Current Topics In Remote Instruction

Grade center consultation preparation, tips for improving breakout groups, and how to successfully gain feedback from students.

LOOKING TO CREATE A VIDEO RECORDING OTHER THAN VOICEOVER? TRY THE LIGHTBOARD!

The Lightboard room in the Rowe building is still open and available for use from faculty. If you are looking to schedule an appointment to use it, you can make an appointment by going to https://lightboard.uconn.edu and selecting the reservations button. The lightboard is currently open for use between the hours of 6 AM and 9 PM Monday through Friday.

Due to the pandemic, personal marker and supply kits are provided in the lightboard. We recommend taking the kit with you after use and bringing it back for your next visit.

Availability and Reservations ⬀

SCHEDULE GRADE CENTER CONSULTATIONS NOW

Getting your grade center in HuskyCT organized can be a daunting task, but with the instructional help of the staff here at Educational Technologies, it can be easier than ever. Given that we are already in the second half of the semester, we are encouraging instructors in need of consultations on their grade center to contact us via our email at edtech@uconn.edu to arrange for an informational consultation. For those who prefer to watch our training video, please refer to: https://edtech.uconn.edu/training-videos/. Virtual training sessions are also available by registering at https://fins.uconn.edu.

MEET THE ED TECHIE

Margaret Ascenzo is a PhD candidate with the English Department. She enjoys learning about new teaching methods, especially innovative ways to teach the humanities online. During her free time, she loves reading poetry, watching sci-fi television shows (basically any series with the word "star" in it), and creating terrible puns.

Making Online Instruction Fun

The transition to remote instruction creates challenges for student engagement. In the last newsletter, we explored ways to increase student involvement. Here, we suggest some methods of making online instruction an enjoyable experience for students at UConn.

KEEP INSTRUCTION ENGAGING

In our last newsletter, we discussed seven methods of increasing student engagement: using breakout rooms, encouraging chat-based participation, using an inclusive curriculum, keeping content concise, learning and using student names, and establishing norms such as class introductions and farewells. Using these methods to increase student engagement is the first step in ensuring successful online course delivery.

BE CREATIVE WITH COURSE DELIVERY

Online instruction can be limiting to classic classroom techniques, but course delivery online can also introduce new and fun ways to make class delivery exciting. Introducing alternatives to classic assessments and increasing student collaboration via breakout rooms and group projects will increase student involvement as well as make instruction more fun. You can attend a workshop to learn about new methods of involvement by registering through https://fins.uconn.edu

WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK YOUR STUDENTS

Some instructors may be stumped for ways to improve their online instruction. One valuable way to learn how to increase student involvement and enjoyment in a course is to request feedback from students. Students taking the course can provide valuable feedback at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester outside of the usual SET surveys that are used at the University. Arranging a Google doc or a survey outside of HuskyCT to request feedback on how to improve the course can be valuable for instructors. One option is to use the University's Qualtrics license: https://oire.uconn.edu/qualtrics/. HuskyCT can also be used to obtain feedback. We expand on using features in HuskyCT to receive feedback in the next section.

ONLINE EXAMS & FORCE COMPLETION

At first glance, the force completion feature in HuskyCT assessments seems like a great idea, but here at Educational Technologies, we strongly advise instructors against using this feature. The feature, which functions to keep students from pausing and re-entering the exam while taking it, poses issues in remote learning. For example, if a student loses connection during an exam, they will be unable to re-access the exam attempt and the exam cannot be re-opened. Due to this issue, we suggest instructors explore other options, like limiting the test availability and using the timer option in combination with "AUTO-SUBMIT" to keep students from taking longer time on their exam.

MEET THE ED TECHIE

Abbey worked with Ed Tech as an undergraduate from 2015 to 2018. She was excited to return as support for the transition to report learning back in March of 2020. When she is not helping instructors with Blackboard or putting together these newsletters, Abbey is hiking, writing creatively, or spending time with her two dogs, Auggie and Luci.

Getting Feedback From Students

Throughout the semester, clear feedback from students assists instructors in gaining a clear picture of what students understand and what is not working. Regardless of the teaching modality, online tools make gathering feedback easier. These tools are also great ways to increase student engagement in class.

