Assessment/Evaluation Plan

Creating and Customizing a Home Page in Canvas

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How to Create a Custom Home Page in Canvas

Executive Summary

Learning Management Systems (LMS) used at the college level are designed to be the online hub of a course. If the features of the LMS are being used by the instructor, a student can find the syllabus, course calendar, assignments as well as take tests and quizzes. The LMS can also be used as the primary way for a student to communicate with the instructor and their classmates. Most features of the LMS are optional and dependent upon the individual instructor to implement. One instructor's LMS site can be "published" with minimal customization while another can be "published" with quite a sophisticated design. This broad set of LMS options and broad set of competencies leads to two areas of need for universities wanting to increase the quality of their LMS course sites for their students:

1. Universities need to teach their faculty, lecturers, and graduate students (who in this context we will call "learners") design techniques for using their LMS

2. Universities need to foster a sense of buy-in among their learners in order to encourage the use of student centered LMS features.

Our assessment plan is built around addressing both of these areas of need and is specific to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK)

UTK began its transition from the LMS it had used for nearly eighteen years (Blackboard Learn) to Instructure Canvas in August 2016. By May 2017, UTK's Blackboard Learn was permanently closed, leaving only Canvas as the campus' official LMS. Some learners only know Blackboard Learn, and they need training on Canvas.

Our design approach was to give the learners instruction on a few select design ideas and avoid attempting to teach all of the features of Canvas. With this in mind,

the goal was to create instruction and an assessment plan that would guide the learners down the path of using the Canvas design features, and in doing so increase a sense of learner buy in for using Canvas. Our assessment/evaluation plan includes the following: a description of the learners and their needs, a presentation using Camtasia that demonstrates the instruction, a three-part assessment in which the learner demonstrates mastery of this content using an actual Canvas course site, and an evaluation administered to the students who are using the course site.

Description of the Learner and their Instructional Needs

The learners for this training are instructors at the University of Tennessee (UTK). This includes: full-time and part-time tenured faculty members as well as graduate teaching assistants. Beginning this fall, many instructors were not familiar with Canvas, as only a few instructors that had taught during the previous summer had used it before. With a semester behind them, most instructors are ready to take more advanced steps in implementing design features available in Canvas for their courses. To meet the needs of instructors who are seeking to design a course that is more learner focused, we have developed an instructional and assessment plan that focuses on building design skills and creating "buy-in." By taking these simple steps described in the video we developed, the learners will become familiar with how Canvas works and be more able to implement additional features in Canvas.

Description of Course/Program Competencies, Intended Outcomes and Specific

Objectives

The graph below outlines the specifics of our assessment/evaluation plan:

	Name	Goal	Objective	Performance	Criteria of Mastery	Matched Non-Example
1	Part 1 (of Three Part Assessment)	Learns and implements LMS design techniques	Create a page in Canvas	Learner can create a page in an active Canvas site	Learner creates page and sends link to OIT	Leaner fails to send link to OIT. Learner does not create the page
2	Part 2 (of Three Part Assessment)	Learns and implements LMS design techniques	Customize a page in Canvas	Learner can customize a page in an active Canvas site using at least 2 of 5 listed options	Learner customizes page using at least 2 of the options and sends link to OIT	Learner fails to send link. Learner only uses only 1 or doesn't use customizing option.
3	Part 3 (of Three Part Assessment)	Learns and implements LMS design techniques	Set custom page as home page	Learner can set a custom page as the home page.	Learner sets custom page as home page and sends link to OIT	Learner fails to send link. Learner sets a non-custom page as home page. Learner fails to set a home page.
4	Three Part Assessment (overall)	Learner has an increased sense of "buy-in" for LMS use	"Buy in " to LMS process by Customizing their LMS course site	Watch online training video and complete 3 learning objectives listed above	Hard to measure "buy-in." Completion of assignment could be seen as exhibition of buy-in	Learner fails to view video, finish video, complete any of the other objectives.
5	Evaluation	Increase "buy-in" for LMS use	Show that course site customization increases student satisfaction	Administer LMS design evaluation mid-semester	Correctly administer and examine results of evaluation	Learner disregards results of survey, or downplays usefulness

The first three objectives (1-3) are tied together in the same assessment, but they are three distinct learning objectives. None of these objectives is very complicated, but that's by design. If the learner completes the three-part assessment (1-3), our expectation is that learner confidence in using Canvas will increase. Learning

objectives 1 & 3 (create a custom page and set it as the home page) are straightforward and do not require any of the customization features in Canvas used in objective 2. The second objective is where most of the complicated work and learner choice occurs. Learners are given the option to make changes to their custom page described in the instruction, or choose another design option. The objective is to customize a page, not specifically to "add a picture" or "add a link." If the learner makes design choices, then they are fulfilling the objectives of the training, regardless of the choices they make. Additionally, these assessments are authentic, as they involve changes being made to an actual, live Canvas course site.

