Issues of plagiarism: the use of Turnitin software

When you submit a written assignment at the University, you are often required to do this through the Turnitin software system.

"Turnitin is an electronic text matching system that compares text in a student assignment against a database of sources. The database contains copies of electronic text on the Internet, in published works, on commercial databases, and in assignments previously submitted to Turnitin by students in universities all over the world, including assignments obtained from internet sites that sell student papers." (Curtin University. (n.d.) Academic integrity. Overview. Retrieved June 2, 2015 from https://academicintegrity.curtin.edu.au/overview/Turnitin_whatis.cfm.)

Turnitin originality reports: Essay 1

This is a section from an essay which was put through the Turnitin plagiarism software. It was given a 12% 'similarity' rating. This might be considered a little too high.

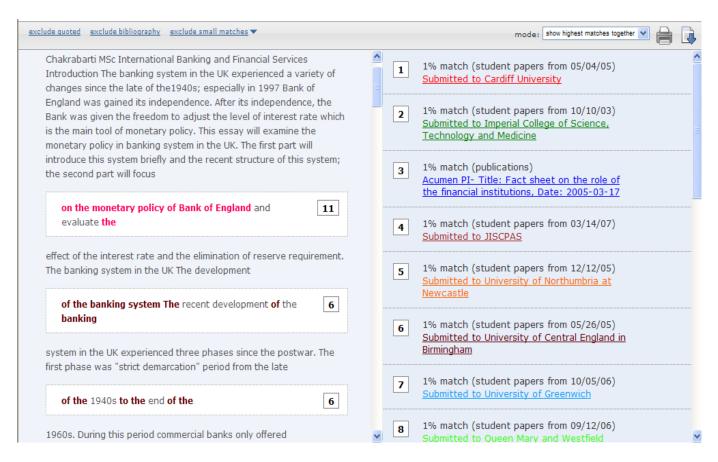
Task 1

Look at the phrases on the left that are coloured pink and brown. Do you think that these phrases are plagiarised? Give reasons for your answer.

Task 2

Now look at the column of sources on the right. The colour of the source matches with the colour of 'similar' (identical) text on the left. The numbers also match text to a source. This system is to show where the phrases have been found.

What are most of the sources? What do you think that this means?



Task 3
Do you think that this student has plagiarised?
Turnitin originality reports: Essay 2

The following essay had a 27% similarity rating. This is clearly too high.

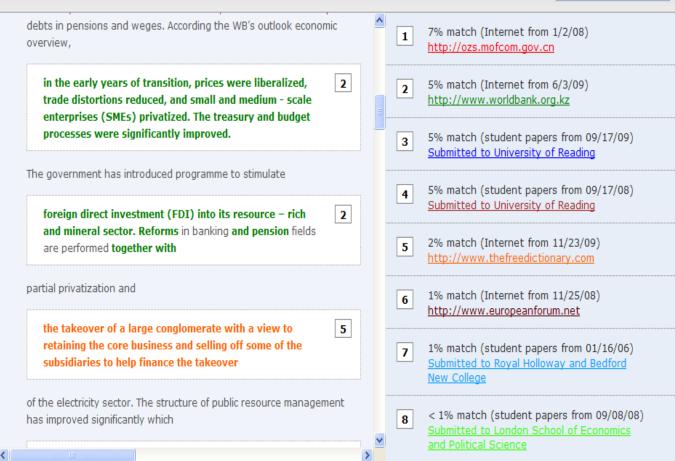
Task 4

Look at the section below.

- To what extent do you think that the student is actually 'cheating'?
- What does the student need to do to avoid the accusation of plagiarism? List the alternatives below.

mode: show highest matches together 🗸

include quoted include bibliography exclude small matches ▼



Task 5

The passages above need to be rewritten. What steps does the student need to take in order to do this effectively?

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Self plagiarism

Read the scenario below.

A student on a Pre-sessional course has the opportunity to write an essay on a topic that will be relevant to the subject that he will be studying for his Master's programme. He does a large amount of reading and researching and produces a detailed essay of a high standard. This is submitted to his writing tutor through Turnitin and they are both pleased to see that the similarity index is only 3%.

After the Pre-sessional the student moves on to his course of study for the MSc. In the second term of his MSc the assignment that he has to do for one module is very similar to the topic he worked on during the Presessional. He is very short of time with several assignments to complete, as well as two exams and a dissertation proposal to write. It seems like a sensible idea to use some of the essay that he submitted earlier on the Presessional. The essay was all his own work, had clear and accurate referencing, so there were no issues of plagiarism and it is just the right information for his current assignment.

The student submits the essay through Turnitin, as required, and is surprised when he receives an e-mail from the School Director of Teaching and Learning who wants to talk to him about Academic Misconduct. What had he done wrong?

- What do you think happened when the MSc module assignment was submitted through Turnitin?
- Do you think that the student had done anything wrong?
- What might happen to a student who is accused of academic misconduct?

Sarah Brewer, ISLI June 2015