SafeAssign is a powerful tool that not only helps you detect unoriginal content in student papers but also helps you teach students how to use proper citation practices.

Before you begin using SafeAssign, you may have questions as to how to make best use of its capabilities. This document will share some ideas.

## Best Practices with SafeAssign

### Strategies for Using SafeAssign

Because the Internet has created so much confusion regarding copyright, intellectual property, and plagiarism you should consider using SafeAssign as a means of educating students about proper citation.

We recommend that instructors provide resources such as the following to better prepare students for writing assignments:

- A library guide explaining proper citation practices and formats
- A quiz regarding proper citation practices and formats

### Before Students Submit a SafeAssignment

Keep these things in mind as you plan for using SafeAssign:

- Make sure your students know you are using SafeAssign.
- Create a sample document that allows your students to see how Safe Assign marks up documents. Go over this with them, explaining what you will disregard, what you would consider allowable (correctable errors), and what would be treated as plagiarism.
- Incorporate any discussion of Safe Assign into a broader discussion of citing sources and intellectual property. Provide links to style guides and other materials on how to cite and quote materials.
- When focusing on creating good papers and avoiding plagiarism, consider using SafeAssign in tandem with a series of Self-Assessment questions to lead students through finding the kinds of errors that SafeAssign catches.
- Help students consider SafeAssign as a writing tool for their own use, similar to a spelling or grammar checker, before submitting the final draft of a paper.

### Using SafeAssign Reports with Your Students

Remember the following as you use SafeAssign with your students:

- Make sure the SafeAssign Originality Report to is viewable to students (select "Student Viewable" option when setting up SafeAssignment).
- Explain to students how to review the Originality Report.
- Also ensure that students understand that SafeAssign does not instantly generate a report; it may take several minutes or several hours to do so (depending on server load).

## Things to Be Aware of in the Report

Quotations will always be flagged as potential plagiarism in a SafeAssign report, even if a student has included the information within quotation marks and cited the sources properly.

## Working with Direct Submit

Because of FERPA, it is important that you remove all student personal information including student name, ID number prior to submitting papers with the SafeAssign Direct Submit tool.

## Naming Documents

It is highly recommended that students and instructors name documents submitted to SafeAssign using only alphanumeric characters, the period, the underscore, and the hyphen.

Using space/blank characters, quotation marks, diacritical marks, the pound sign, percent sign and any other special characters should be avoided when naming documents for SafeAssignments.

## Using a PDF File with SafeAssign

Students and instructors should keep in mind that how the PDF was created is important. If the PDF has been created directly from the computer, it will consist of text that SafeAssign can scan. If the PDF was created by putting the paper copy through a scanner, it will most likely consist of an image without text that SafeAssign can't scan.

## Sources of Misunderstanding with SafeAssign

There are four major things to watch for in evaluating SafeAssign Originality Reports.

1. The paper shows a matching score of 100%.

   *Cause:* If you have had students submit drafts of their papers but did not have "draft" mode turned on in the SafeAssignments, then the earlier version(s) of the paper will have been added to the database. Under these circumstances, all, or almost all, of the final version of the paper will appear to be plagiarized from the earlier drafts.

   *Solution:* These hits may be ignored or you may rerun the report without these sources.

2. When opening the SafeAssign Originality Report, the name of someone other than the student appears as the author.

   *Cause:* This is usually caused by a glitch in the way SafeAssign processes files submitted as .rtf (Rich Text Format). When Microsoft Word saves a file, it includes certain metadata, including the name of the person who installed or licensed the software. When this file is saved in .rtf format, SafeAssign is unable to recognize this as metadata, and so displays it as part of the file's text. Thus the individual who installed Word in the campus computing labs may show up as the "author" of the paper when it is opened.

   *Solution:* Ignore any lines in the body of a paper or report starting with "AUTHOR:" and inform students that they need to include their name at the beginning of the paper. Always look for the name

of the author in the "Paper Information" summary in the header of the document or report. You may also wish to suggest that they do not upload .rtf documents to SafeAssign.

3.  The student has used quotation marks where appropriate and/or cited the sources, but sources show up as being from a different source in SafeAssign.

    *Cause:* SafeAssign ignores quotation marks and block quotations. Likewise, it is insufficiently intelligent to know that a citation refers to a given block of text. It therefore will flag any text in a document that it can match with text from the Internet, the ProQuest ABI/Inform database, or its own databases.

    *Solution:* These flags may be ignored or you may rerun the report without these sources.

4.  Many or most of the citations show up as matching other sources.

    *Cause:* The titles of most articles or books will match some source on the net, such as Google Scholar or Amazon.

    *Solution:* These flags may be ignored or you may rerun the report without these sources.