Canvas 2017: Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

In Autumn 2012, UW-IT made the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) available to all UW instructors, with training and support available at all three campuses. UW-IT worked with the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) to evaluate the first and second years of its adoption, in Spring 2013 and 2014. Included here are the results of our 2017 evaluation. The full report summarizes findings from online faculty and student surveys administered to users in Spring 2017, and includes the faculty and student survey instruments.

Key Findings

Satisfaction: Both faculty and students are generally satisfied with Canvas and its ease of use, though satisfaction with the LMS remains higher among students than faculty. This finding is consistent with earlier evaluations. Overall satisfaction with Canvas has increased over time among both faculty and students.

Use: Instructors are using Canvas primarily for course management and administration, and report that the LMS works well for these purposes. The more experience instructors have with Canvas, the more likely they are to expand their use of the tool beyond course management alone. Some instructors still experience Canvas as a poor fit with their desired teaching practices, particularly in regard to structuring/capturing interactions among students, and between students and course material.

Impact: Use of Canvas has a positive impact on teaching and learning. Over half of instructors reported making a change in their teaching practices as a result of using Canvas, and found that this change had a positive effect in their classroom. Students reported being more engaged in their courses and better able to track their progress and manage assignments, and noted that the opportunity to review course materials or practice exams added to their learning.

Support: Students reported little need for support with Canvas, but their feedback suggested faculty members could use expert advice on instructional design. Instructors most frequently turn to a colleague or documentation for support, however, and utilize far less often consultations with the Canvas support team or workshops on Canvas where they would be more likely to receive this type of advice.

Generally, satisfaction with Canvas is high, though survey results also indicate that IT needs to continue to work with instructional support staff to help faculty expand and deepen their use of features in Canvas to increase engagement and maximize efficiency. Focusing on transforming how training is delivered, and exploring how central support services could work in concert with departmental support, will be important aspects of supporting Canvas use moving forward.

Canvas 2017: Evaluation Report
Opportunities and Challenges with Canvas LMS

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1. Introduction

Canvas is an open-source Learning Management System (LMS) launched by Instructure (www.instructure.com) in 2011. During the academic year 2011-2012, University of Washington Information Technology (UW-IT) piloted Canvas at all three UW campuses (Bothell, Seattle, and Tacoma). A small sample of faculty used Canvas during the autumn and winter quarters and then provided feedback to inform support of the tool university-wide. In Autumn 2012, UW-IT made Canvas available to all UW instructors, with training and support available at all three campuses.

In Spring 2017, UW-IT conducted an evaluation of the fifth year of UW-wide Canvas adoption. With help from the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA), UW-IT had last evaluated university-wide Canvas adoption in Spring 2014. Since that time, use of Canvas has risen steadily; in Spring 2017, 43% of courses taught across all three campuses were using Canvas, up from 40% in Spring 2016, and 35% in Spring 2015. Many instructors have been using Canvas now for years.

2. Methods

UW-IT developed brief surveys for faculty and students based on instruments used in earlier evaluations conducted with OEA. The surveys were designed to address the following questions:

Pedagogy and use of Canvas: How are instructors using Canvas in their courses? Students? Are they using the LMS in interesting and innovative ways?

Impact: What effects has Canvas had on teaching and learning, if any?

Satisfaction: Are instructors and students satisfied with Canvas? Where are the pain points?

Support: How can we best support instructors and students in their use of Canvas?

We recruited faculty Canvas users at all three campuses via an email invitation. Student Canvas users were recruited via a system-wide announcement posted on UW Canvas. Student participants were entered into a drawing for twenty $25 gifts of cash to be applied to their student ID cards.
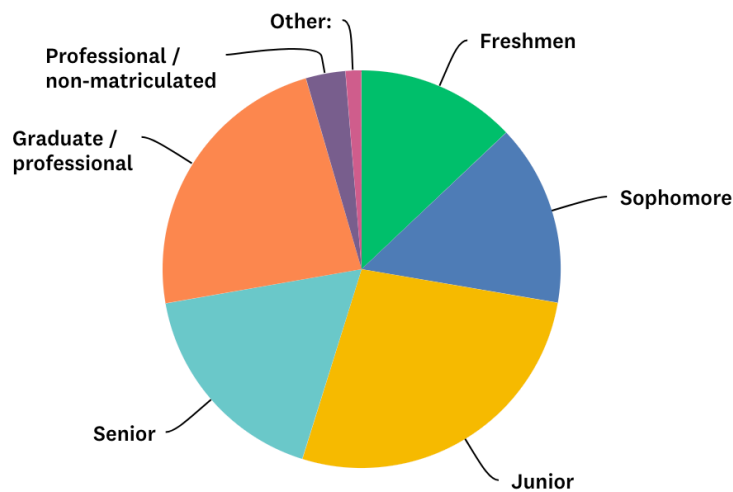
3. Participants

We invited a total of 4,421 UW instructors at all three campuses to participate in the survey, and 648 (15%) responded. Participants spanned a broad range of disciplines, with the greatest numbers representing Natural Sciences (15%), Humanities (13%), Engineering (12%) and the Social Sciences (10%).

