SafeAssignment 2.0 Instructor Manual

1. Overview

SafeAssignment Plagiarism Detection Service for Blackboard is an advanced plagiarism prevention system deeply integrated with the Blackboard Learning Management System. SafeAssignment compares student papers submitted to Blackboard against a wide range of sources and provides instructors with detailed Originality Reports. Because of SafeAssignment's flexibility, its use is not limited to catching cheaters – this product is also an effective plagiarism prevention system that helps instructors to raise student awareness about plagiarism and to educate students about the ways to avoid plagiarizing.

SafeAssignment is based on a unique text matching algorithm that is capable of detecting even inexact matching between a plagiarized paper and its source. This advanced capability makes it nearly impossible to hide plagiarism from SafeAssignment by modifying copied text, thus making students learn to cite information sources properly instead of trying to disguise plagiarism by paraphrasing.

SafeAssignment is focused on teaching students to avoid plagiarism rather than on just identifying offenders. SafeAssignment's "Draft Assignment" and "Students Viewable" features give students an opportunity to submit drafts of their papers for checking and receive SafeAssignment reports highlighting all blocks of text that need to be referenced. This learning mode of SafeAssignment can be enabled by instructors on per-assignment basis and is very effective in preventing unintentional plagiarism.

SafeAssignment searches an enormously wide range of databases, covering virtually all potential sources of electronic plagiarism:

- The industry's most comprehensive index of the Internet (MSN Search Index provided by Microsoft Corporation and containing more than 8 billion documents updated monthly)
- All major publicly accessible digital databases, such as MedLine, PubMed, Project Guttenberg (over 12,000 books) etc.
- The FindArticles® database provided by LookSmart (over 5.5 million articles from over 900 periodical publications, updated daily)
- MyDropBox's proprietary index of promotional abstracts from pre-written papers available for a fee on paper-mill and custom research Web sites (over 150,000 term papers and essays). This database helps identify papers purchased from pre-written paper databases and turned in without substantial editing
- The entire family of ProQuest's ABI/Inform databases (over 1,100 publication titles, about 2.7 million articles from 1971 to present, updated weekly)
- All previously submitted papers within the same institution (to avoid student privacy issues, SafeAssignment does not maintain single cross-institutional database).
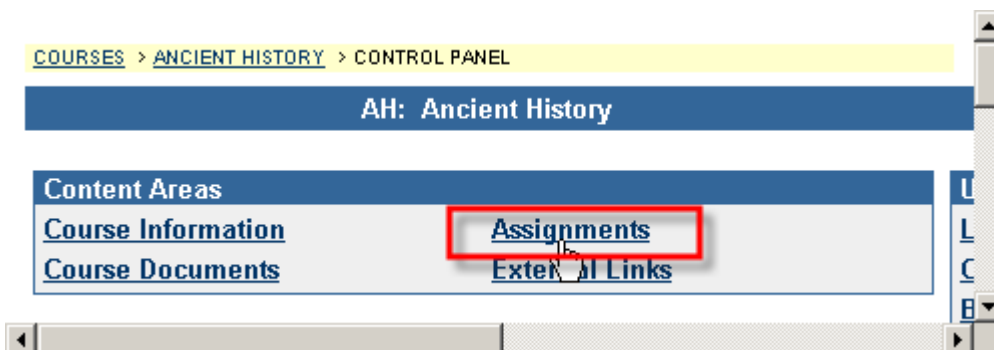
2. Creating Safe Assignments

To create an assignment using SafeAssignment, please follow the steps below:

