How To Interpret A SafeAssign Originality Report Student Tutorial

Interpreting Reports

This video demonstrates how to interpret a SafeAssign Originality Report. We are going to walk through an Originality Report prepared for this tutorial.

When you open the Originality Report, it will open in a new window and will display the paper on the left with any matching content highlighted. On the right, you can see the sources of the matched content. Each different source has a different color.

This paper has a percentage of 46%. It is important to note that this percentage takes into account all similarity in SafeAssign's database, which can include appropriate citations, common phrases or assignment instructions if you included them as part of your response. What this means is that there is no need to keep revising your paper trying to get to zero percent because most papers will have some type of similarity. What is more important is to figure out if any of the matches contain plagiarism and should be re-written.

So, does this paper contain plagiarism? Yes, it does contain plagiarism. Let's take a closer look at the matches to figure out why.

The first match, the yellow match, highlights content from two paragraphs. In the first paragraph, notice that the sentence is not in quotes, not cited and not paraphrased. This is classic copy and paste plagiarism and needs to be cited and paraphrased appropriately, regardless of where it came from originally. The key is that the content is not original. The match says it is from “another student paper” and we will discuss this more in a moment.

Let's look at the blue match. You will notice that after the highlighted sentences, there is a citation. So why is this plagiarism when there is a citation? Even though there is a citation to a secondary source, the content must be synthesized. These sentences are not in quotes and therefore are not paraphrased appropriately.

Compare these sentences to the paragraph that begins with “stem cell research supports”. It also has a citation, but the content was synthesized and paraphrased in the author's own words and thus, did not appear as a match.
Now back to the source of the match, it is referencing an Internet page belonging to NIH but what if you never used this site during your research? As you examine more and more Originality Reports, you may notice that the matches aren’t necessarily identifying the location where you found your information. This does not matter. Multiple sources may contain identical information. What matters is that all content in your paper must be cited, paraphrased and synthesized appropriately if it is not an original thought.

Let’s take a look at the green match now. It is the definition of a pacemaker. You will notice that SafeAssign says this came from another student’s paper. It is important to understand that often SafeAssign will only list the source that has been most recently matched, thus you may come across a match to “Another student's paper” more often than you would care to. Does this mean that the author copied another student’s work? For this small amount of content and for something as straightforward as a definition, the answer is probably no. More than likely, both authors used the same definition of a pacemaker found either on the Internet or in a book or article. A quick Google search should turn up at least of couple of websites with this definition. Regardless of where the definition may have been found, it needs a citation and quotes if the author wants to keep the definition exactly how it is written. You may also see matches to “another student's paper” for common phrases (for example: *The National Institutes of Health*), proper citations or assignment instructions (for example writing something such as *In response to question 3*...). If this is the case, you can ignore as matches to these items are not plagiarism.

If the match to “another student paper” is a paper you submitted previously for another course, you must have advanced permission to reuse work as per Walden’s academic integrity policy.

You can save the Originality Report if you need to submit it to review by others by clicking on the Print icon on the top right hand of the originality report. When the print function appears, you can save the document as a PDF file on your computer or external drive. . You will also notice that when you click on the Print icon, each match will display and the most likely source to that match will be displayed. This may provide additional support when reviewing your originality report. Thank you for viewing this presentation on how to interpret a SafeAssign Originality Report.

Click **Next** to continue.
SafeAssign Limitations

SafeAssign is a sophisticated software system but it is not perfect. Just as some originality reports may find similarities that are properly cited and not plagiarized, it may also miss things. For instance, certain combinations and pairs of words and sentences may be rearranged or restructured in such a way that SafeAssign may not notice a similarity to an original work or works.

In this example, SafeAssign did not recognize the student's draft as being similar to another work, and yet when you look at these works side by side, it is clear that the student's draft is plagiarized. By patching the original content sentence by sentence, the student has misled his reader into thinking he has read and synthesized the literature in a unique way; in reality he has taken someone else’s ideas, work, and research and suggested that it is his own. Regardless of the SafeAssign report, this is plagiarism. As an instructor, you may see content like this on a paper and be concerned that it is not the student’s voice. A glance at the original source or a simple internet search could bring to light that this content is not a student’s own analysis. It will be important for you as an instructor, especially if you are a committee member for large Capstone manuscripts, to take the time to conduct internet searches when the voice, style or skill level appears to shift.

Click the Continue button when you are ready to continue.

Here are a few reminders for working with SafeAssign and originality reports. Do not tell your students that they must get under a certain percentage, because it may be impossible. Instead, encourage them to ensure they have properly paraphrased or synthesized anything that is not in quotations or a blocked quote or a common phrase or assignment template information.

Work with your program director to determine when a submission should be reported formally vs. when it can be an internal learning opportunity. Regardless, drawing a student’s attention to certain areas that were not cited properly will assist them in avoiding bigger problems in future assignments. Also, students may change a few synonyms to get a low percentage and you may be able to identify that while a percentage is low, they have essentially used all borrowed content and have created nothing original. Finally, matches to another student’s paper may
simply be two students using the same third source. Try a quick Google search before attempting to question the student about the other student’s paper.

**Adding New Sources to the SafeAssign Database**
If during your research of a match, you discover that the actual web source of a match was not identified by SafeAssign, you can add the source directly from your classroom. Click on *Course Tools*, click on *SafeAssign*, then click on *Suggest URL*. Paste in the URL you wish to add to the database and click *Submit*. Click *Next* to continue.