What broad category best describes your academic area?
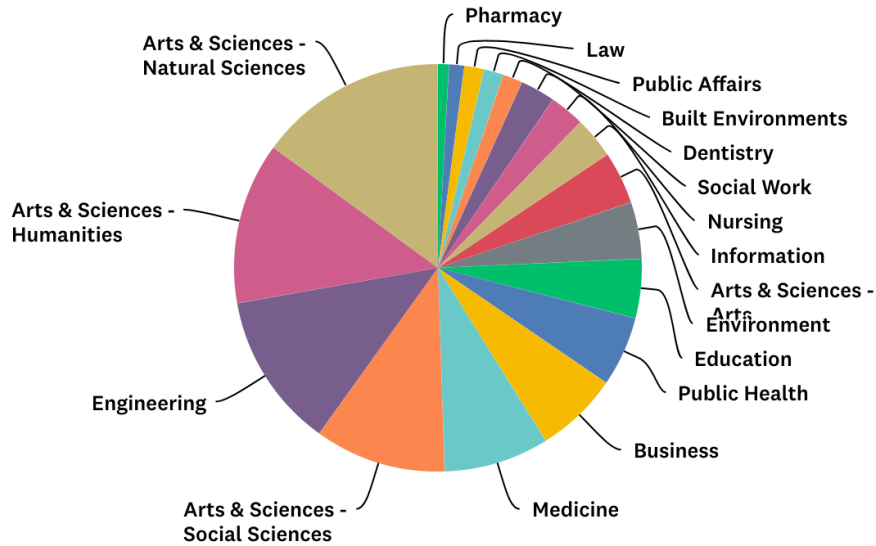

A total of 4,670 students from all three campuses responded to the survey announcement in Canvas. The majority were undergraduates, but graduate and professional students participated as well.

What is your class standing?

Like instructors, student participants represented a wide range of disciplines, with the greatest numbers from Engineering (16%), Business (12%), Natural Sciences (12%), and Social Sciences (11%).

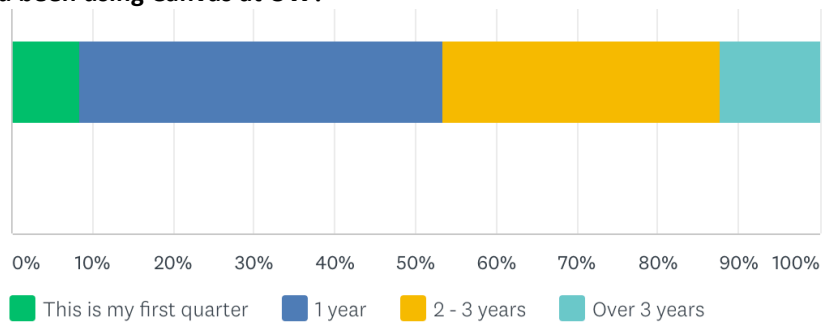**What broad category best describes your academic area?**
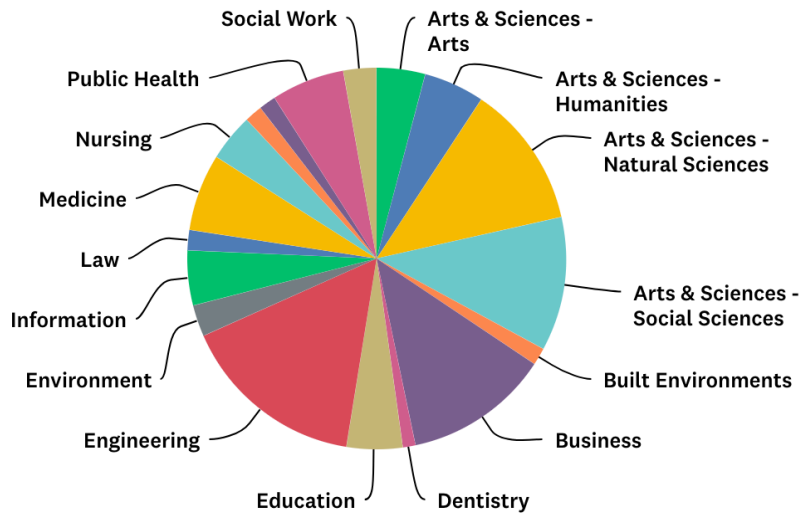
Instructors and students were also asked how long they had been using Canvas. Instructor respondents were roughly split into thirds: those relatively new to Canvas (first quarter using Canvas, 14%; one year, 16%), those using Canvas for 2-3 years (36%) and those using Canvas over 3 years (33%).