1. Login to Blackboard and enter the course you would like to add a Safe Assignment to.
2. Click on the "Control Panel" link located at the bottom of the left navigation menu.
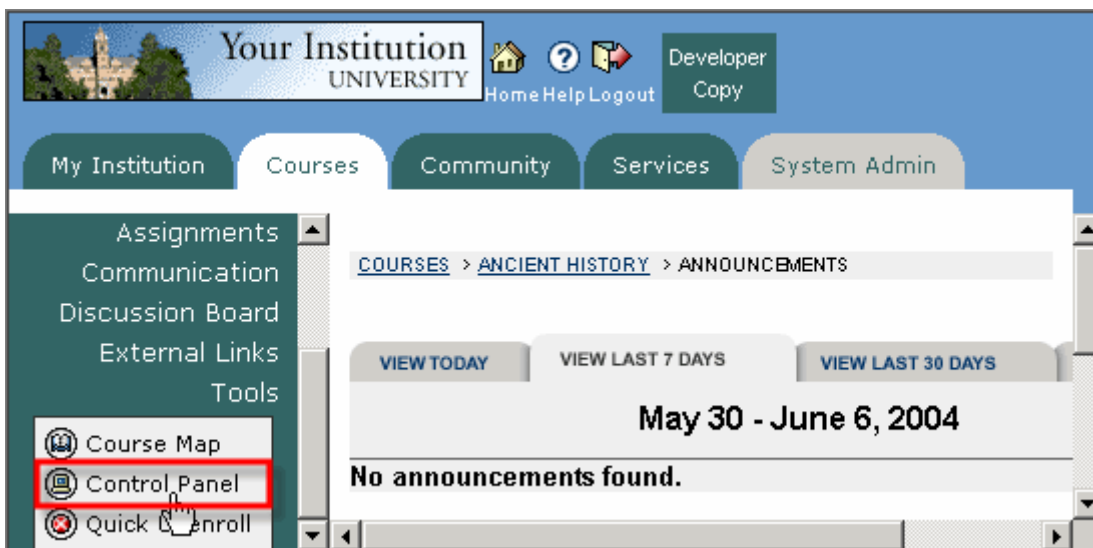
3. In the Control Panel, select one of your course's Content Areas (e.g., Assignments).

4. From the drop-down menu on the right side of the Add toolbar, select the "Safe Assignment" option and click the "Go" button.

COURSES > ANCIENT HISTORY > CONTROL PANEL > ASSIGNMENTS

📖 Assignments

Add 📋 Item   Safe Assignment ▼   GO
                      Learning Unit
                      Survey
                      Assignment
                      LRN Package
                      Safe Assignment

5.   Fill in the assignment creation form and click "Submit". Available assignment options are explained below.

⚒ Add Safe Assignment

① Enter Information

Title: Sample Assignment

Points Possible: 100.0

Text: Sample Assignment for SafeAssignment manuals.

Available: ◉ Yes ○ No

Availability Dates: Display After
Jan ▼ 06 ▼ 2005 ▼ 📅
06 ▼ 40 ▼ PM ▼
☑ Display Until
Feb ▼ 06 ▼ 2005 ▼ 📅
06 ▼ 40 ▼ PM ▼

Draft: ○ Yes ◉ No

Students Viewable: ◉ Yes ○ No

Re-submittable: ○ Yes ◉ No

Urgent Checking ○ Yes ◉ No

Points Possible

The value you enter in the Points Possible field sets the highest possible grade for the Assignment. This value is automatically passed to Blackboard Gradebook.

Instructions

Type the guidelines for completing the assignment in the "Instructions" text box.

Available, Availability Dates

This set of options lets you specify whether the Assignment should be available for submission immediately and/or set the start and due dates. Note that SafeAssignment accepts papers submitted after the due date, but late papers are easy to identify because of the submission timestamp attached to every submitted paper and every originality report

Draft

You can let students submit drafts of their papers by turning the Draft option on.
Papers submitted to Draft Assignments are not sent to your institution's search database and would not be taken into consideration as potential plagiarism sources for papers submitted to any other assignments. This setting prevents matching of drafts to final versions of the same papers and allows instructors to create "sand-boxes" where students can do self-checks to see if all of the borrowed materials in their papers are properly referenced.

Students Viewable

The Students Viewable option lets you specify whether your students should be able to view SafeAssignment reports on their papers submitted to this Assignment. Selecting this option will not let students see reports or papers of other students in the same course.

Re-submittable

Setting the Re-submittable option to "On" will allow your students to re-submit their papers as many times as they need until the due date. This feature is particularly useful for Draft Assignments. Please note that if you need to limit the number of draft submissions each student can make, you should create several single-submission Draft assignments instead.

Urgent Checking

This is a paper processing priority setting that lets instructors specify if the papers submitted to the Assignment should be processed urgently or not. Responsible use of this urgency flag will let us ensure processing time of 5 to 15 minutes for urgent assignments and 15 to 90 minutes for non-urgent ones. The actual time may vary depending on the paper size, the number of matching sources found and other factors.

