WHAT IS SAFEASSIGN?

SafeAssign™ is a plagiarism prevention service, offered by Blackboard to its Blackboard Learning System Enterprise clients. This service helps educators prevent plagiarism by detecting unoriginal content in student papers. In addition to acting as a plagiarism deterrent, it can help educate students about plagiarism and the importance of the proper attribution of any borrowed or paraphrased content.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

SafeAssign can be used in several ways.

1) In all cases, it is of the utmost importance to "synchronize" the SafeAssign module (found in your Control Panel) frequently and before submitting material. This allows your plagiarism check to be matched with the largest amount of recently added content (Internet, other students' papers, databases, e-texts, et al.).

2) Instructors can set up **SafeAssignments** in their Blackboard courses and let students submit papers to these assignments, in a way very similar to the one provided currently by Blackboard Learning System. As students submit papers, they are checked against SafeAssign's comprehensive databases of source material. The papers will then be delivered to instructors through the Blackboard Learning System together with the originality reports, with the results of the matching process, attached to them.

3) Instructors may upload papers directly with the **Direct Submit** feature, without student involvement, and in cases of high matching scores, meet with the student to discuss. This will generate an online report that you can attach to an e-mail or send to your Department Chair. Reports and difficult cases may be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity (academicintegrity@aup.edu), and/or the Writing Lab and ARC.

4) Instructors not using Blackboard, or who do not feel confident interpreting originality reports and matching scores, may send the document by e-mail to Ann Borel, Academic Resource Center (arc@aup.edu). Reminder: not all matches constitute plagiarism.

OVERVIEW

SafeAssignments appear in courses as a new content type and can be added to any course content area. SafeAssignments function like the existing Assignment content type with the added layer of a plagiarism detection check once papers are submitted.

Please note that it is not possible to make an existing Assignment a SafeAssignment without starting from the beginning, although you can certainly submit it like any other paper or exam. Like regular Assignments, however, SafeAssignments are integrated with the Gradebook in the Blackboard Learning System - Enterprise License.

CREATING A SAFEASSIGNMENT

If you wish to create a new assignment, with automatic uploading to SafeAssign, you may enter the content as a learning object called "SafeAssign." Please see below for instructions and images.

1) Access the area in which you would like to add a SafeAssignment.

2) Go to Assessments and select SafeAssignment.

    a. Draft: Allows students to validate their paper without submitting it to the institutional database. Useful as an instructive tool to help students learn how to attribute papers properly. You will be able to see the draft submission.

    b. Urgent Checking: Sets papers to a high priority in the queue.

    c. Student Viewable: Determines whether or not students can see the report generated when their papers are submitted.

DIRECT SUBMIT – NO NEED TO CREATE AN ASSIGNMENT, SIMPLY UPLOAD PAPER

1) Synchronize the course (see above).
2) Go to Control Panel > Course Tools > SafeAssign.
3) Click on Direct Submit.
4) Select whether to submit papers to a private folder or a shared folder.
   a. Private folders can be used to manage papers for an individual instructor. These folders follow the instructor and are available in any course where that user has Instructor-level privileges.
   b. Shared folders are viewable by anyone with access to the Direct Submit tool through the course. Multiple Instructors and Teaching Assistants can view submissions related to a course in shared folders.
5) Create a new folder (for the course, for example). [optional]
6) Click on "Submit A Paper."
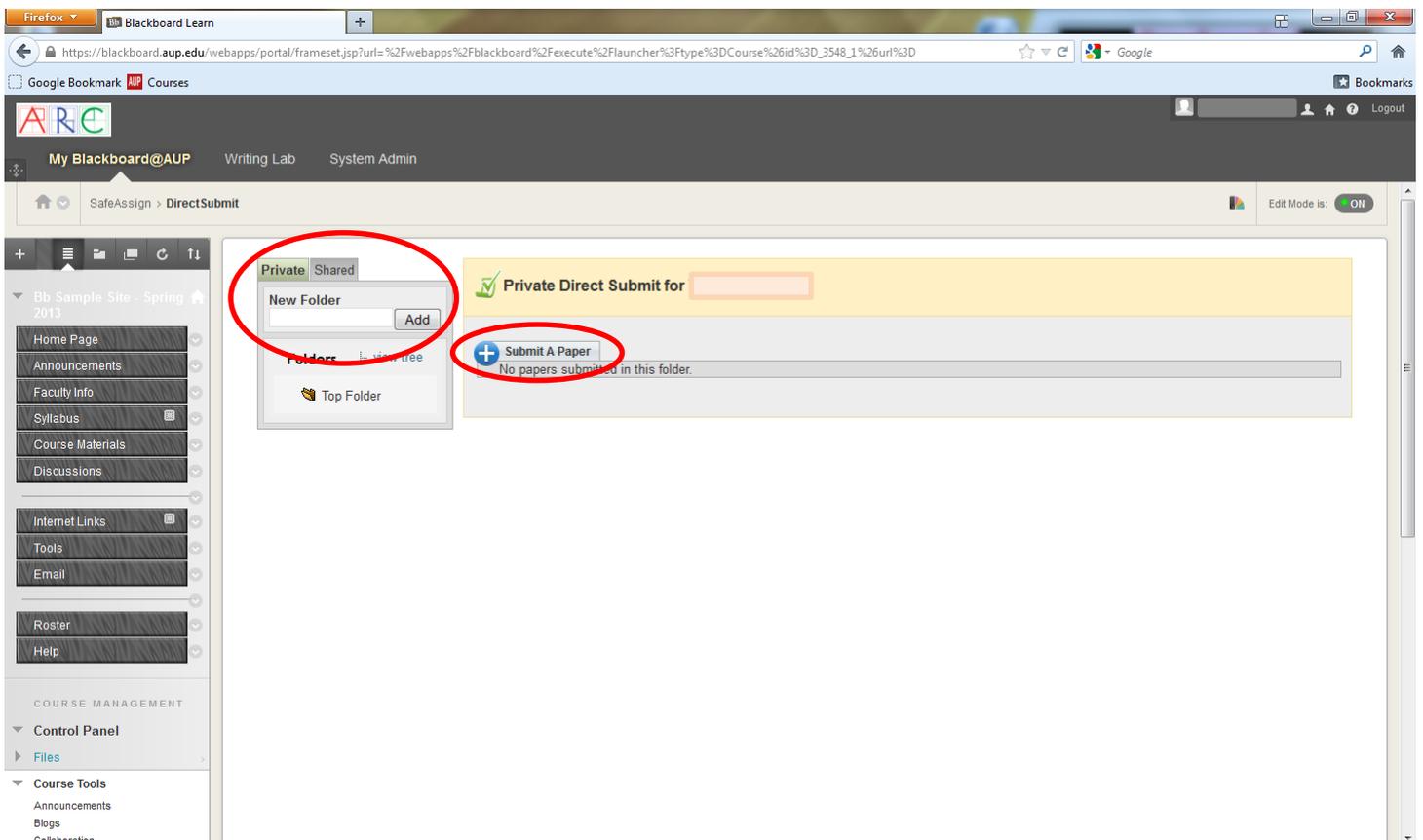
Reports can take several minutes or even an hour, depending on global access, so please be patient and do not re-submit (you may have to refresh your screen or go back to SafeAssign in Control Panel to see finished reports). It is best to create folders for each course you teach.

