

Inside Independent Learning

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Assignment Feedback

Teaching in D2L and teaching a print course have many things in common, including providing constructive feedback on assignments.

Students are promised that their instructor will provide them with feedback within three business days of assignment submission. Beyond meeting this time requirement, IL instructors must also submit feedback

via approved feedback submission channels. Finally, and most importantly, instructor feedback must meet the educational needs of students.

This issue of Inside Independent Learning was designed to guide instructors through the process of providing assignment feedback via approved feedback channels.



D2L

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While not all IL courses are D2L courses, many IL courses will soon make the shift from print to D2L. D2L has many advantages for students, instructors, and coordinators including transparency of communication. Students submit assignments into the course dropbox. Instructors should leave feedback for the student via the “Evaluate” function in the dropbox. Instructors can

also see when students read assignment feedback in the dropbox.

D2L courses should be set up so that feedback and grades left in the dropbox are automatically updated in the grade book. Please contact Sarah (skorpi@dcs.wisc.edu) if you find that your dropbox feedback is not linked to your D2L gradebook.

Some courses use the D2L quiz function for course quizzes and exams while others rely on printed, proctored exams. Regardless of how your students complete their quizzes and exams, feedback on quiz and exam performance should be left via the D2L gradebook. To leave exam

feedback, click on the “Grades” tab. Then, click on the student name. Scroll down to the correct exam. Click on “Show Comments” and enter student feedback in the “Feedback” box. Be sure that you click the blue save button when you are finished entering feedback. (Note: any comments entered in the “Private Comments” box will not be visible to students.) It is important that students have the option of viewing feedback on their exams, especially when they have the option of retaking an exam for a passing grade.



“Can I just email my assignments directly to you?”

Email

A few courses are still available outside of D2L in print version. Students who are enrolled in these courses can either submit their assignments via postal mail (making use of “First Sheets”) or by uploading assignments via the IL website (<https://il.wisconsin.edu/current/submitassign.aspx>). At times, students may ask instructors whether they can just email the assignments directly to the instructor. If a student makes such a request, please explain that it is important that student submit assignments through Independent Learning using the postal mail or online submission options. Should an as-

ignment get lost or an instructor fall ill, IL will not be able to help the student or the instructor because there will be no record of the assignment being submitted. It can be similarly tempting for a print course instructor to click “Reply” to an email assignment submission and email students assignment feedback directly. It is vital that print course instructors instead log in to “Istudy Access” and return student feedback in this system. If a student contacts IL about assignment feedback, it is important that Student Services can see when the feedback was returned to the student. To access Istudy, go to the following website:

<https://il.wisconsin.edu/coursework/assigngrade.aspx>

Log in using the username and password provided to you by IL Student Services. (Please contact Sarah if you need a username and password.) Once you are logged in, you will be asked for some student information and will be able to enter a grade and email feedback to the student.

Using “Istudy Access” for student feedback is a requirement for instructors of print courses. If you have any questions or difficulty with Istudy, please contact Sarah (skorpi@dcs.wisc.edu).

“ I already entered grades in D2L (or Istudy) AND my Assignment Tally Sheet. Why do I have to enter them in LRMS too?”

LRMS / Independent Learning Partner View (ILPV)

LRMS is the official student record system used by Independent Learning. You might be familiar with this system as “ILPV,” Independent Learning Partner View or “LPV,” Learning Partner View.

In addition to recording student assignment feedback via the dropbox in D2L or Istudy, IL instructors are required to update the official student grades in LRMS. If grades are not updated in LRMS, student midterm and final exams will not be sent and students will be delayed in completing their IL courses.

To enter grades into LRMS, go to: <https://admin.wlearn.com/logon.asp>

Then enter your individual username and password. (Most user names will be the instructor’s last name followed by “il.” Contact student services if you need a new username and password.) Once logged in, you can search for students using the student’s last name or the registration number. Open the student record and click on the appropriate course if needed. Be sure to enter assignment grades, exam grades, and lesson averages as a percent of 100. The final grade must be entered as a letter grade. Be sure to click the blue “Save” button. Entering grades this way is vital in case a student contests a grade. If you have any questions about how to use LRMS, please contact Sarah (skorpi@dcs.wisc.edu). She is happy to help.

