

PLAGIARISM: THE WARNING SIGNS

A HIGH LOW 'SIMILARITY' SCORE IN TURNITIN

UNEVEN WRITING

'LOOSE' REFERENCING

INCORRECT OR BIZARRE USE OF WORDS

INCONSISTENT USE OF TENSE

INCONSISTENT FORMATTING

UNREFERENCED FACTS, IDEAS, DEFINITIONS ETC

Identifying Plagiarism While Marking

A high or low 'similarity' score in Turnitin: Turnitin produces a similarity report based on matched text (similarities) between the assessment task submitted and a database of previously submitted work, websites and other sources. This is not a plagiarism report! However, in general a high or very low similarity report is worth investigating.

Uneven Writing: This is when some phrases or sentences stick out as being outside the student's normal academic writing style (reviewing the PELA writing task can help in this instance or a student's writing style in a Discussion Forum). It could be the use of unusual words/technical terms not expected by the student which means that these phrases have been copied directly from someone else's work.

'Loose' Referencing: This is seen when there are long paragraphs with multiple in-text references at the end of the paragraph. This may indicate that the student has failed to identify which material is original and which has been taken from elsewhere.

Incorrect or bizarre use of words: If words are used incorrectly, or in an unusual way, this may indicate that the student has used a paraphrasing tool such as 'Spinbot.com' to re-write text/paraphrase a piece of text.

Inconsistent Formatting: strange use of capitals, font style, font size can be signs that text has been cut and pasted from elsewhere.

Inconsistent use of Tense: this can be an indication that text has been taken from another source or another author has worked on the assessment task. It can also be an indication of low levels of English language proficiency.

Unreferenced facts, ideas, definitions etc.: if the assessment task includes knowledge outside of the learning material or paraphrased text that do not include in-text references, then this suggests that the ideas, arguments, discussion points have been taken from somewhere else without crediting the source. This is the most common form of plagiarism in new students who are still learning about referencing conventions.