

Materials linked from the February 14, 2013 Faculty Senate Agenda.

Plagiarism Prevention FAQ's



Provided by Technology Across the Curriculum (TAC)

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Plagiarism Prevention FAQ's

What is happening? Technology Across the Curriculum and the Office of Student Conduct are working together on an OSU-wide academic integrity training and support initiative for students and instructors. The initiative is designed to give students and instructors consistent, accessible information and tools for encouraging academic integrity and preventing plagiarism at OSU.

Educating students about proper citation of sources as well as about plagiarism and how to identify and avoid it are important elements of academic integrity. Blackboard's plagiarism prevention service, SafeAssign, will be implemented as one part of the campus-wide academic integrity initiative.

When will this all start? Academic integrity webinars and other training material will be available in late Winter term 2013. SafeAssign will be enabled in Blackboard in Week 9 of Winter 2013.

What is SafeAssign? SafeAssign is a plagiarism prevention service in Blackboard that detects unoriginal content in student papers. In addition to acting as a plagiarism deterrent, it also has features designed to help educate students about plagiarism and the importance of proper attribution of sources.

How does SafeAssign work? Instructors can set up SafeAssignments in their Blackboard courses; students submit papers to these assignments, very similar to using the Assignment tool in Blackboard. Use of SafeAssign is entirely optional.

What is the matching process? When students submit SafeAssignments, they are checked against SafeAssign's databases of source material:

- Internet - comprehensive index of documents available for public access on the Internet
- ProQuest ABI/Inform database with over 1,100 publication titles and about 2.6 million articles from '90s to present time, updated weekly (exclusive access)
- Institutional database hosted here at OSU, which contains all papers submitted to SafeAssign by OSU users
- Global Reference Database containing papers that were volunteered by students from Blackboard client institutions to help prevent cross-institutional plagiarism.

The papers are then delivered to instructors in Blackboard together with originality reports, which display the results of the matching process.

Any material that has been drawn from another source (including correctly quoted and cited material) will be highlighted, with a link to where the material can be found.

Why are we implementing SafeAssign?

Many instructors at OSU have asked for a system or service to help them prevent plagiarism. The College of Business has been using a product called TurnItIn since Fall 2011, which has

been paid for with TRF funds. SafeAssign provides very similar functionality to TurnItIn at no additional cost to OSU, and is integrated with Blackboard.

Who authorized SafeAssign? Technology Across the Curriculum and the Blackboard Steering Committee conducted a thorough investigation and requested reviews of SafeAssign by Legal, Disability Access Services, the Registrar, and instructors from multiple colleges.

COB's use of TurnItIn in 30+ courses served as a valuable pilot to evaluate instructor and student experience of a plagiarism prevention service.

What is the impact on instructors? The impact on instructors will entail learning about SafeAssign and how it works; teaching students about your SafeAssignments; and interpreting originality reports in students' SafeAssignments.

It's important to note that SafeAssign on its own is not a fool-proof or even desirable way to address plagiarism. SafeAssign is one tool that can be used with multiple strategies to educate students about academic integrity and the proper use of source material.

What is the impact on students? The SafeAssign tool is not complicated, so there is little if any learning curve in uploading documents. But students will need training and guidance on interpreting originality reports for draft documents they submit.

The impact of SafeAssign for students depends greatly on how the instructor sets the context for academic integrity, and how it relates to the course's learning objectives.

Must all papers be checked for plagiarism? No. SafeAssign is entirely optional for all instructors. SafeAssignments are only visible to students if an instructor creates one in a course site.

Instructors may submit a student paper for originality checking even if they do not have a SafeAssignment in their course site. Students can submit their own papers in a draft mode and receive their own reports, if that option is made available by the instructor.

Will student names or personal information be visible? Student names are only visible to instructors in the course site in which the papers were submitted. The one exception is if students include names in the body of the document; instructors should inform students not to put their names in the body of the file.

What kind of training and support will be available to students and instructors?

Technology Across the Curriculum's webinars provide live, interactive training and discussion as well as pedagogical models for understanding what is and is not plagiarism, creating assignments, and improving writing.

TAC is also partnering with the Office of Student Conduct and OSU Libraries to create on-demand tutorials and user guides that can be shared and displayed in course sites. The training material will be reviewed by several stakeholders, including the Writing Center, Writing Intensive Curriculum, members of the English Department and Writing programs, ASOSU, INTO, and Legal.