



## Blackboard 9.1 - Focus on Feature: SafeAssignment Tool

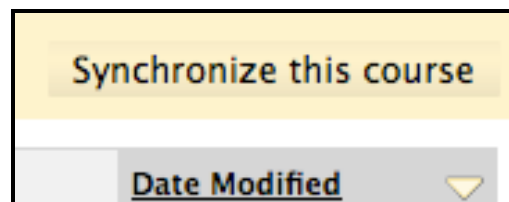
### What is the SafeAssignment Tool?

The Safe Assignment Tool is an advanced plagiarism prevention system deeply integrated with the Blackboard Learning Management System. SafeAssignment compares student papers submitted to Blackboard against a wide range of sources and provides instructors with detailed Originality Reports. Because of SafeAssignment's flexibility, its use is not limited to catching cheaters – this product is also an effective plagiarism prevention system that helps instructors to raise student awareness about plagiarism and to educate students about the ways to avoid plagiarizing.

**SafeAssignment** searches an enormously wide range of databases, covering virtually all potential sources of electronic plagiarism:

- The industry's most comprehensive index of the Internet (MSN Search Index provided by Microsoft Corporation and containing more than 8 billion documents updated monthly)
- All major publicly accessible digital databases, such as MedLine, PubMed, Project Gutenberg (over 12,000 books) etc.
- The FindArticles® database provided by LookSmart (over 5.5 million articles from over 900 periodical publications, updated daily)
- MyDropBox's proprietary index of promotional abstracts from pre-written papers available for a fee on paper-mill and custom research Web sites (over 150,000 term papers and essays). This database helps identify papers purchased from pre-written paper databases and turned in without substantial editing
- The entire family of ProQuest's ABI/Inform databases (over 1,100 publication titles, about 2.7 million articles from 1971 to present, updated weekly)
- All previously submitted papers within the same institution (to avoid student privacy issues, SafeAssignment does not maintain single cross-institutional database).

**Note:** in courses that have been copied over, the additional step of synchronizing must be taken in order to activate SafeAssignment in the new course. In Control Panel/Course Tools/SafeAssign area, click at the upper right of the screen – “Synchronize this course.” A message will advise that the course is being synchronized.





## **Creating SafeAssignments**

A SafeAssignment can be assigned from within the desired Content Area and the results can be viewed from the Grade Center or from the Control Panel/Course Tools/SafeAssign area. Or an individual paper can be independently submitted to SafeAssign for analysis from the Control Panel/Course Tools/Safe Assign/DirectSubmit area and the results can be viewed directly in that area. Safe Assignments can be created as a SafeAssignment to be submitted by the student finally or as a draft.

To create a SafeAssignment:

1. Enter your Blackboard course and navigate to the Content Area desired.
2. Click on Create Assessment at the top of the screen.
3. Click on Safe Assignment. A column will be entered into the Grade Center.
4. In the Add Safe Assignment screen, enter information requested: (Name and Points Possible are required; see Explanation of Options below.) Click Submit.
5. The new Safe Assignment will be added at the bottom of the items listed in the Content Area.

Explanation of Options:

### **Points Possible**

The value you enter in the Points Possible field sets the highest possible grade for the Assignment. This value is automatically passed to the Blackboard Grade Center.

### **Instructions**

Type the guidelines for completing the assignment in the "Instructions" text box.

### **Available, Availability Dates**

This set of options lets you specify whether the Safe Assignment should be available for submission immediately and/or set the start and due dates. Note that SafeAssignment accepts papers submitted after the due date (an ending date is not mandatory), but late papers will be easy to identify because of the submission timestamp attached to every submitted paper and every originality report.

### **Draft**

You can let students submit drafts of their papers by turning the Draft option on. Papers submitted to Draft Assignments are not sent to your institution's search database and would not be taken into consideration as potential plagiarism sources for papers submitted to any other assignments. This setting prevents matching of drafts to final versions of the same papers and allows instructors to create "sandboxes" where students can do self-checks to see if all of the borrowed materials in their papers are properly referenced.

### **Urgent Checking**

This is a paper processing priority setting that lets instructors specify if the papers submitted to the Assignment should be processed urgently or not. Responsible use of this urgency flag will let us ensure processing time of 5 to 15 minutes for urgent assignments and 15 to 90 minutes for non-urgent ones. The actual time may vary depending on the paper size, the number of matching sources found and other factors.

