

Plagiarism Detection Software

Originality checking can encourage best practices for using and citing other people's written material. Instructors have various reasons for using originality checking software and have developed a number of techniques for applying it to their evaluation of student work. The broader question of whether to use originality checking software and for what purposes is beyond the scope of this document.

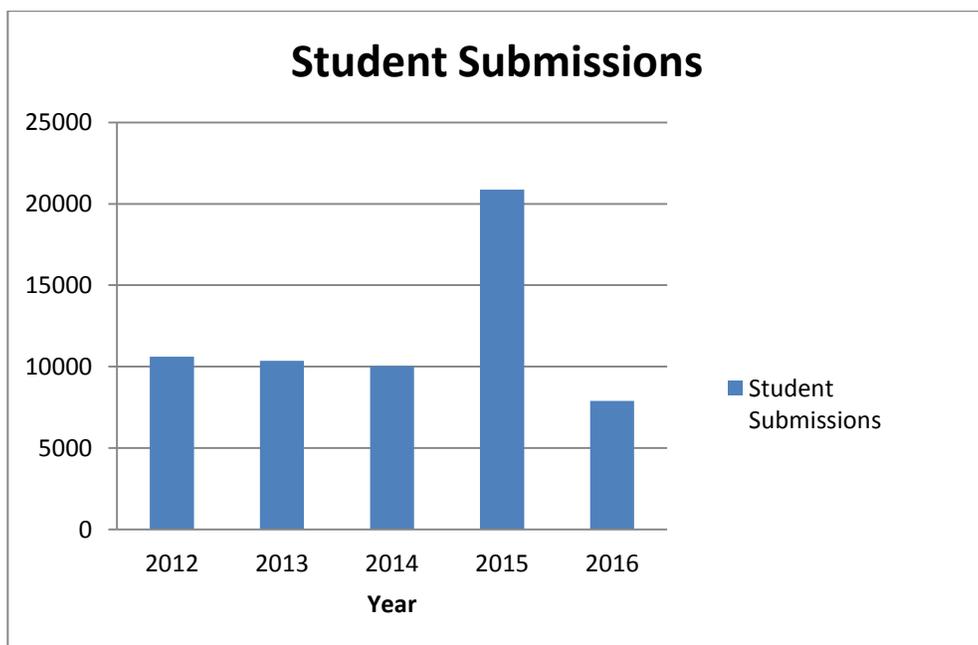
Turnitin:

Turnitin is the leading originality checking and plagiarism prevention service used by institutions worldwide. Institutions license Turnitin on an annual basis using FTES as the contract index. Individual accounts are no longer supported. An instructor can use the service with or without Canvas integration to submit electronic papers to Turnitin's proprietary software that then compares the paper's text to a database of millions of pages of digital content (including archived internet content that is no longer available on the live web) and millions of papers in the student paper archive, and professional, academic and commercial journals and publications.

Since 2014 when we started using the canvas integration about 55 instructors have attempted to use Turnitin with Canvas. I would estimate that about 65 instructors are currently using Turnitin either standalone or with the integration.

We have usage data for Turnitin going back to 2005. The English department setup a separate account "Center for Teaching Excellence" this account has been used as a standalone account with no integration to any LMS and has approximately 52,000 student submissions since being setup in 2005 (that is about 50% of our overall submissions). Usage of this account has steadily been declining since 2011 probably due to declining enrolment and the use of the Canvas integration account. There are currently about 20 active users in this standalone account.

Before the end of 2015 the Turnitin integration with Canvas was simple (a single check box in the assignment setup) and the results of the report were available to students and instructors. No other functionality or access to Turnitin tools was provided. At the end of 2015 Turnitin required a change to the integration making it much more complicated to use and maintain. These changes have had a dramatic effect on the use of the Turnitin (see below).



