What does a Turnitin Originality Report look like?

When your work is uploaded to Turnitin, the markers will get an Originality Report similar to the one reproduced below. Your assignment text will have been compared to text maintained within a vast corpus of digital material taken from published work (both print and internet) as well as from student assignments submitted all over the English-speaking world. Any strong similarity between your words and those in the database will be flagged up to the markers and colour coded to at least one source. This source may or may not be the one used by you in your assignment, as the words could already have been borrowed or quoted, legally or illegally, by a different source, which is the one that Turnitin has found.

1) Some numbered sections show similarity that is perfectly acceptable. In Fig. 1, numbers 3 and 10 relate to the essay question itself (already in the database from other assignments submitted for this module) and the title of a published collection of work, which has been properly presented as such.

2) However, number 2 shows a long chunk of text that is presented as the candidate’s own work, but which—see figure 3—can be traced to an internet source published by the University of Buckingham (in fact, the Writing Guide for the Department). This has not been acknowledged or referenced in any way, and is an example of academic misconduct.

3) The third paragraph is mainly biographical information. The opening sentences have been reasonably clearly referenced to the American Dictionary of National Biography, by the use of inverted commas, but the second half of the paragraph has not. Turnitin has NOT in fact spotted this—it is not infallible—but your markers may well recognise it, or find it, if their suspicions about the referencing of the essay have been raised by the passages which Turnitin HAS recognised.
4) On the second page (see Fig. 2) Turnitin reveals most of the writing to derive from published sources. Although some secondary sources are mentioned (Genette in para. 1 and Bethea in para. 2) these are for the most part not properly referenced. Whole phrases and sentences from others’ writing have been introduced but are presented by the candidate as their own. Quotation marks, and much clearer sourcing (with dates and, depending on the referencing style adopted, page numbers) are needed.

5) Only the final paragraph on the page—where footnotes are used and sources and page numbers given to the primary text, and to Saltzman’s essay—is properly presented, and is an example of good practice. The rest is an example of academic misconduct.

6) At the end of the essay (see Fig. 3), the Similarity Index is given, along with a breakdown of where similar/identical material has been detected by Turnitin. Each source can be expanded to the point where its origin can be traced.

7) Note that part of the Similarity Index represents properly referenced and legitimately quoted material, and will be considered part of the strengths of the essay. A good essay ought to have a Similarity Index of 10% or more, representing the secondary materials that have been consulted, cited, and properly referenced.

8) However, a notable percentage of this essay derives from material that has been illegitimately presented, and will normally cause the marking team to raise an allegation of academic misconduct, to be investigated and potentially sanctioned as per the University’s Policy and Procedures.