Announcement

You can optionally create an announcement about the Safe Assignment you registered.

3. Modifying/Removing Assignments

You can modify or remove Safe Assignments in the same way as any other Blackboard course content units.

To modify or delete a Safe Assignment:
1. Go to the course Control Panel.
2. Enter the corresponding content area.
3. On the following page, find the Safe Assignment you would like to update or modify and click on the appropriate button.

4. Viewing Submitted Assignments

The recommended usage scenario for SafeAssignment is to create assignments and let students submit their papers online (see the Student Manual for more information). Gradebook integration allows you to view uploaded student papers along with SafeAssignment originality reports and instantly grade them.

To see the list of available Safe Assignments, go to the Control Panel of the corresponding course and click on the **"MyDropBox Suite (Safe Assignments)"** link located in the "Course Tools" section.

To list all papers submitted to a particular Safe Assignment, click on the **"View"** link below the corresponding assignment. On the following page you will see a table listing all students in the course with links to all submitted papers and originality reports on these papers.

- Click on the **Text** icon to view the text of the corresponding paper along with **student's comments** in a separate browser window.

- To **view SafeAssignment report** on a particular paper, click on the SA Report icon of the corresponding paper. For more information on originality reports please see the SafeAssignment Report section of this manual.

- *Note for Safari users:* There is a known issue with Safari browser for Mac. The default behavior for Safari is to only accept cookies from sites that you are currently viewing. In order for SafeAssignment to display reports, this setting should be changed to accept cookies always.

- The percentage in the **Matching** column should be interpreted as the percentage of paper matching other documents. For more information on this please see the Interpreting Scores section of this manual.

  * Please note that Matching and SA Report columns appear blank for papers that have not been processed yet.

- To **download the source file** of a paper, click the File icon.

- Use the **Clear Attempt** button to delete a particular paper and give the corresponding student another chance to complete the assignment. Note that the primary use of this button is to delete papers that were uploaded by mistake (e.g. wrong file) – there is no need to delete properly uploaded papers. The Clear Attempt button permanently removes the corresponding paper from your institutional database, making future comparison with this paper impossible.

Bulk Download

The Bulk Download feature allows you to download all papers submitted to the corresponding Assignment in a single ZIP archive. The original filenames of the uploaded files are preserved, so that you could easily identify papers. To download papers, click the "Download" button above the list of submitted documents and choose to save the downloaded file to disk.

5. Grading Safe Assignments

You can grade Safe Assignments just like standard Blackboard Assignments in Gradebook. Originality reports on student papers are also accessible from Gradebook. To grade papers submitted through SafeAssignment via Gradebook:

1. Enter the course Control Panel and click the "Gradebook" link in the "Assessment" section.
2. When the Gradebook appears, you will see an exclamation mark (!) for each student who has submitted a new paper to the corresponding assignment or a grade for each paper that has already been graded.

3. Click on any exclamation mark or grade to see the "Modify Grade" page for the corresponding paper.
4. On the Modify Grade page, you can access the paper submitted by the student and the originality report on it, as well as see the matching score and the submission timestamp.

