Using SafeAssign: Information for Students in the Connecticut Community College System

SafeAssign is free software tool is incorporated into the Blackboard Vista course management system. SafeAssign is used to identify possible instances of student plagiarism in submitted papers. This documentation provides students in our system with information about how the tool is used.

Please read and follow the instructions in this document carefully.

Contents
About SafeAssign .............................................................................................................................. 2
  SafeAssign Overview.................................................................................................................. 2
  How Safe Assign Works ......................................................................................................... 2
How to Submit a Paper for a SafeAssignment ............................................................................. 3
  Acceptable File Formats for Submitted Papers....................................................................... 3
If Your Instructor Enabled a Student View of Originality Reports ........................................... 4
About SafeAssign

Note: Some information in this section is from the Blackboard SafeAssign PowerLinks Instructor Manual © 2007, Blackboard, Inc.

SafeAssign Overview

SafeAssign compares submitted student papers against a set of academic papers to identify areas of overlap between the submitted assignment and existing works, and then generates an “originality report” which provides details about any matches found. SafeAssign can be used to prevent plagiarism and to create opportunities to help students identify how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrasing or (in some cases) using the exact words of another author without correct attribution. SafeAssign is effective as both a deterrent and an educational tool.

Your instructor can choose between two different methods of checking papers submitted by students for plagiarism.

- The instructor may set up “SafeAssignments”, which enable students to submit their papers directly into the SafeAssign system to be checked for originality.
- The instructor may use “Direct Submit,” with which instructors can submit student papers (one at a time, or in bulk) in order to check for originality, without students doing the submission on their own.

How Safe Assign Works

Plagiarism is the use, or use without proper citation, of someone else’s published work or unpublished material, either printed or electronic. It is not unusual for students to plagiarize inadvertently if they fail to distinguish between their own ideas and those of others, or simply fail to properly cite another person’s work. **It is important for both faculty and students to understand that a SafeAssign originality report does not distinguish between purposeful and accidental plagiarism.**

SafeAssign uses a unique text matching algorithm capable of detecting both exact and inexact matches in text between a submitted paper and source material in several different databases. SafeAssignments and papers submitted via Direct Submit will be compared against the following database sources:

- **Internet** – A comprehensive index of documents available for public access on the Internet;
- **ProQuest ABI/Inform database** - Contains over 1,100 publication titles and about 2.6 million articles from 1990s to present time, updated weekly (exclusive access);
- **Global Reference Database** - Contains papers that were volunteered by students from Blackboard client institutions to help prevent cross-institutional plagiarism. Blackboard’s Global Reference Database is a separate database where students voluntarily donate copies of their papers to help prevent plagiarism. Submissions to the Global Reference Database are extra copies that are given voluntarily for the purpose of helping with plagiarism prevention. Blackboard does not claim ownership of submitted papers.
  - Note: Faculty in the Connecticut Community College are being instructed to create SafeAssignments in such a way that students in our system will not be given the option of submitting their papers into the Global Reference Database. However, Connecticut Community College student papers will be compared
against those submitted from students at other institutions that are in SafeAssign’s Global Reference Database.

Note:
At most institutions that use SafeAssign, student papers would also be checked against what is referred to as an “Institutional Database”, which is a document archive containing all papers submitted to SafeAssign by users in within a specific institution. However, faculty in the Connecticut Community College system are instructed to use SafeAssign in such a way that student papers from within our system will not be submitted into our system’s institutional database, so this particular archive will not be relevant.

How to Submit a Paper for a SafeAssignment

Acceptable File Formats for Submitted Papers
- Microsoft Word (.doc and .docx)
- Rich Text (rtf)
- Text (txt)
- OpenOffice (odt)
- Portable Document Format (pdf)
- HTML (.html, .htm)

From the course home page, you will see the SafeAssign tool link icon that your instructor created.

After selecting the icon, you will see the list of assignments that your instructor has created with SafeAssign.

Once you select an assignment, you will be brought to a page with important information to review.

You can use the Browse button to find and upload the paper you wish to submit from your own PC, which will be checked by SafeAssign.
Once the you have browsed to the location of the file to be uploaded, you have the option of entering a comment for your instructor.

You can then click the **Submit** button.

A confirmation of submission will display.

The review of the document in SafeAssign usually will take a several minutes.

Once the paper has been graded by your instructor, you will see your grade displayed in the “Submitted Papers” section.

If your instructor uses the Grade Book, you will also see your grade in the **MyGrades** tool.

### If Your Instructor Enabled a Student View of Originality Reports

Once a paper has been processed, an *originality report* is generated, which details the percentage of the paper that matches existing sources. The report also shows the suspected sources of each section of the submitted paper that returns a match. Mousing over the text that’s highlighted in the originality report, or clicking on it, will display the matching text from the *original* source (which may be in a SafeAssign database or on the Internet.)

Each paper submitted to SafeAssign has its own unique ID. On the originality report, 0% is no matches and 100% indicates that the whole paper is a match. **Keep in mind that SafeAssign identifies all matching blocks of text, so instructors must look at the details of the text that was found to be matching, and check the original paper’s citations and attributions.**

**Note:** Students will only see an originality report for the SafeAssignment if the instructor enabled this property when the SafeAssignment was created.

When the paper has been evaluated it will come back with a green check mark in the SA Report column in the “Submitted Papers” section.
Clicking the green check mark will bring up the SafeAssign originality report for review.

In the example at right, you can see that there was a “matching index” of 55% of some of the text in this paper, and the suspect source is “another student’s paper”. (This could mean, for example, that a match was found in SafeAssign’s global reference database of papers that students at other institutions have submitted for comparison purposes.)

Clicking on a suspected source link will open the full corresponding source paper in a new window.

The numbers shown in “Suspected Sources” match the numbers shown below in the “Paper Text” section. Highlighted text indicates the portions of the submitted paper that match the source.

Clicking on any matching sentence in the paper and a “source comparison” window will display the URL of the matching source document, the percentage of similarity, as well as a direct comparison with the text within that sentence in the submitted paper.