Introduction to Screening Your Thesis or Dissertation using *iThenticate* (December 1, 2014)

The student is the sole author of their thesis or dissertation, and it is the student's responsibility to ensure that all information in their document is correctly cited and attributed, and that proper copyright permissions have been obtained. The *iThenticate* screening process should be only one part of their effort towards this end. For example, *iThenticate* cannot detect images and figures taken from other sources, texts in languages other than English, and user error (e.g. inappropriate exclusions).

**What Does *iThenticate* Analysis Provide and What Problems Do I Have to Fix?**

Once you submit your Committee Recommendation Form for your defense, you will be given access to *iThenticate* to screen your thesis or dissertation for overlap with other published work. You should be receiving an invitation to create an account so that you can analyze your document. Please read the sections below before analyzing your document (instructions at the end of this discussion).

*iThenticate* is a character matching program that compares your document to an enormous database of previously published papers, dissertations, symposia, and webpages. It has no native intelligence and it cannot discover plagiarism. It simply matches overlaps with other published work. Some of these matches are useful, and suggest that the text is more or less a direct quote of a written work, and therefore requires either quotation marks, or word changes to make the passage into a paraphrase. These passages will also need a citation to indicate the source of that quote or idea.

Many matches are *not of concern*, and these highlighted texts are either common phrases, embedded references, parts of previously published tables, or commonly used figure labels. These are considered *trivial* matches and are likely acceptable. Please see below for several examples of overlaps *not of concern*:

- Bibliography/Literature Cited sections (*iThenticate* can be set to eliminate the “Bibliography” but this doesn’t always work)
- Standard forms (e.g., IRB approval forms)
- Common headings for tables
- Embedded citations (e.g., Smith et al, 2000)
- Terms of art or common phrases in the field
- Quoted sections with citations (*iThenticate* may miss your quotes)

If *iThenticate* highlights something that matches prior work in a *significant* way, please address it by substantially rewording (paraphrasing) or placing quotation marks around a sentence or section that you would like to retain in its original, with the appropriate reference. Make sure there is a citation associated with this section!

That said, there are only a few remaining issues you'll need to address, to make your thesis conform to the Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA) standards for citation. In general you'll see highlights in the text of the report that begin with a numbered flag. These are areas of
overlap with works that are cited at the end of the document. These may not be the original sources from which the text was referenced, but they are sufficient to make the point. In some cases, the cited reference may actually be citing your previously published original work but is found more recently in another author's document. If this occurs within a chapter that you have indicated is your previously published work, you need not include the secondary reference.

When you are finished correcting the citations, please recheck that all references in the text appear in your bibliography, and that all references in the bibliography appear within the body of your thesis.

A Common Problem: In general, the vast majority of problems concerning citations fall in the category of "even though you've cited the original source, your phrasing is more or less exactly what the original author used." As a result, you need to put quotes around the highlighted text, make it a block quote, or change the passage to be more of a paraphrase and less of a direct quote.

In cases where you've changed particular words in the midst of a larger quote then: "this is my large quote about something [but here I changed something] and the reader can now tell what the author said precisely, and what you changed when you incorporated it into the manuscript." Got it? Quote the whole passage if you want, and if you only changed a word or two, put these between brackets - [ xxxxxx ] - to notify the reader that the words aren't precisely the same as the original. The following link is to an online writing resource that deals with many issues/questions you might have about citations: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/577/01/

Block Quotes: If the quote is long, bring the margins in. If you're formatting your dissertation or thesis in APA style, maintain double spacing, https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/03/. If you are using the Chicago Manual of Style (Modern Language Association uses this), bring the margins in and use single line spacing https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/02/, rather than the double spacing of your normal text, as a signal as to what's up.

If you don't want to do that, then just paraphrase the statement (the word similarity should be less than 50%). However, given the typical time constraints of a student eager to graduate, quoting directly will be far less work.

For more details, check out the Purdue University website on this topic: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/.

Scientific Theses and Dissertations

Frequently, students in the STEM fields will include descriptions of devices or methods that are commonly used by their laboratories or research groups and have been previously published. If you cannot paraphrase these statements (with citation), please place them in quotation marks and include the appropriate citation.

A Few Notes on Previously Published Work

For all students using their published work in a thesis or dissertation:

If the entire document is reprinted: Students must follow the rules of their department and committee as well as the rules of the publisher who holds the copyright for that work. This will typically include:

- An acknowledgement of the previous publication and the journal in a written statement in the text (e.g. under the Chapter Title) (follow publisher’s format),
Chapter Three: Evaluation of Slit Protein Expression

AND

b. Either written permission from the publisher or a statement from the journal’s/publisher’s website outlining their policies in an appendix of the thesis or dissertation.

If figures, tables, images, etc are reprinted: Rules of the publisher must be followed as above (each table, figure should include required citation as mandated by publisher) with written permission or journal’s policies included in an appendix of the thesis or dissertation.

When the student is an author of a multiple author manuscript and wants to include that manuscript in their thesis or dissertation:

a. All the above rules should be followed AND a description of the student’s contribution to the published work should be included.

b. Many publications are collaborative, for this reason and because students many times have a mixture of first author and middle author manuscripts as well as unpublished work, one convenient way to make clear a particular individual’s contribution is to include a statement following the Acknowledgements and prior to the Table of Contents entitled “Contribution of Authors.”

A hypothetical example is shown below:

Contribution of Authors

Chapter 1 is a literature review that places my dissertation question in the context of the larger field and highlights the significance of my research question. Chapter 2 represents a published manuscript (include complete citation) for which I was the primary author and major driver of the research. Susan Smith assisted me in the experiments shown in Figures 5 and 6. My research mentor, Dr. John Johnson contributed to the writing of the manuscript. Chapter 3 represents a published manuscript (include complete citation) for which I was the second author. I generated Figures 4, 7, 8 (3 of 7) and played a large role in the writing of the manuscript along with the first author Susan Smith and my research mentor, Dr. John Johnson. My work was critical to the conclusions of this manuscript because (fill in). Chapter 4 represents a series of my own unpublished experiments directed at answering the question (fill in). I anticipate that this line of research will be continued in the laboratory after I leave and that this work will ultimately be published as part of a co-authored manuscript. In Chapter 5 represents my synthesis of the research presented in this thesis/dissertation and my overarching conclusions. The future directions of this field and this research question are discussed.