How long have you been using Canvas for teaching at UW?
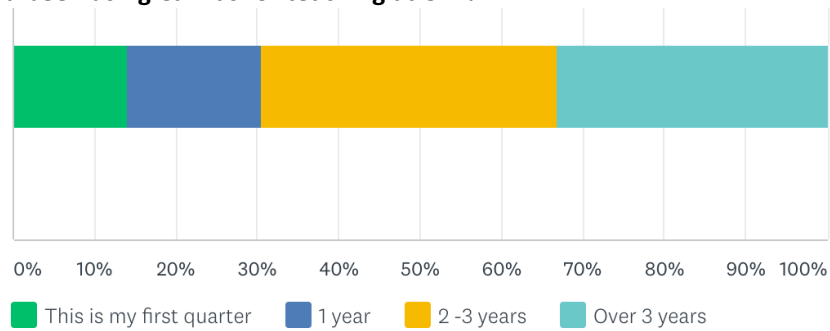
Among student respondents, just over half were relatively new to Canvas (first quarter using Canvas, 9%; one year 45%). Only 12% reported using Canvas for over 3 years.

How long have you been using Canvas at UW?

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90%   100%

🟩 This is my first quarter   🟦 1 year   🟨 2 - 3 years   🟩 Over 3 years

4. Instructor Findings

4.1 Use/Pedagogy

Instructors were asked to select a course in which they had used Canvas over the last academic year and to answer a series of questions with this course in mind. The results indicate that Canvas is being used by instructors in a wide range of class types. Most described their course as a "small lecture" (36%), followed by "large lecture" (17%), "seminar" (16%) and "large discussion-based class" (16%).

How would you describe this course?
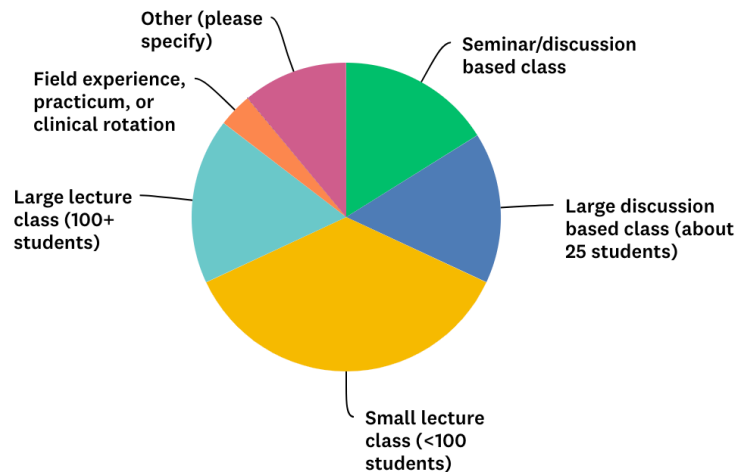
Almost all of these courses (87%) were taught in person. Only 5% (34) were described as courses taught entirely online, with another 8% (51) described as hybrid.

When asked how they were using Canvas in their courses, between 72% and 91% of instructors indicated that they used Canvas for course management activities such as distributing readings, posting grades, collecting assignments and communicating with students (see table below). Another 64% indicated that they also provided feedback on assignments through Canvas. Significantly fewer instructors indicated that they took advantage of opportunities within Canvas to promote interaction between students and course materials, or between students and their peers and/or the instructor. For

example, just over a third (36%) indicated that they engaged students in discussion of course materials in Canvas, and just over a quarter (26%) reported that they used it to facilitate group work or other collaboration among students.

In this course, for what purposes did you use Canvas?

