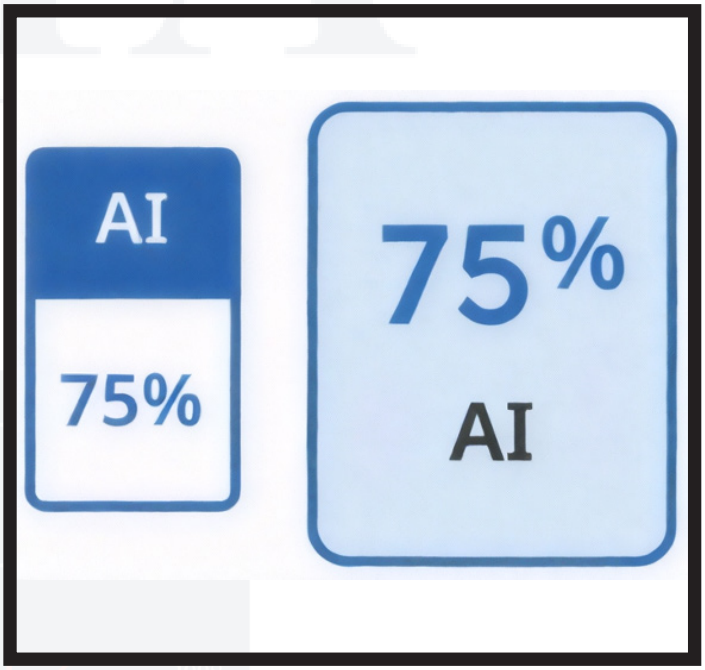
Disclaimer from Turnitin:

- **Our AI writing detection model may not always be accurate (it may misidentify human-written, AI-generated, and AI-generated and AI-paraphrased text), so it should not be used as the sole basis for adverse actions against a student. It takes further scrutiny and human judgment in conjunction with an organization's application of its specific academic policies to determine whether any academic misconduct has occurred.**

How to interpret the AI Writing Detector:

When you open a Similarity Report, the AI writing indicator is in the side panel. After a short period of processing, the indicator will display one of three potential states:

Blue with a percentage of 0 or between 20 and 100: The submission has processed successfully. The displayed percentage indicates the amount of qualifying text within the submission that Turnitin's AI writing detection model determines was likely generated by AI. As noted previously, this percentage is not necessarily the percentage of the entire submission. If text within the submission was not considered long-form prose text, it will not be included.



Our testing has found that there is a higher incidence of false positives when the percentage is between 1 and 20. In order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, the AI indicator will display an asterisk (*) for percentages between 1 and 20 to call attention to the fact that the score is less reliable.

To explore the results of the AI writing detection capabilities, select the indicator to open the AI writing report. The AI writing report opens in a new tab of the window used to launch the Similarity Report. If you have a pop-up blocker installed, ensure it allows Turnitin pop-ups.