The final two objectives (4 & 5) have to do with learner buy-in. Completion of the overall three-part assessment (objective 4) is, in a way, its own assessment of buy-in. By completing the instruction and assessment, they've interacted with Canvas's design features, and hopefully that means they've "bought in," to how simple customizing their course site can be. The evaluation (objective 5) is administered to the students in the course that the learner is teaching. If the learner can see that students are responding positively to the custom design choices in Canvas, the learner might feel more of a sense of "buy-in," and hopefully continue implementing custom design choices in their future courses.

Camtasia Instruction, Three Part Assessment, and Evaluation

Instructors will watch the Camtasia video, hosted on YouTube: [https://youtu.be/qBDjVvJlc4I] and complete the following activities:

1. Watch the video

2. Using one of their active course sites, complete three-part assessment (create a page, customize the page and designate the page as their home page).

3. When completed, the instructor will send the link of their course site to OIT for grading of assessment.

Multiple options for customizing the home page (the second part of the three part assessment) are mentioned in the video yet instruction yet only two are shown. Design options could include:

1. Adding a photograph of the instructor (or using an avatar)

2. Adding a personalized welcome message, a version of the university's official course description, course objectives, or any combination thereof

3. Adding a picture that can be used as a banner image

4. Adding links or multiple links to course materials such linking to the syllabus or course calendar

5. Adding links to other parts of the canvas course site, such as linking to Assignments Quizzes, Discussions and Modules .

The first two choices, adding a message and avatar, are explicitly described in the video, with the remaining design options mentioned. The goal was to keep the video short (under 3 minutes). If an instructor doesn't feel comfortable adding an avatar, for example, they can stretch their learning by adding one of the other choices. This structure fits well with the "buy-in" objective, which is more about the learner using a design features in Canvas, and less about using one design feature over another. Allowing for more options gives the learner choices while still requiring them to fulfill the learning objective. The skills used for implementing these Canvas design features are, in fact, closely related. If a learner successfully demonstrates proficiency on two of the skills, they are actually showing proficiency in overall design in Canvas, as illustrated in Figure 1.
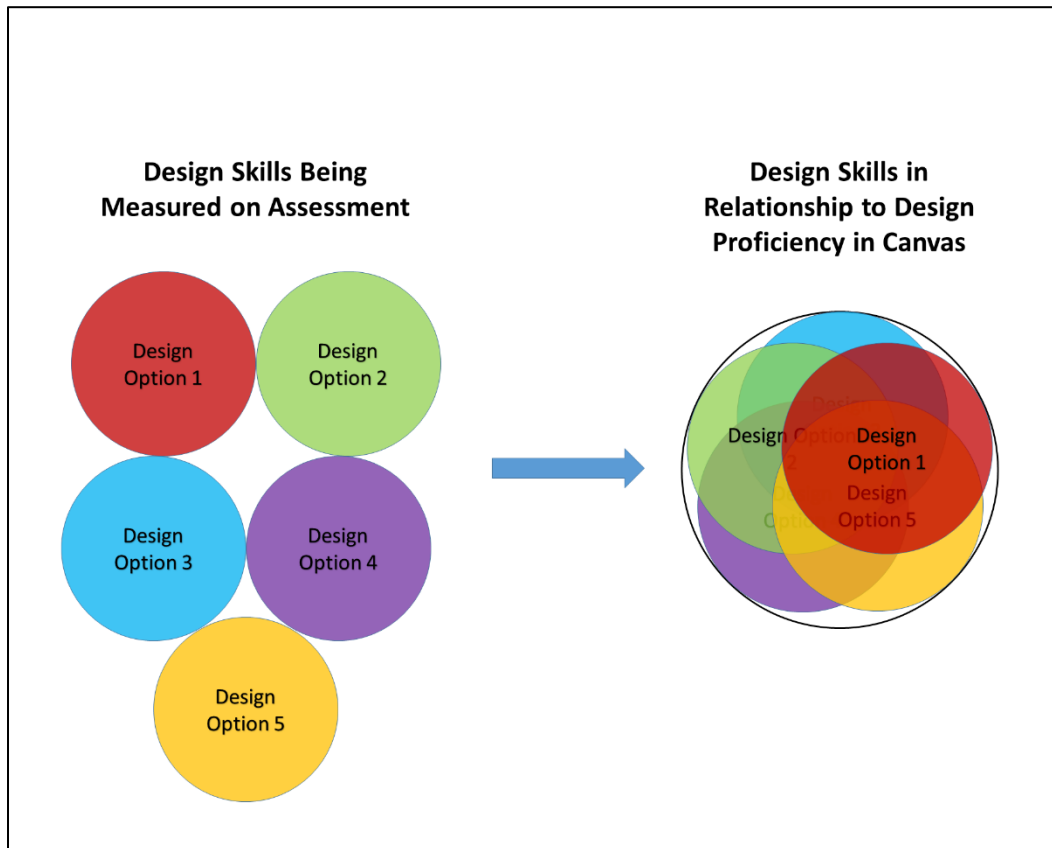
Figure 1: The various skills that we are asking learners to demonstrate. By picking two, it might seem that they are missing out on major chunks of learning. In actuality, the skills being measured have a large amount of overlap when looked at in terms of design proficiency in Canvas.

