University of HUDDERSFIELD **Similarity**Sim

Facilitator notes

SimilaritySim is an activity designed to give learners an insight into how assessors use Turnitin, in order to demonstrate the level of human attention reports require rather than being a case of "computer says no". This can help to alleviate student anxieties about submitting their work for Turnitin analysis. The game can also be used as part of development activities for staff and students who will need to interpret Turnitin reports.

This exercise only addresses text-based plagiarism. (There are other forms of plagiarism which Turnitin is not designed to detect.) In some disciplines using quotations is considered to be poor scholarly writing, but this would be addressed through the marking process. These are points you may wish to discuss with learners during the session.

Set up

The activity is intended to follow a presentation or other learning episode in which students have been familiarised with the basic concepts of Turnitin's reporting.

Learners will work in groups. The size of these groups is not critical – groups of around 5 or 6 students work well, but smaller groups (pairs or even individuals) can be successful too.

Randomly allocating students to groups rather than allowing friends to sit together can enrich the discussions, particularly if you have international learners, whose cultural background can lead to them having different conceptions about plagiarism.

Each group will require a set of the purple and yellow card decks.

Round 1

This part is a simulation allowing students to experience the role of an examiner interpreting a Turnitin report by using a set of cards with extracts from Turnitin reports.

- Give each group a purple card deck.

- Explain that each card contains an extract from a Turnitin originality report that may or may not suggest potential plagiarism.

- Ask the groups to sort the cards into two piles: one pile which they think shows potential evidence of plagiarism and one pile which they think is acceptable work.

- After a suitable period of time (the size of your groups will dictate how long they need) announce that learners can check their own answers against a model answer by looking at the star in the corner of each card.

  o Learners should count the number of points on the star – an odd number indicates that it may show plagiarism, an even number indicates writing which has probably not been plagiarised.

- State that these model answers are one interpretation, some are borderline examples. Explain that the interpretation is open to debate, and invite learners to challenge the model answers if they wish.

Model answer

This is provided for reference in answering queries about the model answer. **Don't share these explanations with students** as this will negate the second round.

Card code	Model answer	Reasoning
A	OK	Short matches for common phrases that can only be written in a limited number of ways
D	OK	Well paraphrased summary of the source cited
H	Unacceptable	Patchwork copy and paste, uncited, no quote marks
I	Unacceptable	Poor attempt at paraphrasing, just a couple of words switched.
N	OK	Standard definition, cited with quotation marks. May not be acceptable scholarly writing in all disciplines, but not plagiarism.
O	OK	Multiline quotation, for a standard definition. Properly cited with quotation marks.
R	OK	A reference list is bound to match.
S	Unacceptable	Poor attempt at paraphrasing with just a few words switched. No attempt to cite source.
U	Unacceptable	Long verbatim quotation, with no quotation marks. This wrongly implies it is student's interpretation of the cited source.
Y	OK	Short, technical definition. Can't be written in many other ways.

Round 2

This part reinforces how nuanced the reports can be, and introduces some competition elements to make it into a game.

- Issue each group with the yellow card deck.

- Ask the learners to match the purple cards with the yellow ones and look for the code. The first team to crack the code and stand up and shout the answer (and be able to explain their working) is the winner. You may wish to offer a suitable prize.

    o You may wish to provide a hint, that the yellow cards need to be placed in numerical order

- Some yellow cards may appear to fit more than one purple card, but there is only one combination in which all cards correctly match.

- Properly matched, and placed in numerical order of the yellow cards, the letters on the purple cards spell out "HOURS IN DAY", so the answer is "24".

Plenary - points to reflect on

Learners have now experienced the process that their examiner will use to interpret the report they get from Turnitin. They have seen how borderline and open to interpretation the reports can be.

More of the purple cards show no evidence of plagiarism than do suggest plagiarism – Turnitin finds a lot of false positives.

All of the highlighted text on the cards would be contributing to the similarity index (the headline score on Turnitin). A good piece of work which references the literature is likely to show some similarity matches.

The examiner makes an academic judgement based on the information from Turnitin (along with their experience and knowledge of the literature in the area) – it is not a "computer says no" scenario.

The small print

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Portions adapted from the work of Alex Moseley, University of Leicester, used by kind permission.

For more information about the development of SimilaritySim please see

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Changelog

V1.0   16/11/16   First public release