5. To **grade the paper**, enter the point value into the Grade field and click on the Submit button.
6. You can also attach your **Comments and Feedback File** to the grade. Scroll down to see the Feedback to Student section. Enter the text of you comment into the corresponding block and/or click on the Browse button to select the feedback file for upload and click Submit. The student can go to the "My Grades" page in the Tools area of the course and click the grade to see your comments and attached file.
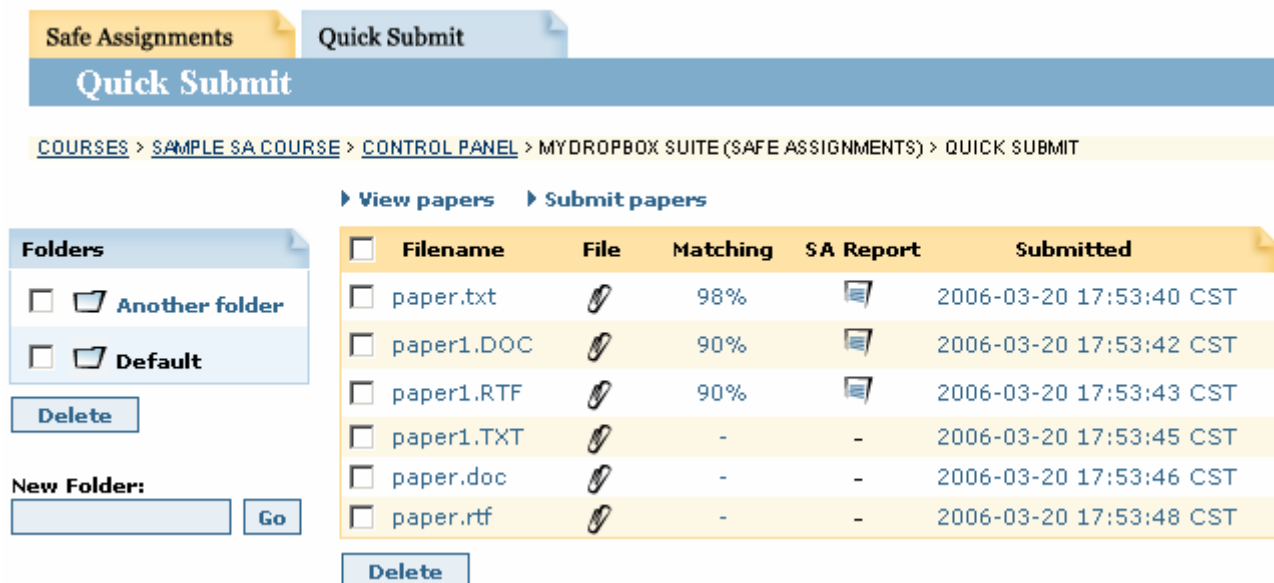
6. Quick Submit

You can submit papers for processing directly from your instructor account using the **Quick Submit** feature. The Quick Submit functionality allows you to quickly check a suspicious student paper or a batch of papers packed into a .ZIP file for plagiarism without having to register assignments. It also allows organizing submissions into folders for higher convenience. Please note the following features and limitations of the Quick Submit functionality:

1. Quick Submit is recommended for use only when it is impossible or inconvenient to organize submission of papers to SafeAssignment by students. One example of a scenario when this tool can be used is when you have already collected papers from students via email or any other paper submission interface, and now need to generate originality reports on those papers.
2. It is not recommended to upload more than 100 papers in one batch and more than 300 papers in one session. Please also note that papers larger than 10 Mbytes or 5000 sentences of text are automatically rejected.
3. Deleting papers from Quick Submit is **not recommended** as it will remove the papers from the internal comparison database, making future comparison to these papers impossible.
4. Papers submitted via Quick Submit are not tied to student profiles and do not appear in Gradebook.
5. All batch uploads are considered less urgent than single-paper uploads and have the lowest processing priority. Therefore, you can experience slower turnaround times for batch uploads as compared to individual paper submissions made by students.
6. **(For Safari users only)** There is a known issue with Safari browser for Mac. The default behavior for Safari is to only accept cookies from sites that you are currently viewing. In order for SafeAssignment to display reports, this setting should be changed to accept cookies always.
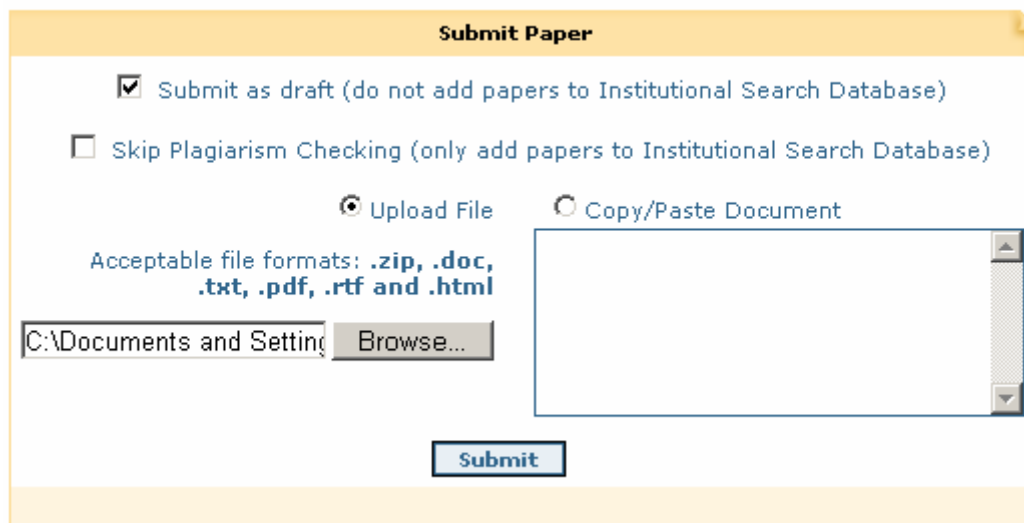
Submitting Papers

