

# Inside Independent Learning

## Making Learning (more) Accessible with Technology

### Special points of interest:

- Making Learning (more) Accessible with Technology
- Online Assessment Pilot
- Assessment Types
- Lessons Learned
- LPV/LRMS
- D2L Gem: Other Uses for D2L Quizzes
- Introducing: Jeanne Connors
- Next Month: Personalizing your D2L Course

One of the great benefits to students in Independent Learning courses is that they can complete university coursework at a time and in a space that is convenient for them. Our students' learning and course selection is not limited by a work schedule or a time of day when none of the required courses for the major are offered. This makes Independent Learning courses some of the most student-friendly and accessible courses a student can take.

Students who live far from campus and cannot get to the university can complete IL courses from home. Students with work or family commitments that make it impossible to attend face-to-face classes can complete IL courses at times that work for them. Be-

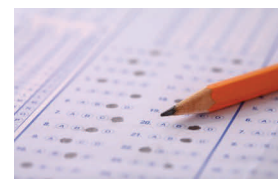
cause of this, IL courses make it possible for unlikely students to learn and successfully earn college credit.

The exam process is one part of the IL program that has been out of step with our student-centered program. Students who need the flexibility of completing their coursework at a time, place, and pace that is convenient to them must take proctored exams during the usual work week and work place of their exam proctor. For some students, taking the exams and completing their courses means taking time off from work or family commitments. For students who register for Independent Learning courses because their schedule cannot accommodate a traditional face-to-face course schedule, the exam process can

constitute a barrier that prevents them from completing their course.

Happily, recent advancements in proctoring technology make it possible to proctor a student's exam online. It is possible for students to complete an exam in their own learning space, at a time that is convenient for them. At the same time, the student's work can be monitored and the academic integrity of the exam can be maintained.

Using the modern technology available to us, we can continue to work to make learning accessible to students, any time, any place.



## Online Assessment Pilot

Some Independent Learning courses are presently involved with a pilot program to use online assessment in place of proctored exams.

The students benefit because they can take their exams from their normal learning environment at a time that is convenient for them.

An online proctoring company monitors the student's work space, computer desktop, and eye movement. The proctoring company then flags any activity that is outside the param-

eters of what is allowed during the exam.

One of the advantages to the IL program is that the exam requirements are uniformly set. This means that every student taking the exam will have the same exam conditions and time; exam administration discrepancies caused by different proctors will be eliminated.

For instructors, the online exam environment means that you will soon no longer need to hand-score T/F and Multiple Choice questions. Finally, D2L courses with

online exams will have all student work in the D2L space. Exam feedback and grades will be returned directly to the student in D2L, eliminating the need to hold a paper copy of the exam or complete and file exam reports.

Relatively few courses were selected for inclusion in the pilot, but already much has been learned. Read on for some helpful hints regarding online testing as well as other ways you can use the D2L quiz tool in your online IL courses.

**Announcing the Second  
Quarterly DCS IL Instructor  
Appreciation and Professional  
Development Meeting: A  
Working Lunch**

**February 19th from 1-3 pm  
Room 7045, 21 N. Park Street  
Madison, WI 53715**



**Continuing Studies**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# D2L Quiz Tools

## Possible Assessment Types

The D2L Quiz Tool has many capabilities that quiz authors can use to customize their student's exam experiences. Quizzes can be divided into multiple sections, and sections can contain set, specific questions or a bank of questions that can be used for random selection. Photos can also be included as part of quiz questions.

Possible question formats include:

- True/False: useful for testing basic knowledge of facts
- Multiple Choice: useful for testing basic knowledge of facts
- Multi-Select: useful for assessing more nuanced or complex facts
- Long Answer: useful for paragraph or longer essay responses
- Short Answer: useful for phrase or sentence responses
- Multi-Short Answer: useful for questions that require multiple phrase or sentence responses (i.e. list three facts about X")
- Fill in the Blanks: useful when students should add individual words to a text with blanks
- Matching: useful for testing basic knowledge, especially vocabulary
- Ordering: useful for testing sequence of events
- Arithmetic: useful for testing mathematical concepts
- Significant Figures Questions: Useful for testing mathematical concepts and formulas

## Lessons from Converting Paper Exams to D2L Online Assessments

As a part of the online assessment pilot, some students will have access to online exams as early as Feb. 2. An online proctoring vendor has been identified, and some select exams are being converted from paper exams to D2L quizzes. Converting paper exams to the online environment is a task that sounds as if it would be straightforward, and for some exams, it certainly is. Paper exams that rely on T/F, Matching, Multiple Choice, and Essay questions convert easily into the online exam format. Other exams are more difficult to convert to the online format.