### **Student Viewable**



The Student Viewable option lets you specify whether your students should be able to view SafeAssignment reports on their papers submitted to this Assignment. Selecting this option will not let students see reports or papers of other students in the same course.

### **Announcement**

You can optionally create an announcement about the Safe Assignment you registered. However, once the Safe Assignment is created, you cannot go back and edit to create an announcement.

To DirectSubmit a paper for analysis:

1. Go to the Control Panel/Course Tools/ SafeAssign/DirectSubmit. The screen for “Private Direct Submit” will display. The Submission Options include submitting as a draft and Skip Plagiarism Checking (which only adds papers to the Institutional Search Database).
2. Upload the File (**or** Copy/Paste Document) and Submit. The file will be listed in the Private Direct Submit list with the results.

### **Using DirectSubmit**

You can submit papers for processing directly from your instructor account using the DirectSubmit feature. The DirectSubmit functionality allows you quickly to check a suspicious student paper or a batch of papers packed into a .ZIP file for plagiarism without having to create assignments. It also allows organizing submissions into folders for greater convenience. Please note the following features and limitations of the DirectSubmit functionality:

1. DirectSubmit is recommended for use only when it is impossible or inconvenient to organize submission of papers to SafeAssignment by students. One example of a scenario when this tool can be used is when you have already collected papers from students via email or any other paper submission interface, and now need to generate originality reports on those papers.
2. It is not recommended to upload more than 100 papers in one batch and more than 300 papers in one session. Please also note that papers larger than 10 Mbytes or 5000 sentences of text are automatically rejected.
3. Deleting papers from DirectSubmit is **not recommended** as it will remove the papers from the internal comparison database, making future comparison to these papers impossible.
4. Papers submitted via DirectSubmit are not tied to student profiles and do not appear in the Grade Center.
5. All batch uploads are considered less urgent than single-paper uploads and have the lowest processing priority. Therefore, you can experience slower turnaround times for batch uploads as compared to individual paper submissions made by students.
6. **(For Safari users only)** There is a known issue with Safari browser for Mac. The default behavior for Safari is to only accept cookies from sites that you are currently viewing. In order for SafeAssignment to display reports, this setting should be changed to accept cookies always.



More DirectSubmit options are explained:

- **Submit as draft**  
Check this option if you don't want the paper(s) you are submitting to be added to your institution's search database and only need to generate originality reports for them. Papers submitted within your institution in future will not be matched against documents submitted as drafts.
- **Skip Plagiarism Checking**  
Check this option if you only want to add the documents being submitted to your institution's search database, so that all future papers are compared against them. SafeAssignment will not generate originality reports for papers submitted with this option turned on.

### Viewing SafeAssignments

There are two basic ways to view submitted SafeAssignments: from the Control Panel/Course Tools/SafeAssign and from the Grade Center/Attempt areas.

From the Control Panel/Course Tools/SafeAssignments:

1. In the Control Panel of the course, click on the Course Tools link. Click on the Safe Assignments link. Click on the dropdown chevrons in the Name column and select View Submissions.
2. In the Grade Center, click on the dropdown chevrons in the grade cell and select Attempt. A table displays listing all students in the course with links to all submitted papers and originality reports on these papers. This information also displays under Student's Work in the Grade Center

The screenshot shows a web interface for viewing submissions. At the top, there is a yellow bar with the text "Download All Submissions". Below this is a "Clear Checked Attempts" button. The main part of the interface is a table with the following columns: Student ID, Name, Text, File, Matching, SA Report, and Submitted. The table contains several rows of data, with some student names redacted with black bars. One row shows a submission with a 22% matching score and a green checkmark in the SA Report column. At the bottom of the table, there is another "Clear Checked Attempts" button and a footer that says "Displaying 1 to 4 of 4 items" with "Show All" and "Edit Paging..." buttons.