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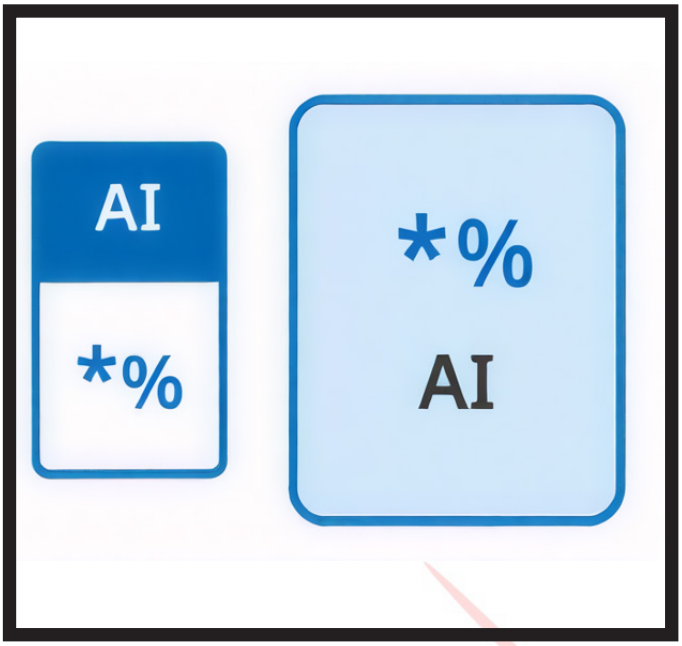
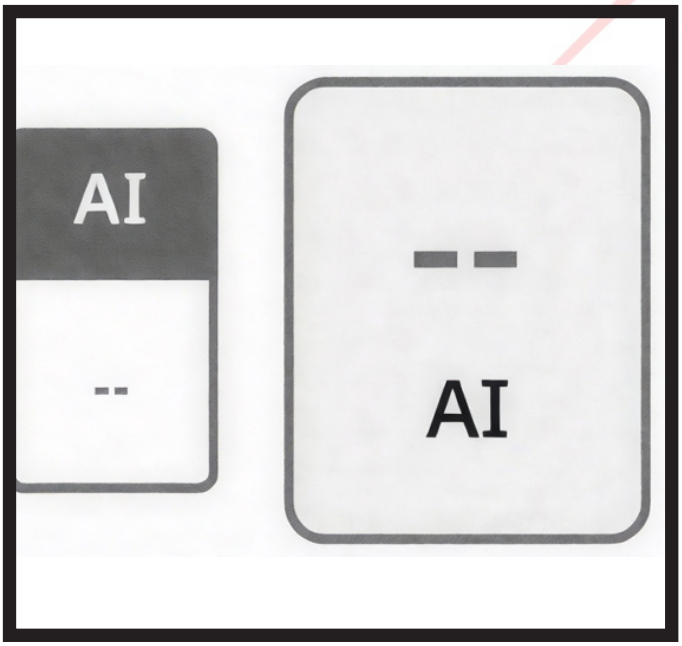
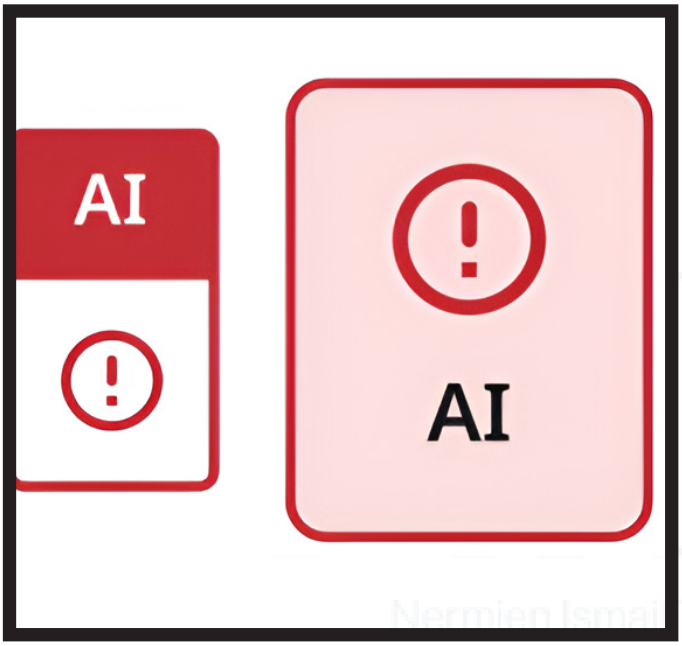


Low percentage (*%): False positives (incorrectly flagging human-written text as AI-generated) are a possibility in AI models. To avoid potential incidence of false positives, no score or highlights are attributed for AI detection scores in the 1% to 19% range. When AI is detected below the 20% threshold in the report, it is now indicated with an asterisk (*%) and no percentage is attributed. This change is reflected in new submissions only and will not retroactively apply to existing submissions. If your report was generated before July 8, 2024, then you may still see a numerical score below 20%.



Gray with no percentage displayed (- -): The AI writing detection indicator is unable to process this submission. This state means that the AI writing report cannot be opened. This can be due to one, or several, of the following reasons:

- The submission was made before the release of Turnitin's AI writing detection capabilities. The only way to see the AI writing detection indicator/report on historical submissions is to resubmit them.
- The submission does not meet the file requirements needed to successfully process it for AI writing detection. For more information, check out our File requirements for an AI writing report.



Error (!): This error means that Turnitin has failed to process the submission. This state means that the AI writing report cannot be opened. Turnitin is constantly working to improve its service, but unfortunately, events like this can occur. Please try again later. If the file meets all the file requirements stated above, and this error state still appears, please get in touch through our help center so we can investigate for you.