Ongoing assessment is an integral component of teaching and learning, because it provides both the teacher and the learner information about how well the learner is understanding and mastering the material. Exams are a form of assessment that usually test rote memorization of information. Another form of assessment is a performance assessment. Performance assessments require students to use the knowledge gained in the course to create a product that demonstrates their knowledge and skills. Many courses and programs nation-wide are moving toward performance

based assessments, following the current trends in educational reform, which emphasize student-focused, active learning. The conversion from paper to online exams is an opportunity for instructors to rethink exam design. In addition to modernizing the exam delivery, converting to online assessments gives instructors the opportunity to incorporate performance-based assessments into their overall assessment design for the course.

Our experience with online exams thus far have yielded some tips for future exam conversions:

- Rather than just taking a paper exam and attempting to transfer it into a new format, exams should be designed to work in the online environment. Consider which of the online assessment types will work best, and re-write the questions to work with that assessment type.
- Split assessments when possible. It may be that only part of the final exam grade is made up from the proctored exam portion, and the other part is based on a longer project. (For example, in a language course, vocabulary, grammar, and cultural competency skills may be

included in the proctored exam, but reading and writing skills may be tested in other, non-proctored formats that allow students to invest more time and use the tools they would use if they were engaging in these activities in real life.)

- Use multi-part exams. You may wish to test general facts with T/F questions and allow students to demonstrate mastery of broad concepts through essays.
- Rethink alternate exams. In the past, IL course authors penned two separate exams, one regular exam and one alternate exam. The online assessment tools allow for randomization of questions. This means that course authors will author one exam, but will need to write more questions per section. The online assessment tool will randomize questions for students. This means that no two students will see the exact same exam, and that students who need to retake an exam will see the same exam framework, but that questions will automatically be randomized from a question bank.

## Good Practice Reminder: Updating LPV/LRMS

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. Students will be delayed in completing their IL courses.

To enter grades into LRMS, go to the following website:

<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 you are logged in, you can search for students using the student 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 send Sarah an email ([skorpi@dcs.wisc.edu](mailto: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.

## D2L Gem: Other Uses for D2L Quizzes

Midcourse and Final exams are not the only ways instructors can use the D2L Quiz Tool. When your IL course is up for revision, consider how using D2L for portions of each unit’s assessment can save you time and provide your students with immediate feedback on their understanding of basic unit concepts and information.

D2L quizzes can be used for student self-tests. This can be a great, non-graded tool for students to check their learning and comprehension of topics before they submit their graded assignments. Self-tests can also help students study for their mid-course and final exams. Since the self-tests can be auto-graded, this is a tool that students can use independently of their instructors. Motivated students can even use the feedback from D2L quizzes and their self-tests to pose more informed questions about course material.

D2L Quizzes can be set to give students immediate feedback. For each question, feedback can be set to display to students. Feedback can even be

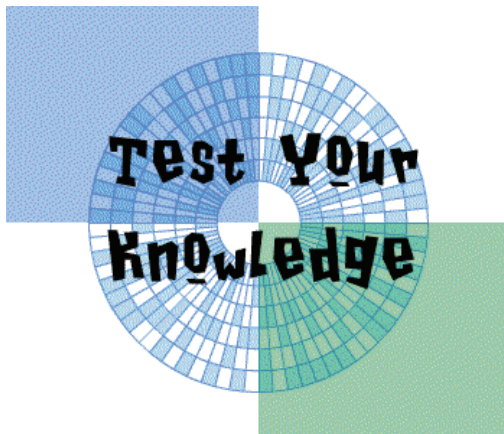
answer-choice specific in multiple choice questions.

Using D2L quizzes effectively as a graded portion of a unit assignment can reduce instructor grading time. If a question only has one correct answer (i.e. the third planet in the solar system is always Earth, and acceptable answers are “Earth” & “earth”), then the D2L quiz tool is a great way to check and give credit for rote memorization of facts while saving instructor grading time for more complex and involved questions and feedback.

