How Instructors Across the Disciplines Can Manage Written Assignments and Deliver Rich Feedback
# Table of Contents

1.0 Summary ..................................................................................................................... 3

2.0 Introduction  
   2.1 The Struggle to Engage Students in Writing as a Process ................................. 4  
   2.2 Turnitin: Creating a Digital Environment that Engages Students through the Entire  Writing Process ..................................................................................................... 5

3.0 Teaching the Writing Process with Turnitin  
   3.1 Turnitin Creates an Online, Collaborative Prewriting Environment that Sets the  Stage for More Focused, Original and Relevant Work .......................................... 6  
   3.2 Online Peer Review—A Practical Way to Stimulate Thoughtful Dialogue and  Reflection While Drafting ....................................................................................... 7

4.0 Taking Students Beyond Editing  
   4.1 Using Turnitin to Help Writers Become Real Revisionists ..................................... 9  
   4.2 Coming Full Circle: Turnitin Enables Instructors to Provide More Meaningful  Assessments and Encourages Students’ Self-Reflection .................................. 11

5.0 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 12

6.0 References ................................................................................................................. 13

About the Author .............................................................................................................. 14
About Turnitin and iParadigms, LLC ................................................................................ 15

Figure 1: The Writing Process ............................................................................................ 4  
Figure 2: The Turnitin Collaborative Writing Process ......................................................... 5  
Figure 3: Collaborative Prewriting ...................................................................................... 6  
Figure 4: The Peer Review Process .................................................................................... 8  
Figure 5: Turnitin’s Originality Report ................................................................................. 9
1.0 Summary

Educators recognize that writing is an effective tool for evaluating student knowledge across the curriculum. Yet students tend to struggle with written assignments because they need more exposure to good writing practices. Students often fall short in their writing assignments because they fail to see writing as a recursive process of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. In addition, educators struggle to provide feedback on student writing and assess student writing throughout the process. Instructors need a tool to engage students throughout the writing process and to encourage good writing practices, such as collaboration and self-reflection. Instructors also need a tool to facilitate their assessments of writing in each stage. Turnitin is an instructional support tool that engages students in the writing process within an interactive writing community. Turnitin also enables instructors to evaluate writing throughout the process and improves students’ access to that evaluation. When students receive feedback on their writing early and throughout the process, that feedback becomes more meaningful and useful.
2.0 Introduction

2.1 THE STRUGGLE TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN WRITING AS A PROCESS
Teaching writing as a process began as a movement within composition studies in the late 1960s. However, any instructor who assigns writing knows the challenge of getting students to embrace the process of writing.

Regardless of their educational level, students often attempt to write their papers the night before assignments are due, truncating the process of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing into simply drafting and editing. Students may attempt to skip necessary stages of the writing process because they tend to want just to get the job done. Speed and efficiency become more important than care and accuracy. Prewriting and drafting multiple drafts, for example, take more time, so students deem them inefficient. In addition, students place less value on writing as a process since instructors typically place more value on the final product by grading and evaluating only that final paper. Students, therefore, get the message that the product is more important than the process. Thus, they will invest their time in writing a final draft because it gets the grade. Instructors can send students the message that the process is just as important as the final product by assessing students throughout each writing stage, holding them accountable for the work they do and providing feedback on their progress.

Assessing students’ prewriting, drafting, revising and editing is a daunting task given the sheer volume of writing and writing-related activities for even a small number of students. By encouraging students to provide feedback to one another through collaborative peer assessment activities as well as encouraging students to assess their own progress through self-reflection, instructors can engage students even further in their writing processes without an exponential increase in the time instructors need to devote to grading papers. Instructors need a consistent, collaborative tool to facilitate this work.

Yet another challenge to supporting writing as a process is that textbooks lack the ability to illustrate how the writing process really works. For the most part, textbooks describe writing as a process, but a text that is static cannot illustrate the thought processes students must engage in to analyze writing, whether it is their own or a peer’s. Students need to practice analyzing and evaluating writing as they learn how to move through the stages of the writing process.

FIGURE 1 | The Writing Process, a composition movement originating from the late 1960s, emphasizes an approach to writing in which students focus on several stages of writing: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Originally, teachers taught students to work through one stage at a time. As theories about writing as a process evolved, the cyclical nature of the writing process emerged, suggesting that students move back and forth through the stages as they compose. Students are taught, for example, to go back to prewriting even as they revise.
2.2 TURNITIN: CREATING A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT THAT ENGAGES STUDENTS THROUGH THE ENTIRE WRITING PROCESS

Turnitin's OriginalityCheck, PeerMark, and GradeMark tools, offer students multiple rounds of feedback from their peers, their instructors, and even themselves throughout the writing process.