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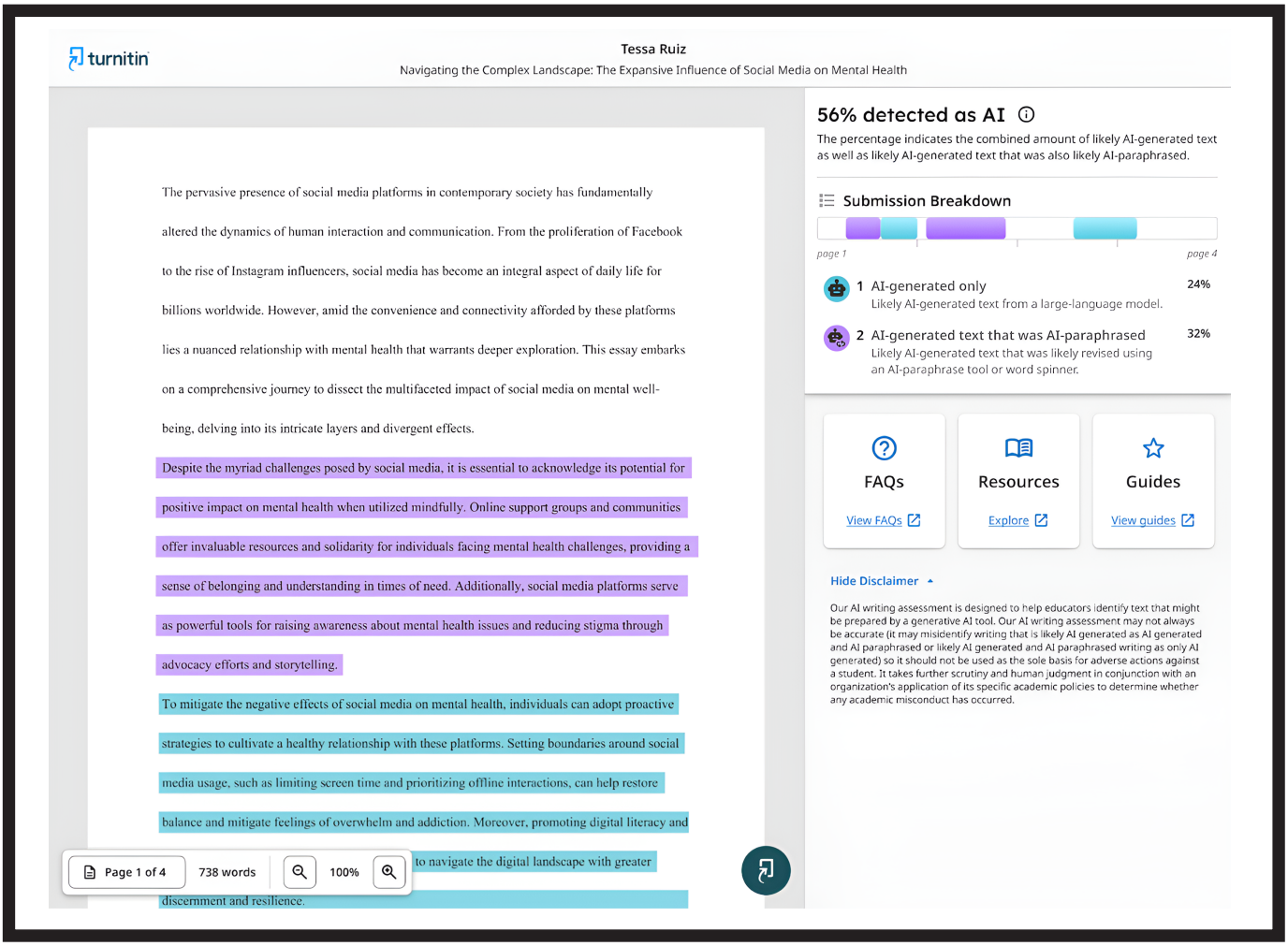
The AI writting Report