SAFEASSIGN ORIGINALITY REPORTS

SafeAssign generates an Originality Report with the results of the matching process. In order to see the actual matched phrases, go to the body of the text after clicking on highlight, and click on each sentence – a box will open up comparing the paper content to the source, along with a link to the source. These reports may be e-mailed.

MATCHING SCORES

SafeAssign checks all submitted papers against the following databases and content:

- **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 the 1990s to present time, updated weekly (exclusive access)
- **Institutional document archives** containing all papers submitted to SafeAssign by users in their respective institutions
- **Global Reference Database** containing papers that were volunteered by students from Blackboard client institutions to help prevent cross-institutional cheating

SAMPLE REPORTS

SAMPLE REPORTS

No. 3: Could be from a term paper mill: it is not possible to open this link, but I traced the IP to Laos! Notice the words "paper/get" in URL.

Match No. 2: Taken from a K-12 homework site – good time to remind students of the quality of research required at university. See homepage used.→→

DETAILED READING OF MATCHING CONTENT

SCORES

Sentence matching scores are the percentage probability that two sentences have the same composition or meaning. This number can be interpreted as the reciprocal to the probability that these two sentences are similar by chance. For example, a score of 90 percent on one passage means that there is a 90 percent probability that these two sentences are the same and a 10 percent probability that they are similar by chance.

The overall score is an indicator of what percentage of the submitted paper matches existing sources. This score is a warning indicator only and papers should be reviewed to see if the matches are properly attributed.

Scores below 15 percent: These papers may include some quotes and common phrases or blocks of text that match other documents. If not attributed, students may need reminders (footnotes, parenthetical references, etc.).

Scores between 15 percent and 40 percent: These papers include extensive quoted or paraphrased material or they may include plagiarism. These papers should be reviewed to determine if the matching content is properly attributed.

Scores over 40 percent: There is a very high probability that text in this paper was copied from other sources or purchased. These papers include quoted or paraphrased text in excess and should be reviewed for plagiarism.

TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Choose the highlight option to see the targeted areas of an assignment.

- Be careful not to upload the same paper twice – if the paper was added to the institutional or global database, you will get a 100% score (if you would like a preview in order to warn a student, use the submit draft option).

- New forms of cheating, thanks to the Internet, appear every day. For example, the site selling corrupted files to students…students purchase a corrupted file, submit it to the professor or through Blackboard and then wait for the professor's note advising them that it cannot be opened. This will buy students extra time to finish the real paper. Students may also use invisible characters, e.g., in Cyrillic, to thwart the plagiarism software, and to make fraudulent use of Web-based translation sites.

- Plagiarism-awareness is increasingly important – even so-called unintentional plagiarism is punished in the "real world" while intentional instances can result in loss of credibility, not to mention careers.

- Discuss in class, where time permits, what about can be considered "common knowledge" and what to do when paraphrasing others' ideas (refer to the Writing Lab for assistance).

- If students need help with bibliographies and citations in general, please refer them to the Writing Lab or ask a Reference Librarian (the AUP Library now has RefWorks).

- Please remember that SafeAssign "originality reports" do not determine whether a work has been **properly cited**. If the student has correctly attributed the highlighted areas, the match would not constitute attempted plagiarism.

Suggested sites for student-awareness:

AUP Writing Lab: https://www.aup.edu/academics/offices-resources/academic-resource-center/writing-lab

The Online Writing Lab at Purdue: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/

The Writing Place at Northwestern University: http://www.writing.northwestern.edu/writing-resources/handouts/avoiding-plagiarism/   Questions about SafeAssign? Please contact arc@aup.edu.