Turnitin consists of:

- **Turnitin OriginalityCheck**, which identifies material within student writing that is similar to material found on the Internet. Students are able to use the quick and individualized feedback to revise any issues with source integration within their drafts. Incidences of plagiarism — unintended or otherwise — are dramatically reduced.

- **PeerMark**, which enables students to perform online peer reviews and to give feedback to one another on their drafts in a digital environment. Instructors are able to set up, manage and read peer reviews online.

- **GradeMark**, an online mark-up and grading tool that allows instructors to grade student writing online. GradeMark also allows instructors to create and attach rubrics to assignments so students can assess necessary improvements to their drafts based upon these rubrics.

The Turnitin concept is similar to the cyclical nature of the writing process. In the writing process students are able to cycle through prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing multiple times before they create the final product. They might move back and forth between prewriting and drafting as they develop ideas for the paper. With Turnitin students can move through OriginalityCheck and PeerMark several times before submitting a draft for evaluation with GradeMark. Students also can use Turnitin to check reflective pieces to identify what changes they need to make or to discuss what they have learned through multiple rounds of feedback prior to implementing those changes. In addition to engaging students throughout the writing process, Turnitin holds students accountable for their efforts in the process rather than for just the final product. For example, through Turnitin students might engage in prewriting using an online course discussion board, draft using feedback from PeerMark, and revise after receiving instructor feedback through GradeMark.

FIGURE 2 | Turnitin is a web-delivered environment that facilitates rich feedback and assessment with three integrated tools that support the writing process: 1) originality checking, 2) peer reviewing, and 3) paperless mark-up and grading.
3.0 Teaching the Writing Process with Turnitin

3.1 Turnitin Creates an Online, Collaborative Prewriting Environment That Sets the Stage for More Focused, Original and Relevant Work

Early proponents of the writing process considered prewriting to be the most important stage of the process. However, most textbooks offer limited prewriting ideas — little more than selecting a topic and developing initial thoughts that shape ideas on that topic. Effective prewriting activities should expand prewriting beyond merely brainstorming a topic and listing ideas to develop that topic. The writing process, according to James Reither (1985), is more complex than current theory suggests, and prewriting in particular should promote what Reither calls “substantive social knowing” (p. 626). To this end, instructors need to engage students in collaborative discussion about writing topics to help students uncover developmental points, arguments, counterarguments, and perspectives within social contexts. One feature of Turnitin allows instructors to create this collaborative environment for “social knowing” in an online discussion board.

**FIGURE 3** | Collaborative prewriting activities increase a student’s social awareness of the topic and its broader contexts when compared to isolated, individual brainstorming techniques.
Although writing is often portrayed as an isolated activity, it has many social dimensions, and effective teachers provide students opportunities to experience writing in interactive terms by encouraging students to work together at every stage of the writing process.

"The course discussion board available through Turnitin can help initiate the writing process in an interactive collaborative learning community. Instructors can ask students to discuss readings, and these discussions can shape thought and provide new knowledge to inform their students’ writing. Additionally, instructors can ask students to post their essay topics to elicit discussion from their peers. Through an asynchronous discussion, students can share their ideas and arguments on one another’s topics. This activity also can function as a self-assessment for students who might decide, based upon peer feedback, to move the essay in a completely different direction than their original developmental plan. Some might even throw out their topic for a new one. (Better they do this before writing the entire paper than finding out later that a topic took them nowhere.) As an assessment tool, the discussion board can help an instructor identify students who might need more mentoring in selecting an appropriate topic. This prewriting activity, instituted on the Turnitin discussion board, invites students and instructors to participate together in the initial stage of the writing process and to create the social knowing and conversation that will drive the remaining stages of writing.

3.2 ONLINE PEER REVIEW—A PRACTICAL WAY TO STIMULATE THOUGHTFUL DIALOGUE AND REFLECTION WHILE DRAFTING

According to composition theorists, drafting should be separate from the more critical and analytical stage of revising to allow for uninhibited thought. Peter Elbow (1981) advises writers “to separate the creating and criticizing processes so they don’t interfere with each other.” He suggests that writers freewrite to generate thoughts and words without criticizing whether or not they are good, and “shaping what’s left into something strong” (p.7). While freewriting is certainly addressed in most textbook discussions of the writing process, the second step — the shaping, organizing, ordering and developing of a solid draft — has limited discussion in current texts. The challenge of teaching drafting from a textbook revolves around a book’s inherent difficulty in recreating the writer’s internal dialogue that shapes a draft. A textbook is a final product itself; thus, it is limited in its ability to represent realistically a writer’s cognitive evolution during the writing process. In order to teach students what it means to draft, the instructor needs to recreate realistic dialogue about the student’s own writing and, with the student’s own writing, to mimic the reflective thought that occurs during the drafting stage. One way to accomplish such dialogue is through peer review.