To submit either individual paper or a .ZIP archive with multiple papers, please do the following:

1. Go to the course Control Panel.
2. Click on the MyDropBox Suite (Safe Assignments) link in the Course Tools section.
3. You will see the list of your Safe Assignments and a few navigation tabs above. Click on the Quick Submit tab. The Quick Submit default folder will open, listing all papers you have submitted there.
4. Select the folder you want to submit a paper or a batch of papers to by clicking on the corresponding folder name (this step is optional).
5. Click on the "Submit papers" link.
6. Fill in the paper submission form. Either click on the Browse button to select the file for upload or copy and paste the text of the paper into the text area of the form (use the copy-paste method only if you cannot upload a file of a supported format).
7. Click on the Submit button to finish.

More submission options are explained below:

Submit as draft
Check this option if you don't want the paper(s) you are submitting to be added to your institution's search database and only need to generate originality reports for them. Papers submitted within your institution in future will not be matched against documents submitted as drafts.

Skip Plagiarism Checking
Check this option if you only want to add the documents being submitted to your institution's search database, so that all future papers are compared against them. SafeAssignment will not generate originality reports for papers submitted with this option turned on.

IMPORTANT: The current version of Quick Submit supports the following types of uploaded files only: Microsoft Word Document (.doc), Rich Text Format (.rtf), HTML, plain text (.txt) and ZIP Archive (.zip). Files of all other types will not be processed. It is acceptable for a .ZIP file batch to contain files of different types.

Viewing Submitted Papers and Originality Reports

All papers in a currently selected folder are displayed in a table with links to paper source files and originality reports. The table also displays paper submission dates for your convenience. By clicking on a filename, you can view the plain-text version of the corresponding paper without having to download its source.

For more information on originality reports please see the SafeAssignment Report and Interpreting Originality Scores sections of this manual.

Delete submitted papers

To delete papers please do the following:
1. Go to the necessary folder
2. Check the checkboxes next to the papers you want to delete
3. Click on the "Delete" button

NOTE: Deleting papers from Quick Submit will remove the papers from the internal comparison database, making future comparison to these papers impossible.

Managing folders

To create a folder, enter a new folder name into the corresponding input field and press the "Create" button.
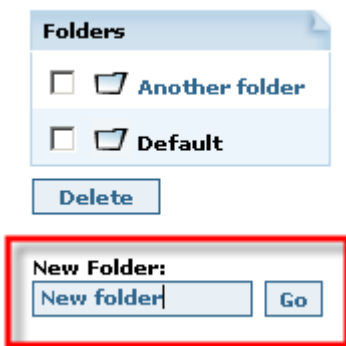
To delete one or several folders, check the checkboxes next to the corresponding folder names and click on the "Delete" button.

NOTE: Deleting non-empty folders from Quick Submit will remove the papers contained in these folders from the internal comparison database, making future comparison to these papers impossible.

