

## Plagiarism Check Policy for Dissertations and Theses

9/27/2011

The Graduate School requires that all dissertations and theses must be submitted for a plagiarism check through Safe Assign in Blackboard (or similar tool) prior to the defense. The Graduate School further requires that the student's dissertation/thesis advisor or program Graduate Director certify that the dissertation/thesis has been checked through Safe Assign. The Defense Final Report form or a memo may be used to transmit the certification to the Graduate School. This requirement will be effective beginning with the Winter 2012 graduation.

Departments will determine their own guidelines for these checks, for how they deal with the results revealed by Safe Assign, and for remedies to address indications of plagiarism, consistent with existing policies and codes of conduct. The Graduate Director typically is in the best position to perform the checks, evaluate the results, and discuss the results with the student and his/her advisor.

Background: Plagiarism is a concern at universities nationwide, with reports in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* of whole dissertations being plagiarized. The Academic Standards Committee examined 20 dissertations from graduated Wayne State students. Of those, two had a high percentage of plagiarism. That was a sufficiently high number to warrant a mandatory dissertation/thesis check through Safe Assign.

Because of the nature of Safe Assign, care and judgment are required for a fair evaluation of indications of plagiarism. For example, a high plagiarism score may reflect a student's own previous publications. Assessing the results provided by Safe Assign is more art than science.