As students give and receive peer feedback, they engage in reflective thought about writing. However, students as novice writers often feel inadequate in giving suggestions to their peers and might not take the activity seriously. To complicate the instructor’s task further, managing peer review in a face-to-face environment can prove difficult when students don’t bring sufficient copies, when students don’t complete their drafts, and when some students are clearly not in the mood to read and discuss writing. Some instructors may face simple challenges of time and space. Non-composition faculty, for instance, have difficulty implementing peer review for their writing assignments because the time...
doing peer review would take away from teaching the course content, or they teach large numbers of students, making face-to-face peer review infeasible. Given these constraints, some instructors may ask: “Why do it? What is the benefit?”

Theorist Kenneth Brufee (1984) highlights the benefit of dialogue in peer review: “What peer tutor and tutee do together is not write or edit, or least of all proofread. What they do together is converse . . . Most of all they converse about and pursuant to writing” (p.10). Peer review asks students to discuss their writing with one another and, in turn, models and rehearses the type of internal conversation necessary for students to move from freewriting to drafting.

Turnitin offers online peer review to students and instructors to foster a collaborative community for drafting. Turnitin’s PeerMark tool helps instructors implement and manage peer review effectively and efficiently. It collects and distributes papers to individual students, stores peer review questions semester to semester, offers suggested topic questions for peer review sessions that can be edited to meet instructors’ needs, and stores the students’ peer reviews for instructors and students to access throughout the course for further assessment.

By easing the management of peer review along with eliminating some of its physical limitations by conducting it online, PeerMark enables instructors to perform multiple rounds of peer reviews. Separate peer reviews of the same paper can focus on the thesis and supporting points, source integration, adherence to a particular documentation style, or other issues. When teachers engage students in multiple rounds of peer review, they are training these students to become better peer reviewers, aiding development of their internal, reflective thought, and in turn, improving their writing.

FIGURE 4 | Peer review engages students in a process of 1) Reading and analyzing peer writing, 2) Evaluating the writing according to evaluative criteria, 3) Communicating feedback to one another, 4) Reflecting on possible changes, weighing and judging the peer feedback, and 5) Implementing appropriate changes into the writing based on peer feedback.
4.0 Taking Students Beyond Editing

4.1 USING TURNITIN TO HELP WRITERS BECOME REAL REVISIONISTS

Revising is one of the most misunderstood and, simply, one of the most missed steps in the writing process. Often students confuse revising with editing, thinking that simply fixing a few commas and correcting some fragments will improve their essays and their grades. Revision is a complex process, and one difficult for students to recognize. Revision also poses a challenge to textbook authors since revision, like drafting, is difficult to replicate in the textbook’s static, published form. Revision can and should be taught with real writing and with students’ own writing.

Turnitin can help students identify whether they have accomplished true revision. While typically used to highlight similarity to material on the Internet, the OriginalityCheck feature of Turnitin can be used to highlight changes in a student’s revised draft, comparing it to the original draft. In this exercise students use Turnitin to submit their essays to the assignment created by the instructor. After completing their revisions on that assignment, students resubmit their essays to Turnitin. By using the Originality Report in the “text only” view and choosing to “see matches one at a time”, the student’s first draft can be compared with the second draft. This version of the Originality Report (shown in Figure 5) will reveal to the student how much of his or her revision consists of newly written material (shown in black) compared to the original essay.

FIGURE 5 | Turnitin’s Originality Report can highlight what a student changed from one draft to another in the Single Source Mode. A teacher can use this visual feedback to illustrate whether a student has done significant revision.
“Writing does not proceed in linear fashion from prewriting to drafting to revising. The revision practices of students become more effective when instructors help them to see that revision occurs at every stage of the writing process. Students benefit from a metacognitive understanding of revision; rather than just learning steps in a process, they should constantly reflect upon their own writing performances.”

- National Council of Teachers of English

to the original essay (shown in red). The visual feedback of Turnitin’s Originality Report is meaningful to students. It creates a textbook out of their own writing, helping them to assess the effectiveness of their revision process and how it differs from editing, a stage more familiar to students.

