

MEMORANDUM

To: All users

From: Junius Gonzales, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: Wednesday, November 1, 2023

SUBJECT: AI Detection Service within Turnitin / Canvas

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST



Dear University Community,

In light of the challenges and limitations of AI detection via Turnitin, and in response to concerns about false positives and the inability to guarantee the validity of AI detection, the [Advisory Board of the Office for Faculty Excellence](#) has recommended that we discontinue the use of AI detection via Turnitin for the assessment of student submissions. The Academic Affairs Council, composed of the academic deans and my senior staff, supports this recommendation.

The AI detection functionality within Turnitin will be discontinued on Monday, November 20, 2023. Instructors will still have access to Turnitin's original service that compares students' submissions with Turnitin's own submission bank and available internet sources.

As explained by the OFE Faculty Board, the new "AI Detection" is not simply an extension or improvement of existing functionality that works differently. AI-generated text is *original*, not found or copied from an existing source; thus, no comparison is possible. Rather, AI detection works similarly to AI generation: the tools use algorithms to *predict* the authenticity of student submissions rather than matching text to other sources.

The use of AI detection tools, such as Turnitin, while intended to uphold academic integrity, has sometimes resulted in unintended consequences, including false positives. Further, instructors are unable to follow a clear evidential trail and make their own judgment, as is the case with the original service that compared student submissions with existing sources. These weaknesses have been [acknowledged by the company](#).

This decision is made following similar ones by many other universities, including [Vanderbilt University](#), which was one of the first universities to disable Turnitin's AI Detector. As noted by

Gen AI leader Ethan Mollick (Wharton, UPenn), “AI detectors don’t work. To the extent that they work at all, they can be defeated by making slight changes to text. And, what might be worse, they have high false positive rates and they tend to accuse people of using AI when they don’t use AI, especially students to whom English is a second language. The falsely accused have no recourse because they can’t prove they didn’t use AI” ([One Useful Thing](#)).

The University supports instructors adjusting to and seeking ways to capitalize on the potential of AI in their teaching. [OFE](#) and [ITDS](#) offer workshops resources and consultations.

In regards to what instructors are advised to do with AI, at a minimum, OFE recommends that instructors:

- Try out the AI tools that are most relevant to your discipline and courses
- Develop policies and guidance for AI use in your course and/or assignments
- Discuss and/or engage in AI with your students to help them uncover its strengths and weaknesses in specific applications

In the event that AI detection tools become more effective and better support students and instructors, we may revisit this decision.

For questions or concerns, please contact the Executive Director of the OFE, Emily Isaacs.

Sincerely,

Junius Gonzales, M.D., M.B.A.
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Emily Isaacs
Executive Director, Office for Faculty Excellence
Professor of Writing Studies