dents do not have the right—either in a legal or ethical sense—to prevent their instructors from performing evaluations of their work or from using their work to determine whether others have committed plagiarism. Turnitin is simply a powerful tool that teachers use to perform these increasingly vital parts of their evaluations.

Moreover, schools are not only entitled but obligated to award grades and degrees based on the student's work, rather than plagiarized work or the input of others. Because of the unfortunate prevalence of plagiarism in all academic settings and across the curriculum, schools are adopting Turnitin as the most reliable way to prevent awarding fraudulent grades and degrees.

**DIGITAL FINGERPRINTING**

Perhaps the most sensitive aspect of the Turnitin system for students is the digital fingerprinting process. We use a proprietary technology to fingerprint every paper submitted to us for comparison against future submissions. In this way, we can stop two of the most undetectable forms of student plagiarism: collusion and paper mills.

Collusion occurs when students submit...
papers from students in other classes or institutions, and paper mills are services that sell papers to students. One of Turnitin’s most valuable features is its ability to stop these trends—both of which have been running rampant in recent years because of the Internet—dead in their tracks.

The digital fingerprints made by our system of student papers are not true derivative works for copyright purposes; they contain only uncopyrightable numerical algorithms regarding student papers but not the papers themselves. Hence, the creation and storage of these fingerprints does not impinge on any of the rights held by the copyright owner.

**PRIVACY**

Student information and papers are protected digitally through industry-standard SSL encryption and physically through stringent security measures at Turnitin’s server facilities.

In addition, Turnitin’s use of student papers complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). A recent Supreme Court ruling, *Owasso Independent School District v. Falvo*, held that individual student papers do not fall under the category of “student education records” as described by FERPA, and their transmission to Turnitin is perfectly legal.

If you have any questions for Turnitin’s legal department, feel free to send an email to legal@iparadigms.com.

**COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT TURNITIN**

“Turnitin treats students like criminals. We’re guilty until proven innocent.”

Student papers are no more plagiarized (“guilty”) or original (“innocent”) before evaluation by our system than they are passing or failing before being given a grade. Our system doesn’t deliver guilty verdicts in any sense of the word. Instead, it generates Originality Reports that provide extensive documentation of any text matches from our databases. Trained faculty then make the determination if plagiarism has occurred. Honest students have nothing to worry about; more often than not, the system discovers only minor citation irregularities with papers. If a paper hasn’t been plagiarized, our system reads it the same way a teacher would—with fresh eyes.

“We don’t need Turnitin. We have an honor code and rules against plagiarism. That should take care of cheating.”

Unfortunately, the best available evidence strongly suggests that cheating at many academic institutions—including those with honor codes—has outpaced all conventional efforts to stop it. Thirty-eight percent of students admitted to cut-and-paste Internet plagiarism in the United States last year in a Center for Academic Integrity study. Clearly, academia is in the midst of a digital crisis that demands a digital solution.

“Turnitin is making money by stealing my intellectual property!”

Turnitin is a third-party contractor that performs a specific service for thousands of educational institutions, and it is entitled to make money from this service. Multiple highly respected law firms have concluded that Turnitin operates 100 percent within the intellectual property and privacy laws of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. Not one legal challenge to our service has emerged from the thousands of secondary schools, colleges, and universities who successfully use our service around the world every day. Schools need to understand that they have a right to use the best system available to weed out plagiarism and fairly grade student work.

“Turnitin makes students submit papers to them or the student gets an F.”

In one highly publicized Canadian case, a student refused to submit a paper to Turnitin and received a failing grade from his instructor. Unfortunately, most of the press surrounding the incident chose to ignore the actual legal arguments supporting our service and repeated the student’s complaint ad nauseam. The fact is that Turnitin operates within the letter of the law, and the student’s objections to our service do not change that. The student chose to violate a stated policy of his instructor and the institution, resulting in certain consequences.

“Turnitin is a violation of the law because the school is disclosing protected educational information to an outside party!”

A recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Owasso Independent School District v. Falvo*, has resolved this issue. The decision held that individual student papers do not fall under the category of “student education records” as described in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Furthermore, in all cases involving student information, Turnitin abides by a strict privacy policy that prevents disclosure to any outside party.