The complications with the interface have reduced the simplicity and reliability of the integration to a point where some instructors are no longer willing to use it. Instructors who are familiar with Turnitin and have used it as a standalone tool are having fewer problems with the use of the integration. Students seem to have fewer problems using the standalone version of Turnitin.

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In addition to originality checking a few instructors are using the other grading tools provide by Turnitin. In general the tools provide similar functionality to what Canvas offers, inline comments, rubrics etc. But with one significant difference that being the ability to store and retrieves grading comments associated with a specific assignment. This functionality is not currently available in Canvas although they are planning on implementing this in the future.

Vericite:

Vericite has been recommended by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office thru the Online Education Initiative (OEI) as an alternative to Turnitin and negotiated special pricing for Community Colleges.

Vericite works differently than Turnitin in that it runs the similarity check each time you access the report and it is therefore not static. For example a student may submit a document and have a low score and then another student may submit the same documents so that when the first student access the report again the similarity would now be 100%. Vericite works as an integration with Canvas and has no external or alternate submission method.

Vericite has no extra tools for grading and peer review. This makes the Canvas integration greatly simplified and much more reliable. Essentially if you enable Vericite for a canvas assignment it will run a similarity report for that assignment when a student submits it or an instructor accesses it. There is no exchange of data between Vericite and Canvas and no interference with SpeedGrader or other Canvas functions. In addition document sharing among other institutions is handled differently.

The following is a comparison chart of Vericite and Turnitin.

Feature	VeriCite	TurnItIn
Canvas integration	Yes	Yes
Scope of comparison databases	Large	Larger
Report score returned instantly	Yes	No
Responsive support	?	No
Reports are constantly updated	Yes	No
Easy to use	?	No*1
On-screen comparisons of writing and sources	Yes	Yes
Reports link to sources	Yes	Yes
Option for multiple draft submissions	Yes	Yes*2
Student submissions kept private and cannot be compared among institutions without institutional approval	Yes	No*3
Instructors can annotate submissions	Yes	Yes
Instructor annotations can be stored and reused	Yes	Yes
Monitored to ensure all submissions are analyzed successfully	Yes	Yes
Supports multiple submissions of the same assignment	Yes	Yes
Supports peer review	No	Yes
Cost *4	50%	100%

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1. *Ease of use takes into account that both Turnitin integration and standalone require more setup and monitoring than Vericite integration.
2. *Multiple drafts for Turnitin require special settings in the integration and can prevent the use of certain Canvas functions.
3. *Turnitin has an opt-out option that must be specifically set for each submission and allows student data to be excluded from the database.
4. Cost of Vericite is estimated to be approximately 50% of that charged for Turnitin

We are planning on piloting Vericite this semester using the 60 day free trial recommended to me when I spoke with their representative. This gives us flexibility to test it out, but we need to keep some things in mind. Instructors will need to think about the length of the trial and when they register for the Vericite trial. At the end of the trial the student's submission and instructor comments will still be available but the Vericite report will no longer be active.

Conclusions:

Vericite has the potential to vastly improve the ease of use and number of instructors who have access to originality checking software. However, it is also apparent that Vericite is not as good as Turnitin at certain tasks, specifically in the use of other institutions data and the depth of their current databases. This will impact a very small percentage of matching issues that are related to non-public databases and reuse of papers from other institutions.

I would recommend that if the pilot is successful we should add Vericite to our list of Canvas integrations. The cost of adding Vericite is relatively low compared to the potential benefit gained.

Turnitin has been used for over 10 years at this institution and there are some instructors who have been using it quite successfully as a standalone solution during that time. I would not underestimate the investment that these instructors have made in learning and using the product. However, Turnitin has experienced a lot of technical and service related issues over the years; poor technical support, poor communication, long service waits and Critical down times. The inability to work smoothly with our LMS has caused a lot of frustration for faculty. Instructors relying on originality checking for grading have had to delay final grades due to poor services or technical glitches. As to the question of whether Vericite could replace Turnitin that is a question only the faculty can answer.