Distribute course readings and other documents/files	90.9%	577
Track and post student grades	78.9%	501
Provide a calendar of course dates and due dates for students	76.1%	483
Collect assignments online	75.3%	478
Communicate with students	72.3%	459
Provide feedback on assignments	64.4%	409
Post recorded course lectures and other course videos	39.5%	251
Engage students with course materials through discussions/activities	35.8%	227
Administer quizzes and/or exams	32.8%	208
Help students interact with each other	26.3%	167
Facilitate student group work, peer review, or other collaboration	26.3%	167
Synchronous communications (web conference, chat)	3.3%	21
Other	3.3%	21
Total Respondents: 635		

4.1.1 Comparisons

In our analysis, we also looked at a number of comparisons to test hypotheses we had about the use of Canvas and its features. The findings were as expected. For example, instructors who reported using Canvas for over three years were significantly more likely than instructors who reported using Canvas for only one year to use the LMS for the following purposes:
- Collect assignments online
- Provide feedback on assignments
- Provide a calendar of course dates and due dates for students
- Help students interact with each other
- Use synchronous communications

Similarly, instructors teaching an online course were significantly more likely than those teaching their selected course in person to use Canvas for nearly every purpose; their list includes the purposes above, plus:
- Post recorded course lectures and other course videos
- Administer quizzes and/or exams
- Engage students with the course materials through discussion or other learning activities

And when compared with instructors who reported teaching seminar classes, large discussion classes, and small lectures, those who taught large lecture courses were significantly less likely to use Canvas to distribute course readings and other documents, and more likely to use it to post recorded lectures and other videos.

Respondents in each of these comparisons were remarkably similar across the remaining survey items.

4.1.2 Use of Additional Tools

A large majority (79%) reported using only the features in Canvas for their teaching (e.g. gradebook, discussions, collaborations).

People use the features of Canvas in different ways. Which way best describes how you have used Canvas in your course?

I used only Canvas (including tools available on Canvas, such as Google docs)	79.0%	500
I used Canvas but replaced some Canvas features with other tools (e.g., I used GoPost for discussions; I used a third-party tool for assignments).	14.2%	90
I used some features of Canvas but did not use Canvas as a course website.	6.8%	43
Total Respondents: 633		

For those who used additional tools with Canvas, these consisted primarily of tools for emailing students, grading, and supporting student collaboration.

Which of the following tools did you use in addition to Canvas?

Class email list	90.9%	577
Other	78.9%	501
Excel	76.1%	483
Catalyst Gradebook	75.3%	478
Collaboration (OneDrive, Google Drive)	72.3%	459
Course Web site	64.4%	409
Video content hosting (Youtube, Vimeo, Flickr)	39.5%	251
eTextbooks and/or publisher sites (Pearson, MHCampus, Cengage)	35.8%	227
Scheduling (Google calendar, Doodle)	32.8%	208
Discussion tools (GoPost, Piazza, TodaysMeet)	26.3%	167
Poll Everywhere	26.3%	167
WebAssign	3.3%	21
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)	3.3%	21
Total Respondents: 635		

4.1.3 Unmet Needs

Instructors were also asked on the survey, "Is there anything you would like to do with Canvas but have not been able to?" The answers to this question provide some indication of how well Canvas is meeting instructors' needs and current pedagogical practices. Among the responses, the top five themes included grading, overall organization and performance, discussions, peer review, and quizzes. These same themes appeared in the findings of previous evaluations.

Grading: In previous evaluations as well as the Spring 2017 survey, instructors requested more customizability to support a diversity of grading practices. Instructors may adopt Canvas, yet they continue to export their grades into other programs or applications to convert grades, or use other tools to track student scores and calculate grades, such as Excel or the Catalyst Gradebook. Some frustrations stemmed from an inefficient workflow.

- *Grading was a nightmare. I had always graded according to a 4.0 GPA scale, but, after four visits to the technology office, was told (in effect) that I had to convert to the Canvas percentage system. I did so, but not without considerable time on my part and confusion for the students.*

- *It's a bit challenging to have extra credit quizzes to make up points without it complicating the grading system. I effectively have to manually enter the extra credit grades.*

- *I need to be able to provide a complete, incomplete, and not turned in score. I have to have a score that differentiates from done well to not done at all.*

- *I would like an option for requiring a revised submission for both assignments graded and complete/incomplete. Currently there is an excused option, which I appreciate, but another option necessary for my courses is a revise and resubmit option.*

- *There is no simple and efficient way to submit image based assignments for grading and have these same images shared among a group of students for working with them in class or on a second assignment.*

- *The ability of students to "track" their grade is a negative. They become too focused on where they are versus what they should be doing. The Canvas algorithm differs from mine and creates undue worry for the students. I would like to turn it off.*

Other comments in regard to grading described inadequate mechanisms for feedback to students.