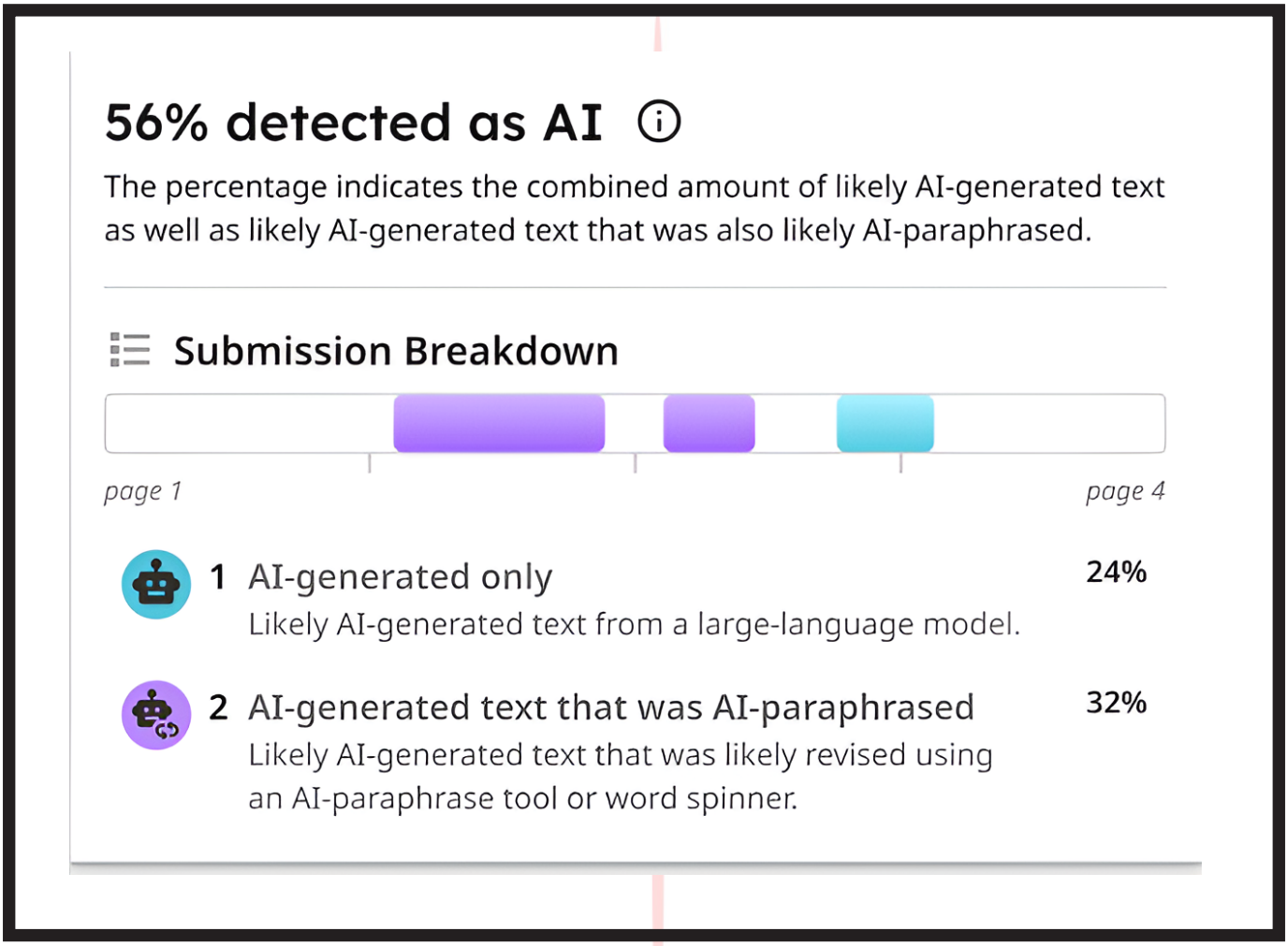


https://www.turnitin.com

Overall percentage detected as AI

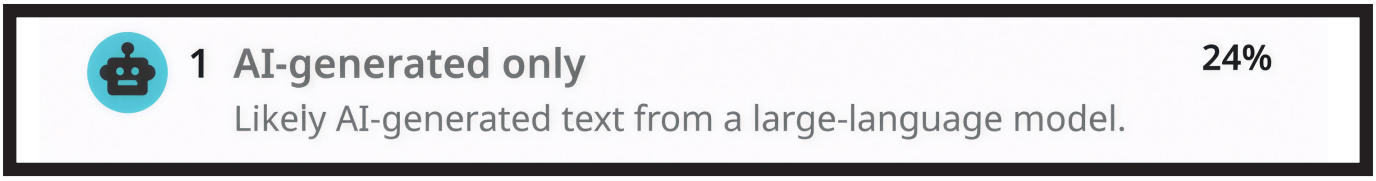
The overall percentage detected as AI indicates the qualifying text (prose sentences contained in a long form writing format) within the submitted document that Turnitin's AI writing detection model determines could be generated by AI or could be generated by AI and could be further modified using an AI paraphrase tool, an AI bypass tool, or word spinner.