HUSKYCT SURVEY

HuskyCT has a variety of assessment tools, including an anonymous survey tool. Instructors can build surveys which are very close in structure to the HuskyCT Tests function, except these surveys are completely anonymous and accessing the results is different than a regular test. Once you have created the survey and have submissions, you will follow these steps to access the results:

1. Under Course Management, access Grade Center, then Full Grade Center.
2. In the Full Grade Center, use the scroll bars to find the column with the survey results in it.
3. Select the drop down menu next to the title of the column. It should appear as a grey circle with a downward pointing arrow.
4. From this menu, select "Attempt Statistics"
5. The following page will show "Test Statistics" and the results of each question in the survey.

HUSKYCT DISCUSSION BOARD

Instructors can create a discussion board thread that allows students to submit questions about the course or the content. This thread can serve as a location for all students to see the questions and the responses to what might prove to be common questions or concerns. Instructors should be sure to set notifications for this thread so they know when a student posts a question.

FLIPGRID

This free tool allows students to submit video responses to prompts provided by the instructor. This product allows students to see and hear other students' views. The instructor and other students can reply via text or video. Feedback on this tool has been very positive from students as a means to create class community. For more information about Flipgrid: https://info.flipgrid.com/.

TEAMS POLLING

For those instructors using MicrosoftTeams, polling is available through the forms feature. To launch a poll before, during, or after a teams session, select the "Forms" icon and input your question. Follow the prompts to launch the poll to your course.

COLLABORATE POLLING

Polling is available in classes that use the Blackboard Collaborate video conferencing platform. You can create questions in the moment while you are giving instruction. One recommendation we give to instructors looking to create questions beforehand is to put questions in PowerPoint so don't need to type out the entire question during the live session. The Polling responses can be also be downloaded after the session is over to give credit to students.

ICLICKER

In addition to using them for in-class surveys and questions, iClickers are a great way to receive immediate feedback from students in the class. REEF polling allows you to sync your iClicker cloud with your HuskyCT site which allows for automatic syncing between iClicker data and your HuskyCT grade center. Keep in mind that iClickers need to be purchased by the students if they have not already done so. To learn more about iClicker: https://confluence.uconn.edu/x/4Ag8C.

Getting Feedback From Students

SLIDO

For obtaining a quick response during class, Slido, a polling tool similar to Poll Everywhere, provides a platform to pose questions to students and receive anonymous responses. Slido can integrate directly into PowerPoint slides and into Google slides. A free version of Slido is available for up to 100 participants with a maximum of 3 polls per event (class period). For more information: https://www.sli.do/. Please note this product is not supported by EdTech or ITS.

BACKCHANNEL CHAT

This tool provides a class chat forum for engaging students and informally assessing their knowledge. Students can amplify a message (vote on it) to ensure the instructor realizes the post is important to multiple students. Instructors can control what is seen by other students and remove inappropriate messages. Students can also have a private discussion with the instructor. This product is free for classes up 30 students. For more information: https://backchannelchat.com. Please note this product is not supported by EdTech or ITS.

WEBEX POLLING

There are many advantages to using WebEx polling with your course, including the ability to make questions ahead of time. If you are already using WebEx for your class, using the polling feature is only a few steps.

To create questions ahead of time, open your Personal Room and follow the guide below to create questions. Step 9 of the section below informs you of the save option; click on that to save your question(s) as an .atp file. Give this file an appropriate name so you can find it easily when you need it! Once saved, you do not need to open the Poll.
1. When the time comes to use your saved questions, click on the folder icon in the Polling Panel (see below).
2. Select a .atp file you saved earlier.
3. Click **Open Poll** when you are ready to publish the question(s) into the session.

From here, you can follow the instructions on our confluence link to create questions in the WebEx polling feature. Here is the link you will need to follow to access the instructions.

Should You Require Student Cameras Be On During Class Time?

Pros of cameras on

- May build engagement and trust
- May foster community within the class
- May enhance student presence
- May create a sense of accountability
- May facilitate learning student names
- May simulate in-person instruction

Cons of cameras on

- May create digital inequity for those students with limited bandwidth or internet access
- May lead to privacy issues and concerns for students
- May increase student self-consciousness
- Creates risk to FERPA-protected data
- Leads to exhaustion when staring into faces at close range

Tips For Breakout Rooms in Remote Instruction

Breakout rooms are a useful feature for a variety of course models. Here are out best tips for success while using Breakout Rooms.