- *I would like to have latex available in the speed grader so I can typeset math equations when responding to students*

- *The commenting/editing tools on Speedgrader are wonky - having to choose from multiple commenting types and having to strikethrough to edit are time consuming. Also, adding text usually writes over other text making it difficult to read.*

- *I really wish written feedback to students on writing assignments was easier (the editing tools are klutzy and hard to use) and easier for students to see (they seem to have to open the assignment to see it - it's not readily viewable when they see their grades.)*

- *Need more flexibility, more emphasis on feedback, less emphasis on score. Have students read feedback before they get to see grade/score on the assignment. Feedback is 3 clicks away, while score is automatically show[n]. Students don't regularly read feedback, even though I spend enormous amounts of time on giving it.*

- *In Speedgrader I provide feedback. Students can respond to that feedback in Speedgrader, but I don't receive a notification that they've done so.*

Discussion: As in the past, instructors reported that they find discussion boards in Canvas difficult to use. They expressed frustration with the organization of discussion threads and the ability to track new responses, and they wanted features that would increase the depth and complexity of online discussions.

- *The current format of "pinned", other, and closed discussions gets very messy in a class where I have many online discussions on various topics that students can revisit throughout the quarter, not just one main running discussion. The search function doesn't work for this.*

- *I would like discussion groups more accessible for the instructors rather than requiring to dig down*

- *For discussion posts-there is no feature that allows an instructor to highlight or comment within a specific discussion post that is just between the instructor and the student. This is a feature that IS available when students upload documents.*

- *A discussion group, sort of like a Facebook group, would be helpful. Students could post links, add comments, "likes", and so on...*

Groups and Peer Review: Instructor comments suggest that groups and peer review are not yet meeting instructor needs. Overall, instructors wanted more flexibility with peer review and support for a variety of ways that students might share and respond to one another's work. Instructors also expressed a desire to customize groups and better evaluate group work.

- *I wanted to provide a way for students to see and read each other's papers, without necessarily assigning them as peer reviewers.*

- *I would like to have automatically created groups in Canvas based on course sections. I would like the peer review feature to be able to randomly assign matched sets of peer reviews within these sections/groups (i.e., all three students in a set are assigned to review each other). I would overall like it to be easier to assign students each other's papers in peer review and to track/assign credit for completion of these reviews.*

- *I'd like to set assignment due dates by student groups.*

- *The peer review function is a bit difficult to use in terms of allowing the grader and the peer reviewer to put on doc comments. Also it forces students to fill out the rubric, which I didn't want them to do.*

- *I have students do peer evaluations after their group projects are done. I want to easily read feedback from each group's members together, but the documents appear in ABC order. So I need to request hard copy, so I can sort them and look at them side by side for grading and assessment.*

Quizzes/Surveys: As with other Canvas components, instructors described issues related to efficiency and flexibility, particularly the ability to design a quiz or survey as they wished. Instructors also wanted to be able to download the results of a quiz or survey in a spreadsheet.

- *For students with accommodations allowing for more time on quizzes - it would be great if Canvas would allow an instructor to change the amount of quiz time on ALL quizzes at once for*

that student (instead of having to go into each quiz, separately, and change the time for every student with accommodations).

- *I would like [students] to include simple recorded audio responses to quizzes...Think of dialogue-like setting with an audio input [where] students record responses by simply clicking one button and starting to speak.*

- *On quizzes, multiple choice questions should have a "none of the above" option, that comes at the end of the selection list. The remainder should be randomized, but the "none of the above" should be anchored.*

- *The quiz development tools are quite limited and do not allow for the flexibility necessary to create optimal assessments.*

4.2 Impact

Instructors were asked to rate their agreement with statements describing the potential impact of Canvas generally on their class(es). On the whole – and as we might have hoped – respondents expressed strong disagreement for the statements describing *negative impacts*; the majority *did not agree* that Canvas requires more time, makes it difficult to communicate with students, or detracts from the quality of student assessment.