After the learner has watched the instructional video, and has created and customized their Canvas page, the final assessment is graded by the Office of Information Technology (OIT) at UTK. The learner will be prompted to copy and paste the address of their course site (found in the browser's address bar) into a provided text box and click "Send". The address will then be sent to the Course Delivery group in OIT, where the learner's course site will be assessed for the creation of a new Page, the customization of the Page using two or more of the design features, and the successful designation of that customized Page as the Home Page. Once it has been confirmed by

OIT that the prerequisites have been met, the learner will receive a certificate showing that the training was completed successfully.

The evaluation portion of the design plan is a short student survey, which is deployed into the course site so that students can rank the site's Home Page. Questions will be limited to a few Likert scale questions so that basic information can be gathered and From the survey's results, the learner and OIT will be able to determine if the customization of the course site's Home Page translates to a better experience for students.

Unfortunately, there are also a few potential drawbacks to this method of assessment and evaluation. The time of year in the semester could delay the review process by OIT and the delivery of the certificate of completion. The busiest times of the year would be the few weeks surrounding the first day of class for the semester, administrative holidays, and the few weeks surrounding the final day of class for the semester. These times when certificates might be delayed are also natural times for learners to complete this training. Another drawback could be the dependence on an evaluative survey. While the survey can be deployed with little or no effort, there is no guarantee that students will complete the survey. A sample set that contains only a few responses could be used for some basic information gathering, yet by no means would be indicative of the class' reaction as a whole.

Group Statement: Assessment/Evaluation Choices, Best Practices, Justifications

In the end, our group felt that the assessment and evaluation choices adequately engage the learner and encourage participation in the process. In particular, because our three-part assessment is an authentic assessment (as it involves making changes to an active course) and according to Palloff and Pratt,

"effectively demonstrate not only acquisition of knowledge but ability to apply that knowledge in professional or other settings" (2009, p.76). Our learners, just by completing the assessments, will already find their knowledge applied in their Canvas course site. The instruction and the assessments, in addition to being authentic, are also designed to be a manageable, as instructors do not necessarily feel they have the time for in-depth training. The evaluation portion is similarly small, as students are busy and might not feel they have the time for anything longer than a simple survey. According to Mager, "the end-of-unit and end-of-course evaluations tell us whether or not the instruction works: That is, whether it accomplished what it set out to accomplish" (1997, p.14). If the learners can see that their design efforts are actually improving their students' experience in Canvas, then the learning objectives of the assessment/evaluation plan have been met.

References

Mager, R.F. (1997). *Measuring instructional results: How to find out if your instructional objectives have been achieved* (3rd). Atlanta: CEP Press.

Palloff, R.M., Pratt, K. (2009). *Assessing the online learner*. San Francisco: Jossey & Bass.