The Submission Breakdown

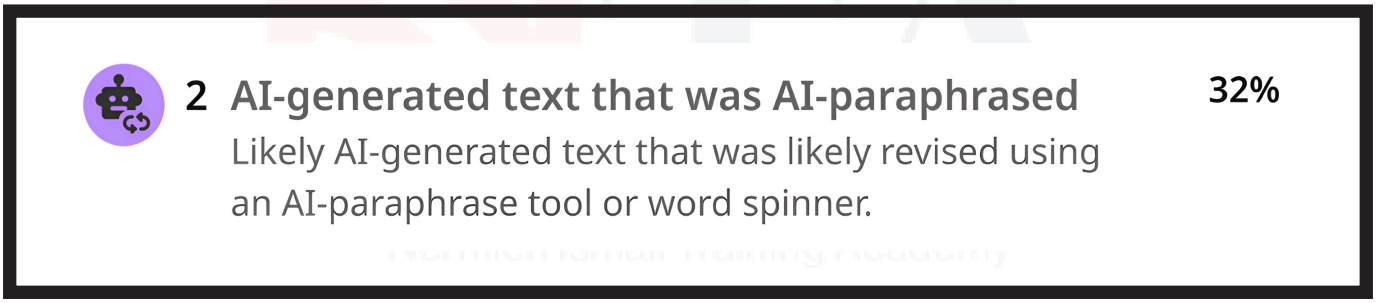


The overall percentage of text detected as AI is detailed in two detection categories in the Submission Breakdown:

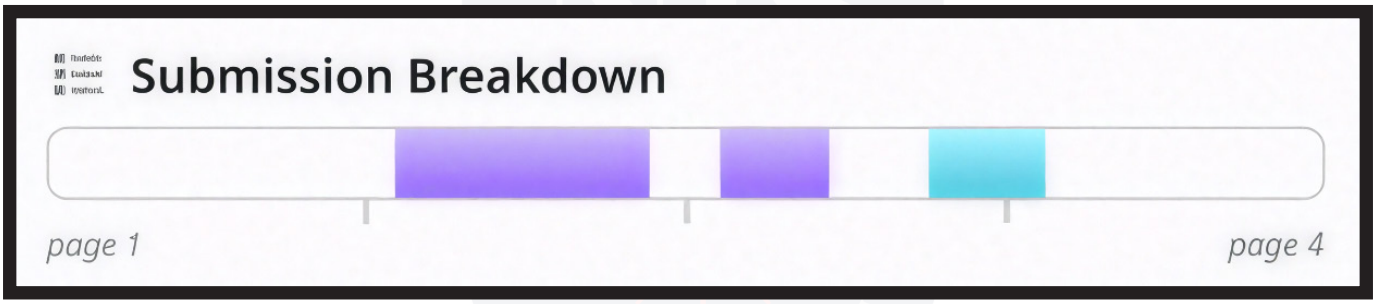
- **AI-generated only - This category detects qualifying text that was likely generated from a Large Language Model (LLM) and may have been further modified by an AI bypass. Text of this category is highlighted in a cyan color in the submission breakdown bar and in the submission.**