7. Usage Tips

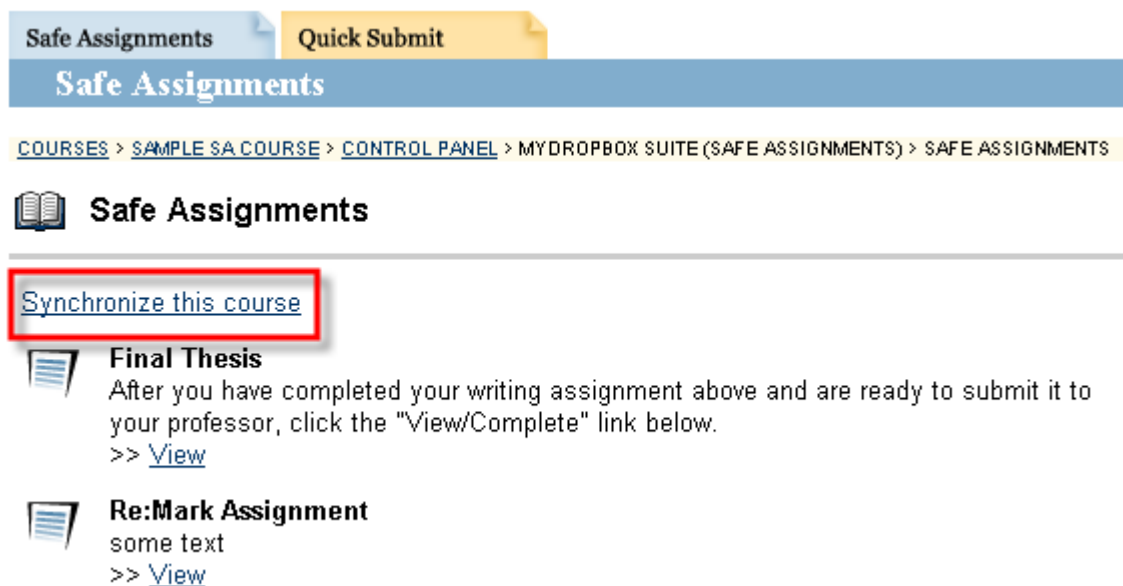**Course Copy and Safe Assignment Copy/Move**

There is an issue which you should be aware of while using the following functions for courses that include Safe Assignments:

- Course Copy
- Assignment Copy (within one course or between courses)
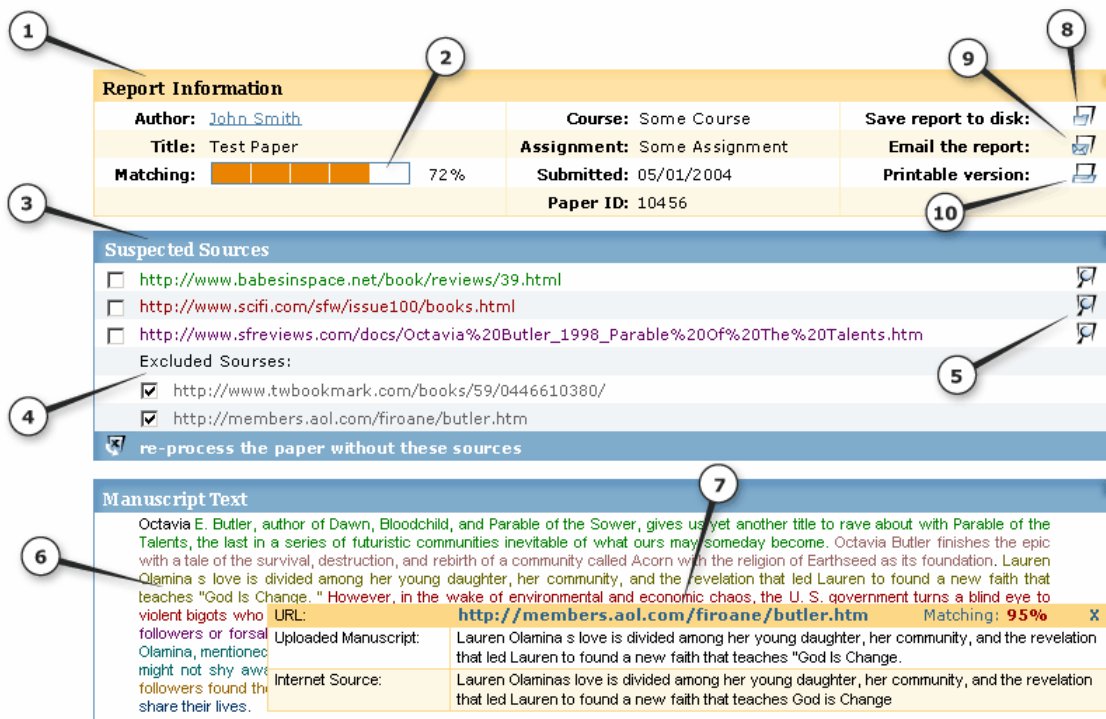- Assignment Move (within one course or between courses)

