SafeAssign

SafeAssign is a text matching software package that is embedded into the Learnline environment at CDU. While other text checking software exists, SafeAssign’s integration into the CDU Learning Management System makes it easy for staff and students to use. SafeAssign can support staff to make an academic judgement on plagiarism. This is done by checking the text in a submitted assessment against exact and inexact text from a range of source material based on a unique text-matching algorithm. The source material checked by SafeAssign does not cover every possible source of text so SafeAssign should be used in conjunction with other approaches to detect forms of academic misconduct including plagiarism.

No text matching software is failsafe. Text matching software is only one tool to assist in identification and deterrence and will only ever catch some instances of plagiarism. A multi-pronged approach to support student academic integrity and to minimise instances of academic misconduct involves strategies for prevention (education and awareness), strengthening methods for detecting academic misconduct and investigation and deterrence. While SafeAssign is usually considered as a tool to assist in the detection of plagiarism it can also be used as an educative tool to build student awareness of academic writing skills in order to prevent academic misconduct.

### SAFE ASSIGN: WHAT SOURCE MATERIAL IS IT MATCHED AGAINST?

Texts put through SafeAssign are checked against the following sources for matching text:

- **Institutional document archives:** Contains all papers submitted to SafeAssign at CDU.
- **Global Reference Database:** CDU student submissions are checked against this data base of over 15 million papers volunteered by students from Blackboard client institutions to help prevent cross-institutional plagiarism. CDU student submissions are currently not added to this data base.
- **ProQuest ABI/Inform database:** More than 1,100 publication titles and about 2.6 million articles from the 1990s to present time, updated weekly.
- **Internet:** SafeAssign searches across the broader internet for matching text.

### OTHER APPROACHES TO DETECTING ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Academic staff members have the primary responsibility for monitoring the academic integrity of student work through the process of reviewing and marking student work. The following trigger questions might indicate academic misconduct and require further investigation:

- Is the work consistent with the student’s previous work in terms of writing style, fluency, depth of knowledge?
- Is the formatting, language or tone inconsistent, indicating possible cut and paste from multiple sources?
- Is the text, structure or ideas familiar based on your knowledge of the field, discipline and the literature and textbooks?
- Has the document been created by the student? Check file properties for the document author.

### TIPS FOR USING SAFE ASSIGN TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING

- Provide the option for draft submission of assessments through SafeAssign.
- Assist students to interpret SafeAssign Originality reports.
- Use SafeAssign Originality reports to educate students on academic writing and referencing skills.
- Use SafeAssign in conjunction with other approaches to detecting academic misconduct and plagiarism.
INTERPRETING A SAFE ASSIGN ORIGINALITY REPORT

When a paper is submitted into SafeAssign a text-matching algorithm analyses the submitted text and checks the key words and terms against multiple data sources. An originality report is then generated and has three sections:

1. **Report information**: the author, percent of matching text and word count;
2. **Citations**: sources that match the submitted paper’s text; and
3. **Manuscript text**: Blocks of text are colour coded specific to each source for up to 30 sources.

The overall SafeAssign score that is generated “indicates the probability that the submitted paper contains matches to existing sources. This score is a warning indicator only” (Blackboard 2016). It is essential that each originality report is reviewed individually, regardless of the percent of matching text indicated in the report. Text that is cited and correctly referenced is also picked up by text matching software so it is important to check if the text that is indicated as matching is properly attributed.

---

**INTERPRETING MATCHING SCORES IN A SAFE ASSIGN ORIGINALITY REPORT**

- **Scores below 15 percent**: These papers typically include some quotes and few common phrases or blocks of text that match other documents. Typically, these papers do not require further analysis as there is limited matching text.
- **Between 15 and 40 percent**: These papers include a larger proportion of quoted or paraphrased material. Review these papers to determine if the matching text is properly referenced.
- **Over 40 percent**: A substantial proportion of text matching exists in these papers. These papers include quoted or paraphrased text in excess, and need to be carefully reviewed.

Source: Adapted from Blackboard 2016

---

**DO:**

- Provide activities and instruction that support the development of academic literacies, including summarising and referencing.
- Reduce the incidence of academic misconduct by reviewing assessment design and assessment approaches (within the bounds of unit accreditation).
- Know what to do if you suspect academic misconduct: refer to the relevant policies, procedures and guidelines.

**DON’T:**

- Rely on SafeAssign as your only means of detection of plagiarism.

---

**REFERENCES AND RESOURCES**


OLOC. (nd) Checklist for Submitting Student Breaches of Academic Integrity via the Complaints Management System (unpublished)