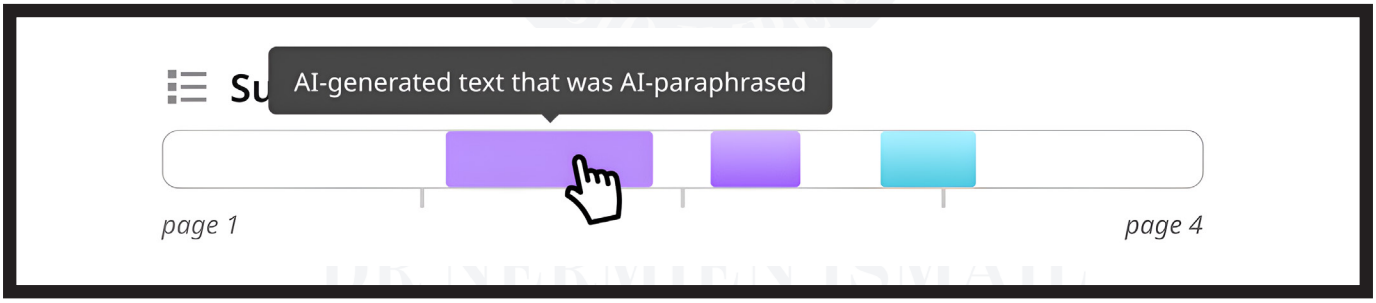


- **AI-generated text that was AI-paraphrased - This category detects qualifying text that was likely AI-generated and then likely modified by an AI-paraphrasing tool or AI word spinner, such as Quillbot. Text of this category is highlighted in a purple color in the submission breakdown bar and in the submission.**



Use the new submission breakdown bar for a color-coded visualization overview of text that was likely created using AI writing tools and/or AI text altering tools. The bar is interactive and allows you to select each color highlight to bring the corresponding text and page of the submission into focus.





What is qualifying text?

Qualifying text (prose sentences contained in long-form writing format) means individual sentences contained in paragraphs that make up a longer piece of written work, such as an essay, a dissertation, or an article, etc. The model does not reliably detect AI-generated text in the form of non-prose, such as poetry, scripts, or code, nor does it detect short-form/unconventional writing such as bullet points, tables, or annotated bibliographies.

This means that a document containing several different writing types would result in a disparity between the percentage and the highlights.

https://guides.turnitin.com/hc/en-us/articles/28457596598925-AI-writing-detection-in-the-classic-report-view

Teacher Training: Using Turnitin Responsibly and Ethically

Our Approach at NIS

At NIS, Turnitin is used as a learning and support tool, not as a policing mechanism. The purpose of using similarity and AI reports is to guide instruction, build academic skills, and support student growth, not to assume misconduct or punish students prematurely.

Teachers are expected to approach Turnitin reports with professional judgment, empathy, and an instructional mindset. Reports should always be interpreted within the broader context of the student, the assignment, and the learning goals.

Core Training Principles for Teachers

When reviewing Turnitin reports, teachers should be guided by the following principles:

1. Do Not Assume Intentional Misconduct

A similarity score or AI percentage does not automatically indicate cheating or plagiarism. Many cases of high similarity or AI detection result from:

- **Poor paraphrasing skills**
- **Incorrect or inconsistent citation**
- **Over-reliance on sources due to limited content knowledge**
- **Misunderstanding academic integrity expectations**

Teachers should begin from the assumption that students are still learning unless clear evidence suggests otherwise.

2. Context Always Comes First

Before drawing conclusions, teachers should consider:

- **The student's grade level and prior experience with academic writing**
- **The genre and task expectations of the assignment**
- **Whether the assignment requires engagement with sources**
- **The student's past submissions and writing patterns**

A report must be interpreted in context, never in isolation.

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3. Turnitin Reports Are Indicators, Not Verdicts

Both the Similarity Report and the AI Percentage Report are indicators that prompt further review, not final judgments.

They are designed to raise questions such as:

- **Does this section need a citation?**
- **Does the writing reflect the student's usual voice and skill level?**
- **Is this an opportunity for instruction or clarification?**

They should never be used as the sole basis for accusations or disciplinary action.

4. Instruction Before Escalation

Whenever possible, teachers should:

- **Discuss concerns privately with the student**
- **Ask the student to explain their research or writing process**
- **Provide feedback on citation, paraphrasing, or AI use expectations**
- **Allow opportunities for revision and learning**

Escalation should only occur after instructional interventions and when there is clear evidence of academic misconduct aligned with school policy.

5. AI Detection Requires Extra Caution

AI writing indicators are probabilistic, not definitive. Teachers must:

- **Avoid treating AI percentages as proof of wrongdoing**
- **Recognize the possibility of false positives**
- **Use AI reports to initiate conversations, not accusations**

As stated by Turnitin itself, AI detection should not be used as the sole basis for adverse actions against a student.

