

Use SafeAssign in Assignments

SafeAssign is now integrated into regular Blackboard Learn assignments. With the integration between SafeAssign and regular assignments, almost all of the regular assignment features are available with the SafeAssign service.

Use SafeAssign to review assignment submissions for plagiarism potential and create opportunities to help students identify how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase. SafeAssign is effective as both a deterrent and an educational tool.

SafeAssign compares submitted assignments against a set of academic papers to identify areas of overlap between the submitted assignment and existing works.

SafeAssign is based on a unique text matching algorithm capable of detecting exact and inexact matching between a paper and source material. Submissions are compared against several databases:

- **Internet:** Comprehensive index of documents available for public access on the internet.
- **ProQuest ABI/Inform database:** More than 1,100 publication titles and about 2.6 million articles from 1990 to present time, updated weekly (exclusive access).
- **Institutional document archives:** Contains all papers submitted to SafeAssign by users in their respective institutions.
- **Global Reference Database:** Contains papers that were volunteered by students from Blackboard client institutions to help prevent cross-institution plagiarism.

Watch a Tutorial

Double-click the video to enlarge the viewing area.

How to Use SafeAssign in Your Assignments

You can now use SafeAssign plagiarism checking for any of your assignments.

1. On the **Create Assignment** page, expand **Submission Details**.
2. Select **Check submissions for plagiarism using SafeAssign**.
3. Optionally, select one or both options:
 - a. Allow students to view the SafeAssign originality reports on their submissions.
 - b. Exclude all student submissions for this assignment from the institutional or global reference databases.
4. Complete the **Create Assignment** page.

5. Click **Submit**.

"Exclude Submissions" Option

Today, both SafeAssignments (in pre-April 2014 Release Learn builds) and Learn Assignments with SafeAssign enabled (in April 2014 Release Learn builds and beyond) support features that call themselves "draft." In making the transition from SafeAssignments to Learn Assignments, SafeAssign needed to be able to support the Learn Assignment Draft feature while still providing functionality that supports the SafeAssignment Draft use case. For perspective, here's the difference between the two features:

SafeAssignments set to Draft (pre-April 2014 Release functionality) – The intent of a SafeAssignment set to "draft" is to have students submit papers for checking against SafeAssign sources, but not include the student papers in the Institutional Database. This way when a student re-submits a (presumably) revised version of the paper, SafeAssign does not flag the paper as matching against the previous "draft" submission. Students may only submit once to any SafeAssignment (including those set to "draft"); if a student wishes to re-submit, the instructor must clear the previous submission first (this is one of the constant complaints about SafeAssignments that is being alleviated by Learn Assignment integration). The other point to note is that the instructor and the student both have access to Originality Reports created for submissions to "draft" SafeAssignments.

Learn Assignment Drafts – The intent of a draft submission on a Learn Assignment is to allow the student to save their work prior to full submission, e.g. "I ran out of time, I'll save this for later and come back to it." Instructors are not able to see saved drafts on Learn Assignments at any time, and do not have visibility into the draft history once an assignment is submitted; saved drafts are entirely student-facing.

The April 2014 Release (and beyond) and SafeAssign integration with Learn Assignments supports multiple attempts by not checking attempts from a specific student to a specific assignment against previous attempts from the same student to the same assignment. This fulfill the use case of preventing matches from the same student and paper from appearing in Originality Reports.

Unfortunately, that is not the entire story. Users who are accustomed to the SafeAssignment Draft ability to allow students to essentially "check their work" against SafeAssign prior to submitting a final version need to be aware of the change in terminology and settings; while the Learn Assignment integration multiple-attempt logic covers part of that use case, it doesn't cover the case where students are submitting the same works to different assignments.

To support the second piece of the use case, the SafeAssign settings have an option to "Exclude Submissions" when creating the Learn Assignment. This option allows instructors to create Learn Assignments that do not include any student submissions in the Institutional or Global Reference Databases, fulfilling the required use case. Like other options on Learn Assignments, this option will be point-in-time and editable after assignment creation. If the option were changed at a later date, new submissions would honor the new state of the setting. An example use case:

An instructor would like a single Learn Assignment to allow non-final submissions, then a single "final" submission, and only the final submission should be included by SafeAssign in the Institutional database for reference against later submissions. This can be accomplished by:

1. Instructor creates a Learn Assignment with multiple attempts and enabling SafeAssign checking with the "exclude submissions" option initially turned on
2. Student submit their pre-final "draft" works, and submissions are not included in the Institutional or Global Databases
3. When the final submission is expected, the instructor unselects the "exclude submissions" option
4. Students submit their final works, and submissions are then included in the Institutional or Global Databases

Supported Files

SafeAssign only supports file types that are convertible to plain text. This includes the following file types: DOCX, DOC, PPT, PPTX, PDF, TXT, ODT, RTF, HTML, and HTM. Spreadsheet files are not supported.

SafeAssign also accepts ZIP files and processes files that match any of these file types.

SafeAssign counts and displays the total number of attachments in a submission, as well as the number of attachments processed by SafeAssign. SafeAssign only processes and creates originality reports for attachments that match the supported file types. For unsupported file types, the SafeAssign originality report omits a matching score.

SafeAssign Originality Reports

After a paper is processed, a report is generated detailing the percentage of text in the submitted paper that matches existing sources. The report shows the suspected sources for each section of the submitted paper that returns a match. You can delete matching sources from the report and process it again. This is useful if the paper is a continuation of a previously submitted work by the same student.

Read the report carefully and investigate whether each block of text is properly attributed.

To learn more, see [SafeAssign Originality Reports](#).

Global Reference Database

Blackboard's Global Reference Database is a separate database where students voluntarily donate copies of their papers to help prevent plagiarism. It is separated from each institution's internal database, where all papers are stored by each corresponding institution. Students are free to select the option to check their papers without submitting them to the Global Reference Database. Students submit their papers to the database voluntarily and agree not to delete papers in the future. Submissions to the Global Reference Database are extra copies that are given voluntarily for the purpose of helping with plagiarism prevention. Blackboard does not claim ownership of submitted papers.