

Disabling the AI Tool in Turnitin

Dear Faculty,

We're writing to let you know that NYU is in the process of disabling the AI detection tool in [Turnitin](#). The AI tool will no longer be available after Friday, September 8. All the other features in Turnitin remain in place and the ordinary Turnitin service of identifying student copying of existing writing will remain unchanged. The AI detection feature of Turnitin was turned on this spring by the vendor with little notice to NYU and with no opt-out function. After a number of institutions complained, Turnitin now allows institutions to disable the tool.

We are disabling it because it does not work well enough to confidently apply it. Though Turnitin originally claimed a 1% rate of misidentification of human text as AI written, work over the summer shows that rate being closer to 4%, which is to say that the tool falsely labels 1 in 25 student-written assignments as forged. That proportion could be even higher for NYU because AI detectors disproportionately misidentify work written by students for whom English is an additional language and NYU has the largest international population in the U.S.

In conversations this month with governance and consultative groups ([Instructional Technologists Committee \[ITC\]](#), [Teaching with Generative Tools \[TGT\]](#), and faculty conversation in the August AI trainings), the consensus was that the risk of falsely accusing students based on the output of automated AI detection was too great. We are taking this specific action with Turnitin because its presence in Brightspace seemed like a University endorsement. However, these problems are general; *there is no reliable AI detection tool we can recommend to faculty.*

Again, please note that the ordinary Turnitin service of identifying student copying of existing writing will remain unchanged.

NYU has a larger set of resources for supporting faculty as they deal with widespread student access to generative AI than we did this spring. These include the [AI workshop series for faculty](#), the [Artificial Intelligence at NYU website](#) with information such as how to get access to a forthcoming secure instance of ChatGPT-4, and the [Teaching and Learning with AI page](#). Find out more about how to access and use [Turnitin](#) in your course.

We hope this information is helpful to you as you begin the fall semester.

Regards,

Clay Shirky, Vice Provost for AI and Technology in Education
Ben Maddox, Chief Academic Technology Officer