Indicate your agreement with the following statements about your overall use of Canvas: (5-point scale, Strongly disagree = 1; Strongly agree = 5)
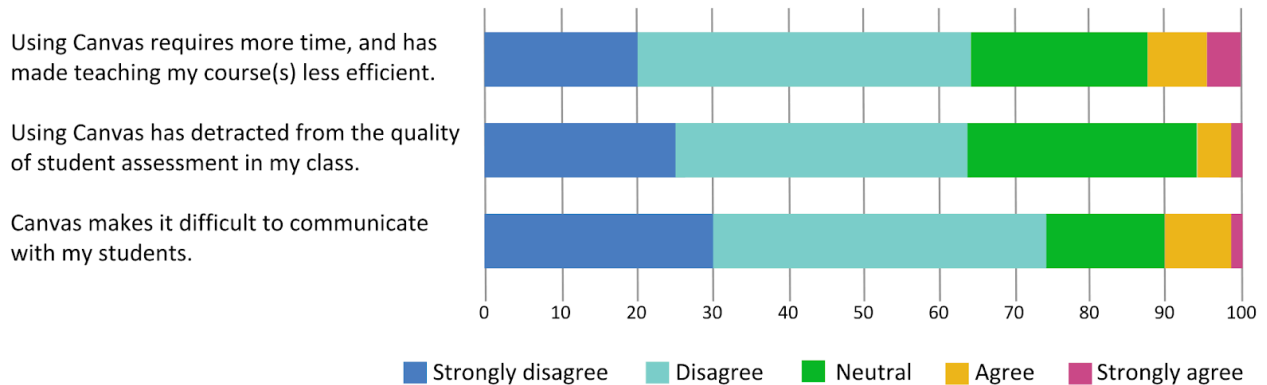
For three of the four statements describing *positive impacts*, however, the majority response (41-52%) was "neutral"; respondents did not have a strong opinion about the effect of Canvas on student participation, students' communication among themselves, or on their own instructional practices. Respondents were more decidedly in agreement with the statement "Using Canvas has enhanced students' experience of the class."

Indicate your agreement with the following statements about your overall use of Canvas:
(5-point scale, Strongly disagree = 1; Strongly agree = 5)
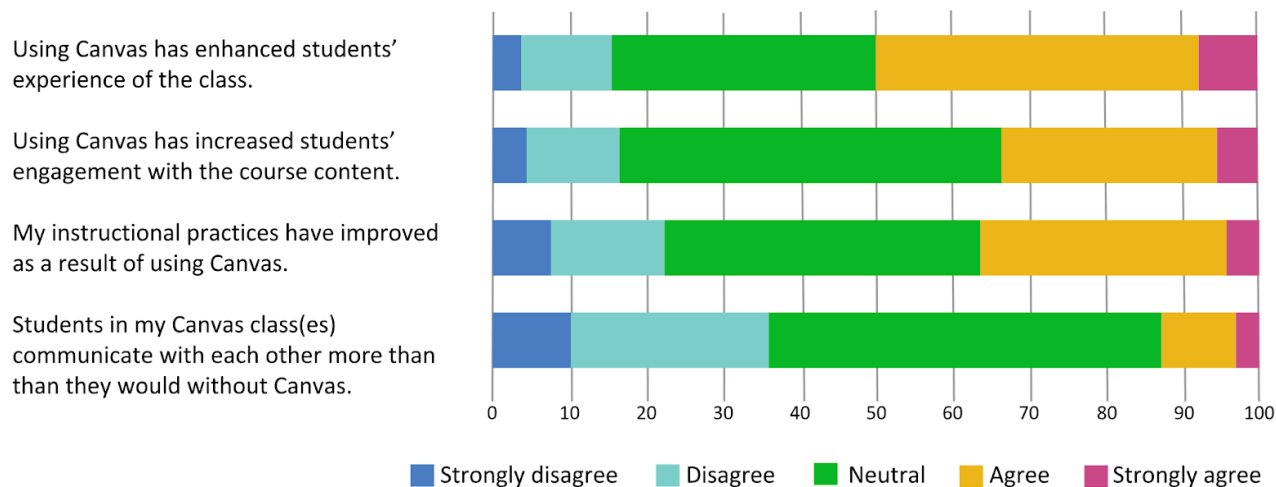
Another survey question asked instructors if they had changed anything in their teaching practices as a result of using Canvas. We analyzed 200 of 439 write-in responses and found that a majority (120, 60%) had changed something in their teaching, and these changes were regarded as positive for the most part (61) rather than negative (15). Most comments were similar to the first listed below – they described how posting materials or questions in Canvas allowed for deeper discussion or enhanced learning activities during class.

- *The streamed videos and links to other online assignment materials have allowed me to do richer teaching via what is popularly called "flipping the classroom."*

- *I was able to quit wasting time administering quizzes in the classroom. This has freed up class time for class activities.*

- *Yes, I have pre-class reading quizzes, I place more background material in canvas and use less of the class time to lecture and more to discuss.*

- *Yes, I provide more opportunities for peer review because it's easy to assign it in Canvas. I also ask for more assignments to be turned in online so that I can grade more quickly and provide more feedback with speedgrader.*

- *I've developed keys for discussion section activities because students wanted Canvas materials to include that.*

- *I've been more structured in my creation of rubrics and how to grade both didactic and practical based assessments.*

Eighty (40%) respondents in the sample we examined reported that they had not changed anything as a result of using Canvas.

When asked whether they had noticed any effects on their class (positive or negative) as a result of using Canvas, a number of instructors said they had not, or had not seen any effects they could attribute to use of Canvas. Those that did describe effects that the use of the LMS had on their *students* described both positive and negative effects.