Teacher Reflection Questions

Before making any decision related to a Turnitin report, teachers should ask themselves:

- **Have I reviewed the actual highlighted content, not just the percentage?**
- **Does this match what I know about this student's abilities and growth?**
- **Could this be a skill gap rather than intentional misconduct?**
- **Have I given the student a chance to explain or revise?**

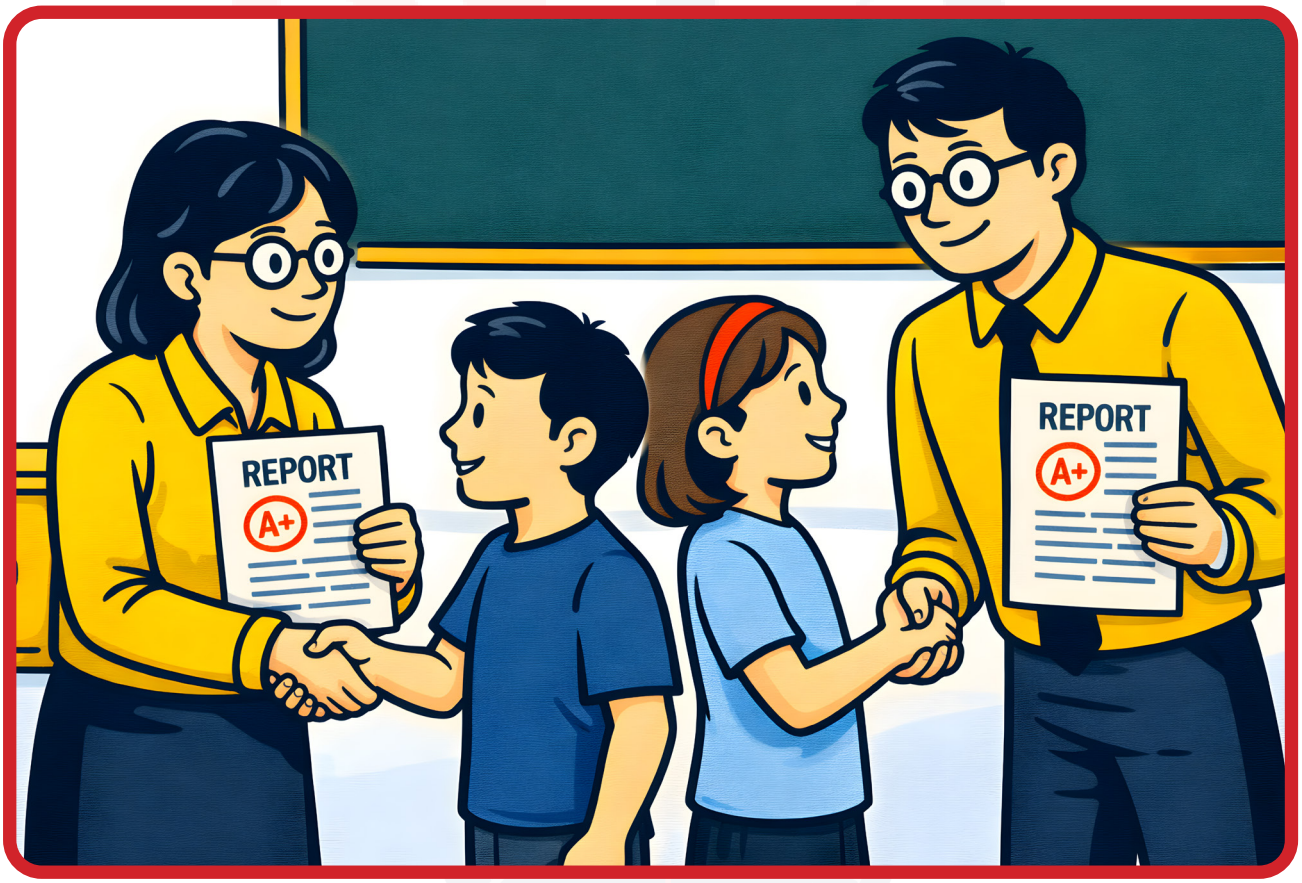
If the answer to these questions is "no," further review and instruction are required.

Our Shared Responsibility

Using Turnitin responsibly is part of our commitment to:

- **Fair and consistent assessment**
- **Student learning and skill development**
- **Ethical and professional teaching practices**

At NIS, academic integrity is taught, modeled, and supported, not enforced through assumption or fear.



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"Every great teacher doesn't avoid the storm, they learn how to bring calm to it, within the classroom."

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