As an instructor, you have developed expertise in the topic you are instructing. Your grading time is best spent helping to further develop a student’s

understanding of complex topics and guiding student learning. Students can only hear feedback that is written at their level of comprehension, and benefit most from pointed feedback and concrete examples of how to improve performance or understanding on 1-3 topics. Using your grading time to author feedback that is specific, supportive, and pitched at your student’s current level of understanding is the best use of your instructional time because it benefits your student and your student’s learning the most. Personalizing feedback on larger concepts for students helps the student gain better mastery of course topics and makes the learning experience feel more student-centered, which in turn increases student motivation in the course.

The next time your course is up for revisions, think strategically about the types of unit assessments you use, and whether the D2L Quiz Tools would be helpful to you and your students. Please also use the academic program coordinator and the instructional design team as resources and sounding boards for ways to streamline your grading and provide more learning tools for your students.



## Coming Next Month: Personalizing your D2L Course

### 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 Newsletters.

#### Save the Date:

**Next DCS IL Instructor Meeting: A Working Lunch**  
**February 19th, 1-3 pm**  
**Rm 7045, 21 N. Park St.**  
**Madison, WI**

**31st Annual Conference on Distance Teaching & Learning**  
**August 11-13, 2015**  
**Madison, WI**

I've been teaching distance learning courses for Independent Learning for twenty years. In fact, I was David Werther's first recruit back when he first assumed the position of director—so we go way back! I was originally asked to write an Anthropology 104 course. Following that, I wrote an anthropology course on Indians of North America and later took over an Anthropology 100 course when the original instructor retired. Eventually I also agreed to instruct two psychology courses, a Civil War course, and an independent reading course on the history of Wisconsin Indians. It goes without saying that this adventure in distance learning has been an enjoyable one.

Anthropology has been a love of mine since before I even knew there was a word for this interest. As a child, I was the only person in our small-town library to check out the book, "Head Hunting in the Solomon Islands," which was, surprisingly, about a young woman photographer touring the Solomon Island and taking head shots of the natives. I was fascinated by cultures so very different from the farming community in Hillsboro, Wisconsin, where I grew up—they seemed so exotic and otherworldly. However, I've discovered that in fact we are all more alike than different. In my work with students, though I assign texts that highlight very different

If you have any helpful tips or hints that you would like to share with your IL colleagues, please be sure to let Sarah know by February 15. If you have any questions that you would like to see addressed in future newsletters, just let Sarah know.



## Introducing: Jeanne Connors

cultures such as the !Kung San in Africa and the Yanomamo in Brazil, I try to stress these similarities—that people in all cultures laugh and love, quarrel and hate, sing and play, eat and sleep, and shelter themselves, etc. It is only the superficial outside that differs, and while this is fascinating, we should never forget the observation that one anthropologist made: "No anthropologist has ever returned from the field saying he or she couldn't understand a single thing about that culture!"

As a non-traditional student, I started college in my 30s after my divorce and managed to put my kids through college while I pursued a doctorate in cultural anthropology. I spent 18 months with the Navajo Indians in Arizona and New Mexico doing my doctorate fieldwork on their perceptions of autism and mental retardation. After earning a Ph.D., I spent considerable time on Plains reservations, followed by six years on the Menominee reservation in northeast Wisconsin about 30 miles from Green Bay. For several years, I also taught for the University system, mostly in the state and Federal prisons. Since then I've been an instructor for on-line undergraduate courses with Independent Learning, and a graduate instructor and mentor for another on-line university.

Over the years, students have become ever more challenging. They're more savvy these days, ask more questions, and require explanations that go beyond the texts—this is what makes teaching so interesting and worthwhile! At the same time, the habit of texting, tweeting, and e-mailing has influenced writing skills, not always for the better. For some students, writing a narrative in complete sentences with proper spelling and punctuation is a



real struggle. What I like best is their willingness to learn these mechanics and seeing their narratives improve over the length of the course.

In the last two years, I've discovered the joy of traveling. The first time I toured the British Isles and visited Stonehenge—a site I'd studied in college but never dreamed I'd ever actually see. I also fell in love with castles, so last year I went to Ireland on a tour in which we spent three nights in castles, including two nights at the famed and stupendous Ashford Castle where we were given maps to find our ways from our rooms to the front door and where we were served sumptuous meals in the King George V dining room.

My hobby is a multi-volume novel I'm currently writing about the reconstruction period in Mississippi, from 1865-1875. It was something I started way back in my 20's. Then life interfered, and for 40 years the project was set aside—but never quite forgotten. With retirement (of sorts), I took it up again. At this point, my goal is to live long enough to finish it!