Due to limitations of the Blackboard Building Block API, SafeAssignment cannot automatically restore synchronization between Blackboard and SafeAssignment back-end server if any of the manipulations mentioned above is performed. To avoid the synchronization loss issue, please use the following procedure for any course which contains any copied or moved Safe Assignments after using the Course Copy and/or Safe Assignment Copy/Move functions:

1. Go to the course Control Panel.
2. Follow the MyDropBox Suite (Safe Assignments) link in the Course Tools section.
3. Click on the "Synchronize this course" link. A small pop-up window will open notifying you that the course is now being synchronized. The synchronization runs on the background and takes no more than a few minutes.

8. SafeAssignment Report

SafeAssignment Originality Report page consists of four main sections:

- Report Information (**1**) – this header section contains information about the author of the paper, assignment and course the paper was submitted into, submission timestamp, matching score (**2**) and icons for several accessory functions;
- Suspected Sources (**3**) – a clickable list of matching sources and links to the source documents with highlighted matching parts (**5**);
- Manuscript text (**6**) – the main report windows that shows the paper text with all matching sentences marked with different colors (different colors represent different sources). Clicking on any color-coded sentence pops-up a Sentence Analysis window (**7**);
- Sentence Analysis (**7**) – shows a sentence from the uploaded document along with the matching sentence from the suspected source, as well as the URL of the suspected source and the percentage of similarity between these two sentences;
- Delete Sources (**4**) - (available to instructors only) allows you to reprocess a paper ignoring any particular sources of matching content. This capability can be useful in order to exclude legitimate matches from the list of the suspected sources of plagiarism;
- Source Highlighting Icon (**5**) - opens the corresponding source document and highlights all chunks of text that are matching the submitted paper;
- Save Report to Disk (**8**) – allows you to store a report on a local hard-drive for future access;
- E-Mail the report (**9**) – sends the report as an attachment to any e-mail address you enter;
- Printable version (**10**) – shows a page with a printer-friendly black-and-white version of the report.

Note. Please keep in mind that SafeAssignment identifies *all* matching blocks of text, and it is a responsibility of instructors and students to investigate whether matching text is properly referenced or not (i.e. plagiarized). This behavior of the service is intentional, to prevent detection mistakes due to differences in citing styles and to prevent students from using "fake" quotations (e.g. quoting a non-existing book when the material was taken from a Web site or encyclopedia).

9. Interpreting Scores

A. Sentence Matching Scores:
Sentence matching scores are the percentage probability that two sentences have the same meaning. This number can also be interpreted as the reciprocal to the probability that these two sentences are similar by chance. For example, score of 90% means that there is 90% probability that these two sentences are the same, and about 10% probability that they are similar by chance (not because of copying).

B. Document Overall Matching Score:
The Overall Matching Score is an indicator of what percentage of the processed document is matching external sources. Note that this score should be treated as a warning indicator only. We strongly recommend reviewing all reports with high Overall Matching Scores. For analysis of matching scores, the following interpretation scale should be used:

1. **Scores below 15%** — usually papers with such scores contain some quotes and few "typical" phrases that match other documents. In most cases, they do not require any further analysis, and there is no evidence of plagiarism in such reports.
2. **Scores between 15% and 40%** — papers with such scores can contain plagiarism or just have very much quoted material. We usually recommend reviewing the reports with such scores before making any judgments about the papers.
3. **Scores over 40%** — with such scores, there is a very high probability that the paper contains some text copied from elsewhere, and, even if this text is properly cited, such amount of cited material is considered excessive in most cases. Therefore, such scores give a clear warning to instructors. However, there are few cases when scores over 40% can be given to legitimate papers, for example, when the paper or its part was published online before it was sent for processing (instructors have just to "Delete" the source pointing to the legitimate copy/source), or when the same student has already submitted this paper or a similar paper to another class (although it is not plagiarism, such practice is not allowed in some institutions).