ASSIGN ROLES

Do not expect students to sort out who does what in the breakout room. Assign one person to be a group leader who is charged with keeping everyone on task; assign another as the note taker; assign another to report on what the group did when the entire class reconvenes. Another option is to tell the students what roles are needed, then pick a random process for assigning roles, such as birthdate, distance from home/campus, or oldest car. This approach promotes discussion early on between students.

PUT EVERYTHING IN WRITING

To avoid having students enter the breakout room unaware of what to do, share instructions for the assignment in writing. This can be done in advance of the class session and should be somewhere the students can refer to during class, such as email, Google Doc, or in chat box. Please note that students will not be able to see the chat box from the main meeting room once they are in the breakout rooms so the information should link out to a location they can still reach.

MIX UP MEMBERSHIP ... OR DON'T

Some instructors like to routinely change breakout group membership while others prefer to students in the same group in allow students to get to know each other. Either approach works but if students are kept in the same groups, switch the roles played by each student so everyone has a chance to participate in each position.

CREATE CONNECTIONS

Breakout rooms work better when students feel comfortable with one another. Provide students with an unrelated question to discuss in their group prior to starting their assigned task.

FIND THE RIGHT GROUP SIZE

Many instructors prefer smaller groups consisting of approximately 5 students. This allows all students the opportunity to participate.

FIND THE RIGHT LENGTH OF TIME

Typically a shorter breakout session is preferred to keep students from losing focus or leaving the room. There are times when a longer session is necessary to work on a more complex assignment.

CONSIDER GIVING EACH GROUP A DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENT

While some instructors prefer all groups to work on the same task, others prefer to give each group different tasks (or have a few groups work on each task). Utilizing different tasks, creates a more engaging post-group report out to the larger class. Utilizing multiple tasks for which all groups need to hear the information from other groups also provides students with a reason for individual students to return to the larger group discussion, rather than signing off.

USE SHARED DOCS

Having students work on a Google Doc, wiki, Padlet, or something similar in order to document their work, promote participation, compare their work with that of other groups, and makes their thoughts and process clearer for the instructor in order to provide feedback. The use of these shared documents also permits the instructor to observe what the students are doing without interrupting conversation in the breakout room. Some instructors prefer to have each group work on their own document which is shared with the larger group later while others prefer to have all groups work on separate areas of the same document.

Upcoming Workshops

All workshops can be accessed and registered for by going to the fins.uconn.edu page and selecting "Events"

KAREN'S UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Using an iPad to Teach Remotely
March 16, 2021 1:00pm - 2:00pm

Collaborate Advanced Features
March 19, 2021 10:00am - 11:00am

DAN'S UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Preparing your HuskyCT Grade Center for Grade Calculation and Submission
March 16, 2021 11:00am - 12:30pm

Using LockDown Browser and Monitor for Online Tests in HuskyCT
March 18, 2021 11:00am - 12:30pm

Developing and Building Online Assessments in HuskyCT
March 24, 2021 2:30pm - 4:00pm

Using LockDown Browser and Monitor for Online Tests in HuskyCT
March 30, 2021 2:30pm - 4:00pm

Developing and Building Online Assessments in HuskyCT
April 1, 2021 11:00am - 12:30pm

Karen Skudlarek (left) & Dan Facchinetti (right) host workshops regularly to update and guide staff through online instruction using HuskyCT (Blackboard), WebEx, Kaltura, Teams, and a variety of other softwares.

OTHER CETL WORKSHOP TOPICS

Public Speaking and Presentation Skills
March 15, 2021 6:45pm - 7:45pm

The Introvert/Shy Person as a Successful Instructor / Student
March 17, 2021 6:45pm - 7:45pm

Where Do Students Need more Preparation in Order to Be Successful in your Class?
March 23, 2021 6:45pm - 7:45pm

Classroom Environment: Accentuate the positive
March 25, 2021 2:00pm - 3:00pm