

Time Required

An overwhelming majority of instructors report that using SafeAssign requires far less time than they anticipated and that the time required rarely exceeded time they would have spent using other means of detecting plagiarism, such as searching the Web.

Recommendations

- Consider SafeAssign as a teaching tool rather than a deterrent or surveillance device. The tool can give students a chance to sharpen their understanding of responsible writing when they use, quote, cite, or paraphrase sources.
- Hold some office hours near a computer. Space is available to you in CASA. Call 481-5419 to make arrangements.
- Check reports regularly.
- When appropriate, have students use SafeAssign at the draft stage of writing and allow them to revise in light of their originality reports.
- When confronted with a case of plagiarism and before you meet face-to-face with the student: reread the *Code of Student Ethics*; print all documents; and contact your chair, course coordinator, or Dean of Students.

Information for Your Students

Help Guides on how to use SafeAssign are available at:

<http://elearning.ipfw.edu/documentation/faculty/SafeAssign.pdf>

Template for Including SafeAssign on Your Syllabus

You may use the following text in your syllabus or revise to suit your class needs.

In this course, we will be using the SafeAssign software as a tool for learning how to write and use sources responsibly. SafeAssign is useful in helping to determine whether or not a writer is relying too heavily upon sources. To read more about SafeAssign, go to its web site: <http://www.mydropbox.com/>

We will have a demonstration of the software in class as well as exercises based on SafeAssign reports. All essays must be submitted to SafeAssign at the draft stage. Individual assignment sheets will provide specific instructions.

Resources for Using SafeAssign

- Online documentation at: <http://elearning.ipfw.edu/documentation/faculty/SafeAssign.pdf>

How SafeAssign Works

Students (or instructors) submit electronic versions of essays to SafeAssign which, in turn, produces an “electronic report.” This report shows the writer and teacher the results of SafeAssign’s comparison of the essay to content on the Web, SafeAssign’s database of student writing, and some databases of common full-text journals. You will be given [in-class] instructions about how to use SafeAssign.

What This Process Requires of You, the Student

- 1) All assignments that you are required to submit to SafeAssign must be submitted by the date and time specified in the syllabus.
- 2) You may submit each assignment ONE time to SafeAssign. You will receive ONE report.
- 3) SafeAssign reports are considered part of the final grade of a paper. As with rough drafts, no final essay will be accepted without a record of its draft having been submitted to SafeAssign on time.
- 4) All rough and final drafts of papers are held to the University’s *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities* and to all relevant departmental policies on plagiarism.

Guide for Using SafeAssign

Plagiarism Detection Software to Enhance Teaching and Learning



Center for the Enhancement of
Learning and Teaching

Center for Academic Support and
Advancement

Information Technology Services

Fall 2009

What Is SafeAssign?

SafeAssign (<http://www.mydropbox.com/>) is a web-based plagiarism detection software owned by Blackboard to which IPFW has a subscription through Blackboard. It is used by most Blackboard institutions, including Purdue University. SafeAssign is a powerful means to teach students how to work with sources, and to raise awareness of paraphrasing and quoting skills.

How SafeAssign Works

Students or instructors submit electronic versions of essays to SafeAssign which, in turn, produces an “originality report.” This report shows the results of SafeAssign’s comparison of the essay to content on the Web, SafeAssign’s database of student writing, and some databases of common full-text journals.

Through SafeAssign’s settings, instructors have the flexibility to allow students to self-submit and view the report, which aids in the development of stronger writing skills.

Using SafeAssign in a Course

Using SafeAssign effectively requires some advance preparation and planning on the part of the instructor and is least successful when used surreptitiously for surveying students’ work.

Before the Semester Begins:

- Reacquaint yourself with the IPFW *Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct* section on student academic misconduct and plagiarism in the bulletin or student handbook. Online see: www.ipfw.edu/senate/STU_CODE.HTM.
- Determine if you will be using SafeAssign through Blackboard.

- Familiarize yourself with the SafeAssign tool and plan how you will use it to support teaching and learning.
- Attend a workshop or individual consultation at CELT or ITS Client Support. Either unit can help you get started.
- Test SafeAssign with materials from your discipline – see what it does with sample work from previous classes, your own paragraph, or text from a common web resource.

Incorporating SafeAssign into Your Syllabus

Incorporate SafeAssign into your assignment and assessment parameters so that using this tool becomes part of the routine of submitting written work. Determine policies about late submissions and include these in the syllabus as well (for example, a paper handed in during class but not uploaded to SafeAssign may be considered late).

Caveats for Instructors Interested in This Tool

SafeAssign does not distinguish between direct quotations and text lifted from a source; students who are quoting correctly will likely have reports that indicate overlap with these sources. The reports are easy to read because these instances are easily noted.

Conversely, SafeAssign does not catch essays that include plagiarized ideas or concepts, nor can it detect uncited paraphrasing that dramatically changes the wording of an original source while maintaining that source’s organization and/or sentence structure.

The implications of originality reports are not always self-evident. Teachers need to discuss the interpretation of these reports with students and allow students an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the tool.

Classroom Practice Recommendations

To introduce SafeAssign, develop a writing assignment that allows students to practice with little or no risk to their grade. If you take this option, ask students to produce and submit something original, rather than having all students submit writing based on a common text. Asking students to work with the same source material may result in overlaps that SafeAssign cannot accommodate easily; in this case, students’ originality reports become more complex with each subsequent submission. Consequently, students who submit last will have to deal with reports that are unwieldy if not inaccurate.

Lead students in a brief (15-minute) in-class discussion about SafeAssign’s results, so that they have a chance to ask questions. CELT can provide samples of SafeAssign originality reports for use in a classroom discussion.

Include information about SafeAssign in your syllabus. You may use the copyright-free templates at the end of this pamphlet or revise them to suit your needs.

Effects on Your Classroom

Instructors use many tools – Google.com searches, for example – to detect plagiarism; SafeAssign is one among many such resources. Nonetheless, teachers worry that using SafeAssign will have a chilling effect on teacher-student relations. Those using the tool report that it does not impede this relationship, but they strongly recommend that all instructors clearly introduce students to SafeAssign and answer any questions they may have before students are required to use the tool.

In summary, discuss SafeAssign with your students, explain your rationale for using it, and set their expectations for its use in class.