Turnitin also has built-in assignment set-up features that give students opportunities to revise. When instructors create assignments within Turnitin, they can allow students to resubmit their essay several times before the due date, giving the students valuable feedback about how well they have integrated outside sources and inviting students to revise for necessary changes before the final due date. These opportunities to revise help students learn the difficult task of integrating outside sources into their writing. They typically need the feedback provided by OriginalityCheck to see visually what material from Internet sources needs appropriate paraphrasing along with proper citation and documentation. Cheah and Bretag (2008) found that when they used Turnitin’s OriginalityCheck as a learning tool, allowing for multiple submissions, the amount of plagiarism decreased. The students acknowledged that this instructional method increased their ability to identify where they needed to edit their work to avoid plagiarism. In addition to allowing multiple submissions to the same assignment, an instructor can set up a specific assignment for revisions. The Revision Assignment does not overwrite the original draft when the student uploads a paper’s revision. The instructor can then track an essay’s progress from first to final draft and better assess student revision.
4.2 COMING FULL CIRCLE: TURNITIN ENABLES INSTRUCTORS TO PROVIDE MORE MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENTS AND ENCOURAGES STUDENTS’ SELF-REFLECTION

The cyclical nature of activities in both Turnitin and the writing process illustrate that these activities should not end when the final paper is submitted and graded. Turnitin’s GradeMark helps instructors offer meaningful feedback so that student learning does not end when the final paper is graded and returned. All too often instructors spend endless hours providing evaluative feedback on student writing, but once the paper is graded, the student misses out on the opportunity to learn from the instructor’s comments. Many students merely scan the comments and quickly search for the overall score, losing the benefit of the feedback. GradeMark, however, stores the paper’s comments for the student to review again and again. This can be particularly helpful with portfolio systems, since students and instructors can’t lose graded essays. The digital feedback is also easier for students to read and does not limit an instructor to marginal comments. Furthermore, the feedback can be directly tied to assessment through GradeMark’s rubrics that the instructor uses to score the essays. (GradeMark even inputs the grade into the course gradebook also available through Turnitin.

Turnitin has another feature that closes the gap between the graded essay and prewriting, making the writing process truly cyclical and recursive. The Reflection Assignment feature extends the conversation between instructor and student as the student responds to the instructor’s comments. Within this assignment, students can offer their own suggestions for revision — moving them back to the prewriting stage — and take ownership of the essay’s feedback and possible future improvements.

Self-reflection is an inherent part of the writing process as the student moves successfully through its stages. Edward White (2004) ties this type of self-assessment directly to the writing process when he questions: “How … can [students] accomplish genuine revision without some ability to assess what they have written, see what should be changed, what omitted, what expanded? If we teach revision, we must … teach assessment with attention to the most important kind of assessment: self-assessment” (p. 111). In addition to reflecting on the graded essay, students might be asked to reflect on their writing process for a given paper and evaluate whether or not it was effective for that assignment. They might include what changes they would make to their process on the next assignment to make that process more effective. Students can do multiple Reflection Assignments for one project; they might, for instance, do a Reflection Assignment after each round of feedback as they move back and forth through each stage of the writing process.

Is it possible to produce “plagiarism-proof” assignments?

Turnitin supports instructors in developing “plagiarism-proof” assignments because each assignment is broken into a series of drafts that get feedback and revision. In addition to instructors providing students interesting topics that require critical thinking, PeerMark and GradeMark enable rich interaction and feedback from peers and the instructors during the process. Along the way, Turnitin originality reports offer opportunities to learn to properly cite sources. Plagiarizing such assignments becomes much more difficult.
Turnitin enables instructors to embed the writing process into their course curriculum regardless of the course subject. The focus on writing as a process has had profound influence on composition pedagogy, centering instruction more on students. While composition studies have implemented the writing process within most curricula, other fields struggle to find the opportunities to integrate the writing process into their course content. Not only can Turnitin facilitate what is already occurring in writing classrooms, it can provide the means whereby all faculty can create a conversation about writing through writing. Using Turnitin as a medium for teaching writing is engaging and interactive, social and communal. Dahl (2007) found that 78 percent of students preferred to receive feedback through Turnitin’s OriginalityCheck, PeerMark, and GradeMark over more traditional means. Furthermore, Turnitin offers appropriate and meaningful feedback to students throughout the writing process, helping them to value writing as a process and to gain insight into their own development as a writer and learner.
References


About the Author

Renee Bangerter
Bangerter has been a composition instructor for 14 years, integrating technology into her pedagogy from the start. Her teaching experience ranges from high school to community college to university courses. As Associate Professor of English at Fullerton College she was instrumental in training faculty in the practical uses of technology in their courses, including implementing Turnitin. She teaches English at Saddleback College in California.
iParadigms, LLC is the world’s leading provider of web-based solutions for plagiarism prevention. The company’s products include Turnitin, used by educators worldwide to check students’ papers for originality, to enable web-based peer review and for digital grading of student work. The company’s solutions check millions of documents each month and are used in over 125 countries. iParadigms is headquartered in Oakland, CA and is backed by Warburg Pincus.

Turnitin is a service of iParadigms, LLC
1111 Broadway, 3rd Floor
Oakland CA, 94607 USA

USA/Canada: 866-816-5046
International: +1 510-764-7600
sales@turnitin.com

www.turnitin.com