Q. What is a similarity score?
The similarity score indicates the percentage of material in your assessment that can be found in other sources. It will pick up things like:
The Cover Page
The Assessment Question (because other students have used it too)
Correctly referenced quotes
Incorrectly referenced quotes
Any string of words that also appear in other assessments, textbooks or online documents
Common phrases
Authors’ names
Titles of books
Bibliographies or Reference Lists

You can see for the above list that it picks up things that are not relevant to referencing. Turnitin is only an electronic tool and human judgement is needed when you view your Originality Report. For example, your similarity score may be 18% but when you review your report and subtract the 1% for the essay question, 4 or 5% for common phrases and book titles, 5% for the reference list, for example, the similarity score that is relevant to referencing may be quite small. After you have taken this irrelevant material into account you should make sure that the relevant material is referenced properly so that you cannot be accused of plagiarism. 0% of your assessment task should be plagiarised, that is, none of your assessment should be copied material that is not referenced.

Q. Do I need to look at the Originality Report?
Turnitin does not make a judgement as to what is referenced properly, it simply highlights the non-original material in a piece of work.

You should use the similarity score as a guide only and must then look at the Originality Report to determine whether or not changes need to be made to the assessment. You may have forgotten to reference a quote, or you may need to consider your paraphrasing.

Q. If Turnitin says that text in my assessment is found in other sources; does that mean I have plagiarised?
Not necessarily. The similarity report does not detect plagiarism. It merely indicates sections of text that are found in other sources. For example, it will detect similarity if you have quoted another author in your assessment, whether the reference is appropriately acknowledged or not. When the Originality Report is returned you are able to check your referencing and to rewrite sections, if required, before submitting for marking.

High similarity scores do not necessarily constitute plagiarism, but would indicate that you should go back and work on the assessment to address the problems identified and improve the quality of the paper.

It is important to understand that Turnitin does not make a decision on what is plagiarised material and what is not. It only measures similarity between the submitted text and other texts.
Q. What does my teacher see?
Your teacher sees the same Originality Report as you see. Your teacher can see what percentage of material is made up by your cover sheet or bibliography etc and will decide whether you meet the requirements. Your teacher views the Originality Report before marking your assessment.

Q. How does Turnitin work?
When students submit assessments electronically via eAccess, the assessment is automatically submitted to Turnitin. Turnitin will generate a similarity report. The similarity report indicates the level of similarity between the assessment and other documents on the Internet, academic databases, previous student assessments and assessments generated by ‘paper mills’.

Q. How many times can I submit a draft?
You can submit a draft multiple times prior to making the final submission for marking. After the first submission, a second submission can take up to 24 hours to process. Turnitin is a useful tool to help develop academic writing skills as it gives you early feedback on unacceptable levels of similarity.

Q. What happens to my paper after I have submitted it?
All papers submitted to Turnitin will be automatically text matched with web based documents and other submitted papers contained in Turnitin’s large databases. After this process has occurred, a digital copy of the assessment will be securely stored in the Turnitin database. Your assessment in its entirety cannot be viewed by anybody except the student and their teacher. Turnitin applies state of the art technology to protect student privacy and copyright, and complies with Australian and international privacy and copyright law.

Q. What happens if plagiarism is detected?
Remember, Turnitin doesn’t check for plagiarism. It only checks for text that is similar to text found elsewhere. This may be plagiarism, or it may not. If the assessment is showing a section or sections of text which appear in other documents the student will be able to view this prior to submitting the assessment for marking. This means that the student can check for plagiarism and, if required, amend the text.

After the assessment is submitted for marking, the teacher can examine the paper (and the Turnitin Report) and determine whether plagiarism has occurred. If the teacher detects plagiarism, they will discuss this with the Subject Coordinator. Generally, the plagiarism will be discussed with you and marks will be deducted.

Q. How does Turnitin help me?
The use of Turnitin will give an indication as to how much non original text is in an assessment so that students can re-write all or parts of their assessment to meet acceptable standards. It is also a valuable self-checking tool that will indicate citation omissions and will help referencing. Turnitin can help you raise the quality and integrity of your work.
Q. It’s taking Turnitin more than 30 minutes to process my work, is there an error?
The average processing time is usually under 30 minutes but occasionally, in periods of high demand Turnitin will take longer. Occasionally, Turnitin may take 24 hours to generate a report. It is important to leave yourself enough time for the Turnitin process to occur and for any subsequent amendments you may have to make to the assessment, prior to the assessment submission deadline. It is highly recommended that you submit your assessment through Turnitin a few days prior to the final submission deadline, in order to give yourself adequate time to amend the assessment, if required.

Tips
Submit your work early, at least a few days prior to the final assessment submission date, so that you have time to act on the report.