Many comments related to the convenience of having all course materials located in one place, as well as greater certainty and ease in communication. Negatives related primarily to difficulties in navigation and the "clunkiness" of the software.

- *Mostly positive, students are more likely to engage with the class material, they stay more up to date on assignments. They also communicate with me more easily, I receive more Canvas announcements than emails.*

- *With all the assignments and documents uploaded on canvas, there are no surprises and nothing is missing. Students feel in control of their course-related work, which they do in a timely fashion and I am able to easily monitor their progress.*

- *Some positive and negative, honestly. I think many students benefit from the wealth of material we're able to disseminate via Canvas, and I enjoy the ability to have different media sources for this. Yet there are also times where students don't receive critical announcements informing them about an issue because of their Canvas settings, or fail to be able to navigate the site well enough, which are issues that I have to look to resolve.*

- *Students get very frustrated with problems Canvas gives and difficulties in the extra steps Canvas makes them do in comparison to email or a simple upload.*

Instructors also reported that students appreciated the ease of submitting assignments online, and the speed with which they were able to receive feedback and grades. Depending on the instructor's grading practices, this was a positive or negative.

- *Much more efficient in terms of gathering assignments and grading. No more hard copy papers. The use of rubric for grading is way more efficient.*

- *Canvas creates greater transparency with regard to students' grades. That greatly reduces the amount of email I receive as an instructor/TA. I've used Excel spreadsheets in other classes, which resulted in a larger number of students emailing me about their individual scores, such as participation scores.*

Other instructors noted how aspects of Canvas contributed to richer learning during class time:

- *Canvas discussion boards have increased both the frequency with which many students participate in class discussion and the quality of our in-class discussion sessions by allowing students access to more of the thoughts and concerns that their peers had about a certain project or reading.*

- *Students indicate on course eval that videos [are] helpful and they appreciate how much class time is preserved for practice with faculty guidance.*

4.3 Satisfaction

When asked about their *overall experience*, a combined 69% of instructor respondents indicated that they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with Canvas. The results indicate a slight increase in overall satisfaction with Canvas since the 2014 survey.

How would you rate your overall experience with Canvas?
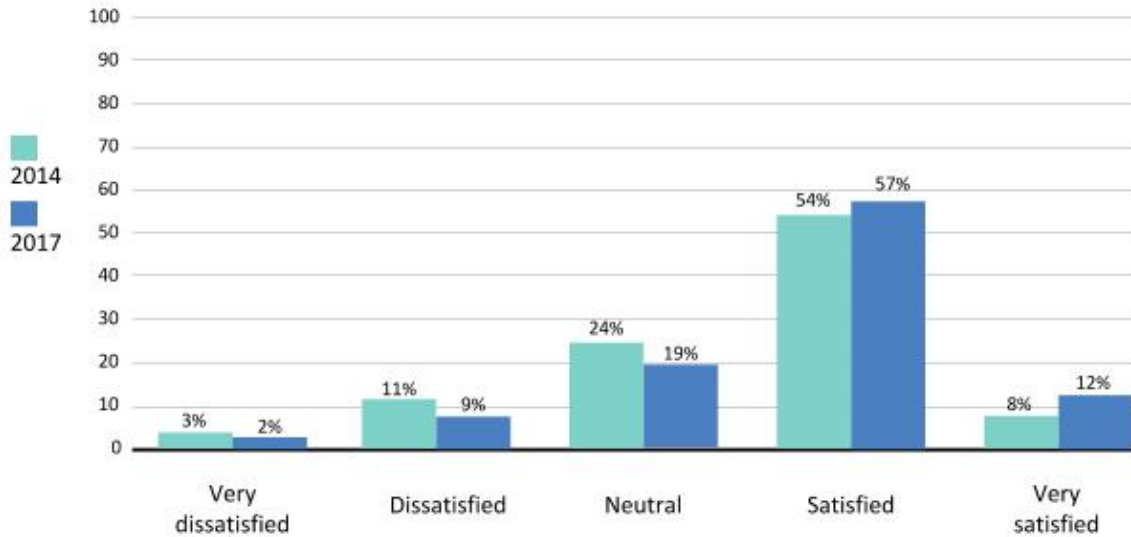
When asked to rate the ease of completing specific tasks within Canvas, responses varied. Instructors were most satisfied with tasks that are primarily about course management: organizing content, creating assignments, tracking grades, communicating with students, and providing feedback. A combined 63-71% of respondents indicated that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the ease of completing these tasks, and these tasks align with instructors' most frequently selected purposes for using Canvas.