If you find yourself dealing with an unexpected student request or issue, check the student notes in LRMS. As IL course instructors, you have access to student notes, which record all communications between student services and students. In some cases, you will also find notes about communication between Sarah and a student. You are also welcome to add a note, but please keep in mind that any notes added to LRMS will become part of the student’s permanent record and should be written with this in mind. Please contact Sarah if you would like to use the LRMS note function. She is happy to guide you through the process.

Assignment Resubmission

What can you do when a student clearly has not achieved the goals of a particular unit assignment? There may be times when you feel it is in the best interest of the student’s progress in the course to redo an assignment. Each instructor can decide when and if assignment resubmissions will be allowed, and whether resubmissions can get full or partial credit. When dealing with student work that does not meet minimum goals, instructors may: give a failing grade without offering resubmission; give a failing grade and offer resubmission for partial or full credit; or give an incomplete and require resubmission for partial or full credit. It is your decision as an instructor which option is the best fit for the academic integrity of your course and the academic progress of your students. The key to assignment resubmission is to be clear with students about what grade they currently have (failing or incomplete), whether reworking the assignment is optional or required, and what steps the student must take to improve their work for resubmission. Recent research shows that students are most receptive to feedback that meets their current level of learning and is restricted to 3 main and clearly explained topics. Students often appreciate the option to email their instructor with questions directly related to topics they do not fully understand. If your student requests a meeting, please contact Sarah. She is happy to meet with students who do not understand instructor feedback.

D2L Gem: My Home Shortcuts

Students who submit assignments to the D2L dropbox know that they have made an assignment submission, but how will their instructor know? Instructors can check for unread dropbox submissions in two ways: setting D2L to email notifications when assignments have been submitted or checking for submissions on their D2L “My Home” page. (If you are not currently receiving emails when your student submits an assignment, but you would like to, please contact Sarah.)

When you log in to D2L, you should be taken to your personal “My Home” page. Instructors responsible for more than one D2L course will see all current courses listed under the “My Courses” heading. If a student has submitted a dropbox assignment, a

quiz, or a discussion board post, there will be a notification under the course name (i.e. “2 Unread Dropbox Submissions”). To view these submissions, instructors can navigate to the course homepage and click the appropriate link (i.e. Dropbox). Or, to save time, instructors can simply click on the notification itself. Clicking on the notification should take you directly to that location (i.e. Dropbox, Discussion Board, etc.) in the correct course. Once the browser has loaded the notification location, you should be able to click directly on the assignment, quiz, or discussion item. Using this function will save time and should help streamline your D2L feedback process.

Good Practice Reminder: Leaving Feedback that Motivates

Maintaining motivation is key for Independent Learning Students. Although learning is completed independently, instructor communication helps students maintain their motivation to complete their courses. One of the easiest ways for instructors to motivate students is through feedback on assignment submissions. Many IL instructors use Microsoft Word’s “Track Changes” function to provide feedback inside of student documents. In addition to this,

taking a minute to write a note to the student can personalize their course experience and help motivate them to persevere in the course. The contents of a feedback note could include: an acknowledgement of work completed in the assignment being graded, a reminder that specific comments and corrections are in the feedback document, a response to something from the assignment that struck you during the grading process, an offer to address any

feedback-related follow-up questions via email, and a reminder to contact the instructor with content related questions that come up when working through the material in the next unit. If you have decided to offer or require a resubmission, the note is a good place to communicate the terms of resubmission. A few words of encouragement for struggling students can also make a difference for them.

Sometimes including statements like “*I am as commit-*

ted to your success in this course as you are.” or “Feel free to e-mail me with any content related questions. I want you to be successful in this course and I am here to help.” can change a student’s impression of the course, inspire renewed effort, and increase the likelihood that the student will persevere and complete the course.