Student ID	Name	Text	File	Matching	SA Report	Submitted
	[Redacted]	[Icon]	[Icon]	[Icon]	[Icon]	[Icon]
	[Redacted]	[Icon]	[Icon]	[Icon]	[Icon]	[Icon]
	[Redacted]	[Icon]	[Icon]	22%	[Green Checkmark]	Wed, Mar 09, 2011, 03:03 PM
	[Redacted]	[Icon]	[Icon]	[Icon]	[Icon]	[Icon]

- Use Download All Submissions to save submissions.
- Click on the **Text** icon to view the text of the corresponding paper along with student's comments in a separate browser window.
- Click on the **File** heading to download the SafeAssignment document.
- The percentage in the **Matching** column should be interpreted as the percentage of paper matching other documents. For more information on this please see the



Interpreting Scores section of this manual. \* Please note that Matching and SA Report columns appear blank for papers that have not been processed yet.

- Click on the SA Report to view the report. For more information on originality reports please see the SafeAssignment Report section of this manual.

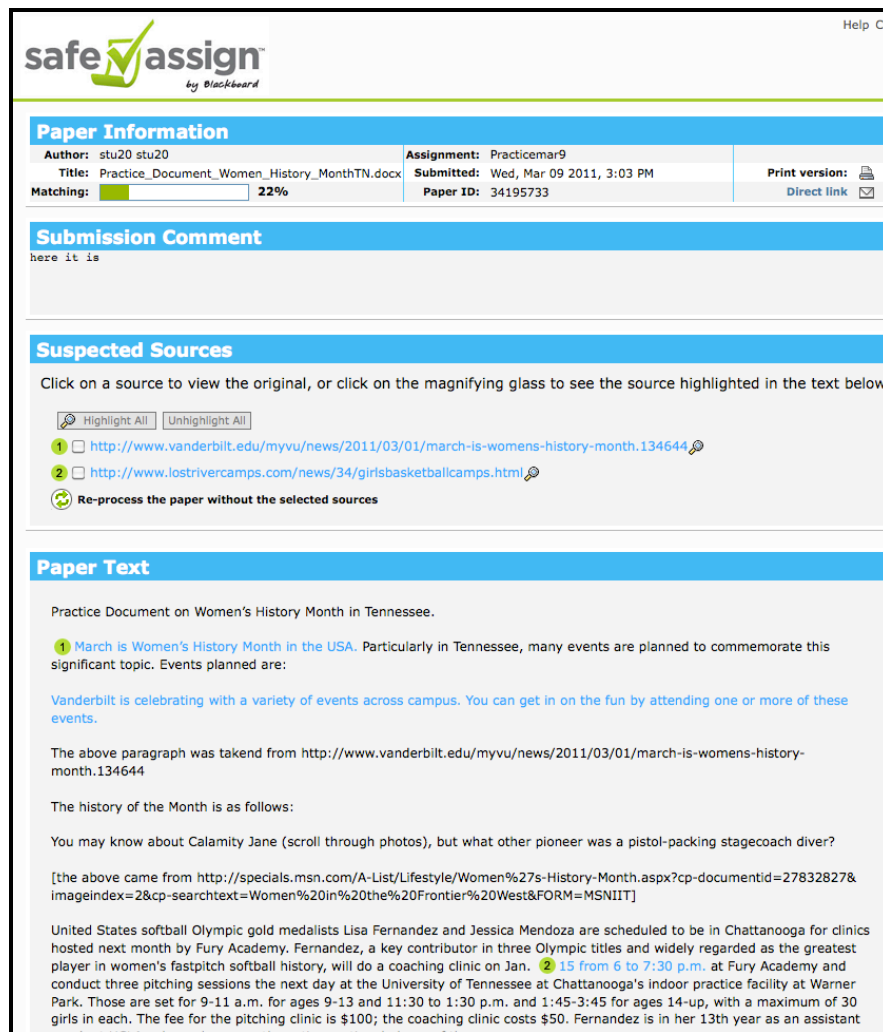
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- Use the **Clear Checked Attempts** button to delete a particular paper and give the corresponding student another chance to complete the assignment. Note that the primary use of this button is to delete papers that were uploaded by mistake (e.g. wrong file) – there is no need to delete properly uploaded papers. The Clear Checked Attempts button permanently removes the corresponding paper from your institutional database, making future comparison with this paper impossible.

