

## **Approved Procedure: The Use of Text-Matching Software in Academic Courses**

**Purpose:** This procedure documents the appropriate use of text-matching software to analyze student written course work as part of the online course delivery system (currently Blackboard).

**Oversight Office:** Office of Academic, Faculty, & Student Affairs

**History:** Drafted by Office of Academic, Faculty, & Student Affairs, based on policy from the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga (accessible at <http://utconline.utc.edu/online/documents/testMatchingpolicy.pdf>)

Approved by:

- Faculty Senate Educational Policy Committee, September 27, 2011
- Faculty Senate Executive Committee, November 3, 2011
- Faculty Senate, November 8, 2011

Reviewed by:

- Student Government Association Executive Committee, October 3, 2011

### **Background**

- Faculty have the option of using text-matching software integrated into the online course delivery system (Blackboard) to analyze student papers and other written work. SafeAssign is text-matching software that may be installed as part of the UTHSC Blackboard system. The software is designed to check paper submissions against other submitted papers at UTHSC, as well as papers that are located on the Internet and a number of published journal, newspaper and magazine articles (Proquest/ABI Inform), to screen written work for plagiarism.
- SafeAssign should be used as part of a more comprehensive educational effort to educate students on proper citation and attribution. The SafeAssign software produces a report of the percentage probability that the phrases from two documents match. The report also provides a link to the suspected matching source. It is the responsibility of the faculty to interpret the report and determine if plagiarism has occurred. Faculty are encouraged to attend a training session on the application before requiring students to submit their papers to the software application. Faculty are strongly encouraged to make the SafeAssign option available for students to submit draft versions of their papers before the final papers are submitted.

### **Specific Procedures**

1. UTHSC will install and make available text-matching software as part of the online course delivery system, provided this is bundled within the course management system and does not require additional expenditure of funds.
2. Student papers will be included in an institutional database of papers upon submission.
3. Students will be given an option to include their documents in the Global Reference Database (a national database of student papers).
4. Faculty may ask students to submit their own documents to the text-matching software or submit students' electronic documents themselves.
5. Faculty must inform students of the potential use of text-matching as a part of the assignment submission process.

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6. Faculty should outline what constitutes plagiarism and what constitutes appropriate citation (footnotes, references, etc.).
7. Students shall be informed in writing if they are expected/required to submit their written work in the course to a text-matching software application or if this is optional (see sample statement #1). Alternately, faculty must provide details to their students regarding the possibility of random submissions of their work to the text-matching software application (see sample statement #2).
8. Faculty are encouraged to provide an option that allows students to upload draft papers and to review the report generated by SafeAssign before submitting their final assignment.
9. Students may also be asked to provide background materials to a faculty member by submitting copies of multiple drafts, an annotated bibliography, photocopies of all sources, or other methods as outlined by the instructor of record.
10. The Faculty Senate's Educational Policy Committee, Student Government Executive Association Committee, and Blackboard Super User Group will review the use of text-matching software after two years of use and provide recommendations for updates and/or modifications to these procedures as well as user training.

**Sample syllabus statement #1 [PLEASE EDIT specifically for your class]:** All (some/selected) papers and other written assignments in this class must (should) be submitted to UTHSC Blackboard text-matching software (SafeAssign) for review and to analyze for originality and intellectual integrity. By submitting your paper online, you agree to have your paper included in the institutional repository of digital papers. If the results of the review indicate academic dishonesty, disciplinary action may be taken against the student as outlined in the UTHSC Student Handbook.

**Sample syllabus statement #2 [PLEASE EDIT specifically for your class]:** The faculty of this class reserves the right to submit papers to the UTHSC Blackboard text-matching software (SafeAssign) for review and analysis of originality and intellectual integrity. If the results of the review indicate academic dishonesty, disciplinary action may be taken against the student as outlined in the UTHSC Student Handbook.

**NOTE:** This document is based on the document developed and in use at The University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. A copy of the original document, as well as additional materials that support the use of SafeAssign at UTC, is located at <http://utconline.utc.edu/safeassign.php>