Academic Integrity

Issues of academic integrity exist in all educational settings, and Independent Learning is no different. Students are expected to submit original work for all assignments and exams. While it can be difficult to know definitively when faced with an academic integrity issue, instructors often have a good feel for a student’s writing style, word choice, and such glaring details as similarities in submissions. Originality checking tools (such as TurnItIn for D2L) can help instructors investigate instances of suspected academic misconduct.

Independent Learning has an Academic Honesty Statement posted in the policies page on the IL website at <https://il.wisconsin.edu/current/policies.aspx>: “Students enrolled in Independent Learning courses must observe the same strict codes of academic honesty required of classroom students. Failure to do so will result in various penalties ranging from resubmission of assignments or reexamination to immediate expulsion from or failure in the course. Unacceptable behavior includes, but is not limited to, submitting another’s work as your own, using a solutions manual, cheating on examinations, plagiarizing in any way, and helping other students commit these or similar acts. If you have any questions as to what is acceptable, ask your instructor before submitting the work in question.”

Due to the nature of IL courses, students located outside of the United States can register for IL courses. This can lead to a cultural misunderstanding of the academic honesty policy. Some issues of academic honesty can be eliminated by including the policy in your new student welcome email or even adding a statement that “Discussion of or collaboration on assignments with another person, even a fellow student, constitutes academic dishonesty and can result in expulsion from or failure of the course.”

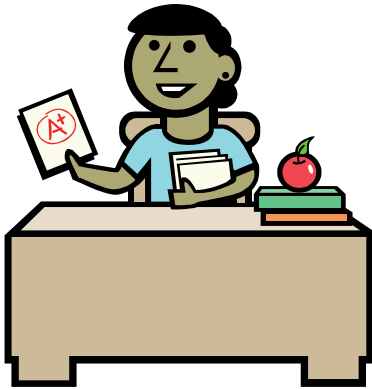
If you think you are dealing with an academic integrity issue, please contact Sarah (skorpi@dcs.wisc.edu) immediately. It is important that the entire IL team is involved in possible academic integrity issues.

Ideas & Suggestions

Remember, if you have any questions or concerns that you think would be of interest to your IL colleagues, please submit them for future IL e-mails.



Coming Next Month: Teaching Through Feedback



Everyone has their own idea of what effective teaching looks like in the classroom setting, but as IL Instructors, how do you define your teaching role? How much support can students expect when taking an independent learning course? How can you teach effectively without meeting your students in real time? Next month, look for articles with the latest research on effective non-synchronous teaching as well as

interesting tidbits from the Distance Learning and Teaching Conference that was held in Madison in August.

If you have any helpful instructional tips or hints that you would like to share with your IL colleagues, please be sure to let Sarah know by September 15th.

Introducing: Britt Ziedler

I have been teaching French for almost 20 years. I never imagined as a child that I would be working in education because I grew up attending uninspiring French schools as an expatriate Canadian. However, that was a very long time ago and education is a vibrant, progressive field full of potential.

I fell into teaching during graduate school and found that I quite enjoyed working with university students. After completing my Master of Arts in French, I returned to the United Arab Emirates to teach and during that time I obtained the Delta from the University of Cambridge. I moved to Madi-

son in 2003 and while waiting for my work permit, I volunteered at Briarpatch, a crisis center in town and led a fundraiser for them. I felt very lucky when DCS hired me in 2006. I truly enjoy the field of continuing studies because the approach is holistic and leaves room for inclusivity, especially for non-traditional learners. I love the flexibility, challenges and ongoing changes in the distance learning landscape. I find my work so engaging and interesting that I will begin a Master's of Science in the Global Educational Leadership on campus this fall.

Outside of work, my life is pretty simple. I enjoy walking my dog, Bob, and listening to books on



tape or I try to teach myself Arabic which is a work in progress. In the summer, Andrew, my husband, and I might spend time at Devil's Lake with Bob or go for casual bike rides (with Bob in tow). In the winter, we like to hike, snow shoe or find new recipes for Andrew to cook which we then enjoy while watching Scandinavian crime shows.