From the Grade Center/Attempt:

- In the Control Panel, click the Grade Center.
- An exclamation mark (!) will be present in the SafeAssignment cell for each student who has submitted a new paper to the corresponding assignment or a grade for each paper that has already been graded.
- Click on any exclamation mark or grade to see the Modify Grade page for the corresponding SafeAssignment.
- On the Modify Grade page, you can access the paper submitted by the student and the originality report on it, as well as see the matching score and the submission timestamp. This is the same information that is displayed when accessing the SafeAssignment from the Control Panel/Course Tools/SafeAssign area.
- To grade the paper, enter the point value into the Grade field and click on the Submit button.
- You can also include your Comments and attach your Feedback File for the student to see in his/her "My Grades" page in the Tools area of the course.

## Interpreting the Report



The screenshot shows a SafeAssign report page with the following sections:

- Paper Information:** A table with fields for Author (stu20 stu20), Title (Practice\_Document\_Women\_History\_MonthTN.docx), Matching (22%), Assignment (Practicemar9), Submitted (Wed, Mar 09 2011, 3:03 PM), Paper ID (34195733), Print version, and Direct link.
- Submission Comment:** A text area containing the comment "here it is".
- Suspected Sources:** A section with a "Click on a source to view the original..." instruction, "Highlight All" and "Unhighlight All" buttons, and a list of two sources with magnifying glass icons. A "Re-process the paper without the selected sources" button is also present.
- Paper Text:** The main body of the report, showing the original text with highlighted matches and corresponding source links.

The SafeAssign report page consists of four main sections, with an option to print:

- Paper Information – this header section contains information about the author of the paper, assignment and Paper ID#, submission timestamp, matching score (the percentage listed in the table) and icons for several accessory functions.
- Submission Comment – student comments
- Suspected Sources – a clickable list of matching sources and links to the source documents; note the magnifying glass icon which when clicked highlights the occurrence in the text in the Paper Text section. The paper can be re-processed without the selected sources. When the highlighted sentence is clicked, the URL and percentage of matching is displayed.



- Paper Text - the main report window that shows the paper text
- Print version – shows a page with a printer-friendly black-and-white version of the report.

*Note: Please keep in mind that SafeAssignment identifies all matching blocks of text, and it is a responsibility of instructors and students to investigate whether matching text is properly referenced or not (i.e. plagiarized). This behavior of the service is intentional, to prevent detection mistakes due to differences in citing styles and to prevent students from using "fake" quotations (e.g. quoting a non-existing book when the material was taken from a Web site or encyclopedia).*



## **Interpreting Scores**

### **A. Sentence Matching Scores:**

Sentence matching scores are the percentage probability that two sentences have the same meaning. This number can also be interpreted as the reciprocal to the probability that these two sentences are similar by chance. For example, score of 90% means that there is 90% probability that these two sentences are the same, and about 10% probability that they are similar by chance (not because of copying). Quotations and references used correctly are included.

### **B. Document Overall Matching Score:**

The Overall Matching Score is an indicator of what percentage of the processed document is matching external sources. Note that this score should be treated as a warning indicator only. We strongly recommend reviewing all reports with high Overall Matching Scores. For analysis of matching scores, the following interpretation scale should be used:

1. **Scores below 15%** — usually papers with such scores contain some quotes and few "typical" phrases that match other documents. In most cases, they do not require any further analysis, and there is no evidence of plagiarism in such reports.
2. **Scores between 15% and 40%** — papers with such scores can contain plagiarism or just have very much quoted material. We usually recommend reviewing the reports with such scores before making any judgments about the papers.
3. **Scores over 40%** — with such scores, there is a very high probability that the paper contains some text copied from elsewhere, and, even if this text is properly cited, such amount of cited material is considered excessive in most cases. Therefore, such scores give a clear warning to instructors. However, there are few cases when scores over 40% can be given to legitimate papers, for example, when the paper or its part was published online before it was sent for processing (instructors have just to "Delete" the source pointing to the legitimate copy/source), or when the same student has already submitted this paper or a similar paper to another class (although it is not plagiarism, such practice is not allowed in some institutions.)

Adapted from Behind the Blackboard Knowledge Base:

<http://wiki.safeassign.com/display/SAFE/Interpret+Reports>

Additional Resources:

[http://www.vanderbilt.edu/oak/docs/Bb\\_91\\_SafeAssign\\_Instructor\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/oak/docs/Bb_91_SafeAssign_Instructor_Guide.pdf)