As might be expected, the majority of respondents selected "neutral" in response to tasks that fewer instructors complete; these tasks align with purposes for using Canvas selected by fewer instructors. Given the consistent number of respondents across these questions, it appears that instructors unfamiliar with these tasks selected "neutral," making it somewhat difficult to understand *users'* true ratings for these tasks.

In general, how satisfied are you with the following aspects of Canvas?

Legend: Very dissatisfied · Dissatisfied · Neutral · Satisfied · Very Satisfied
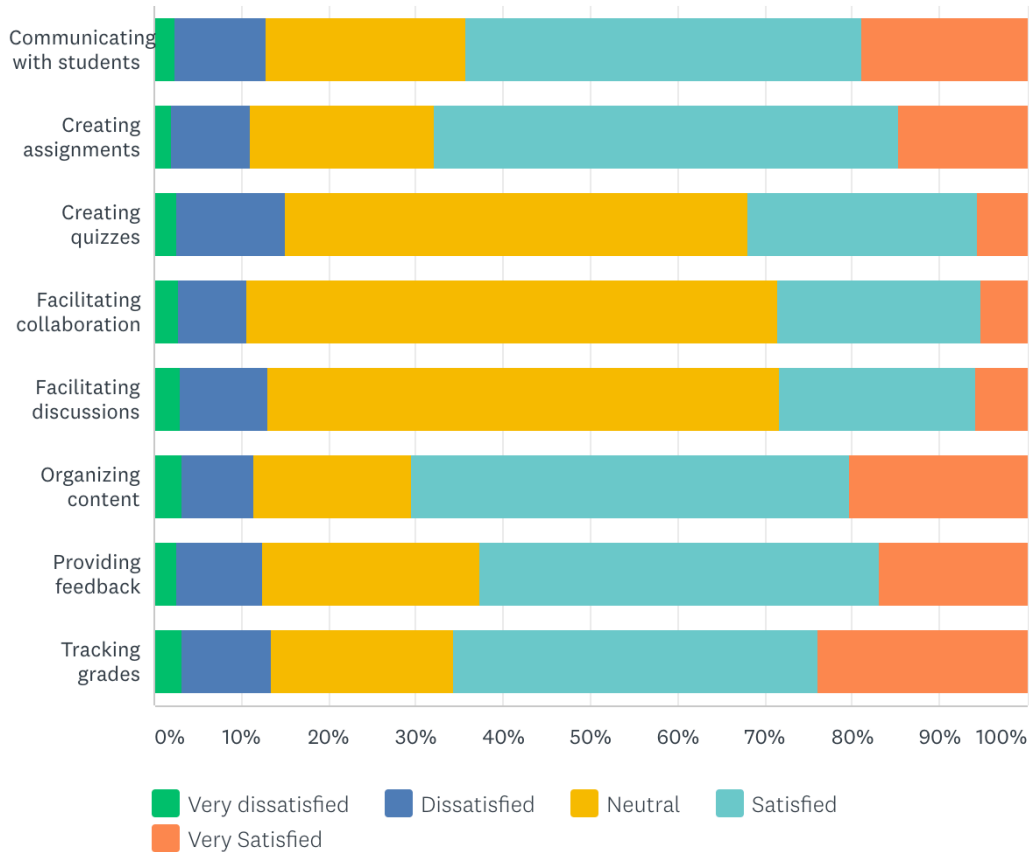
Across the question as a whole, the combined percentage of respondents indicating dissatisfaction with the ease of completing each task remained low, between 11-15%. When asked in a follow-up question to "explain what experiences led you to be 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with any aspect of Canvas noted above," comments generally aligned with frustrations expressed earlier (e.g., difficulty getting Gradebook to work with individual grading practices; an unwieldy format for discussions; challenges with the quiz feature, etc.). In general, respondents who reported teaching large lecture classes expressed greater dissatisfaction with Canvas than instructors teaching other course formats, particularly in regard to quizzing and tracking and posting grades. This is not surprising, given known challenges in Canvas in scaling these features.

4.4 Support

When asked what they do when they need help with Canvas, just over half of respondents (52%) indicated that they turned to a colleague who uses Canvas. Other popular options were going to documentation on the Canvas website (41%) or on IT Connect (34%). Popularity drops off quickly for those options that would put instructors directly in contact with members of the Canvas support team in UW-IT: Just under a third of respondents (30%) indicated that they "send a message to help@uw.edu"; only 16% said they "call 221-5000 to talk to a help desk consultant," and only 11% reported that they "drop by Odegaard 230 for in-person help."

What do you do when you need help with Canvas?
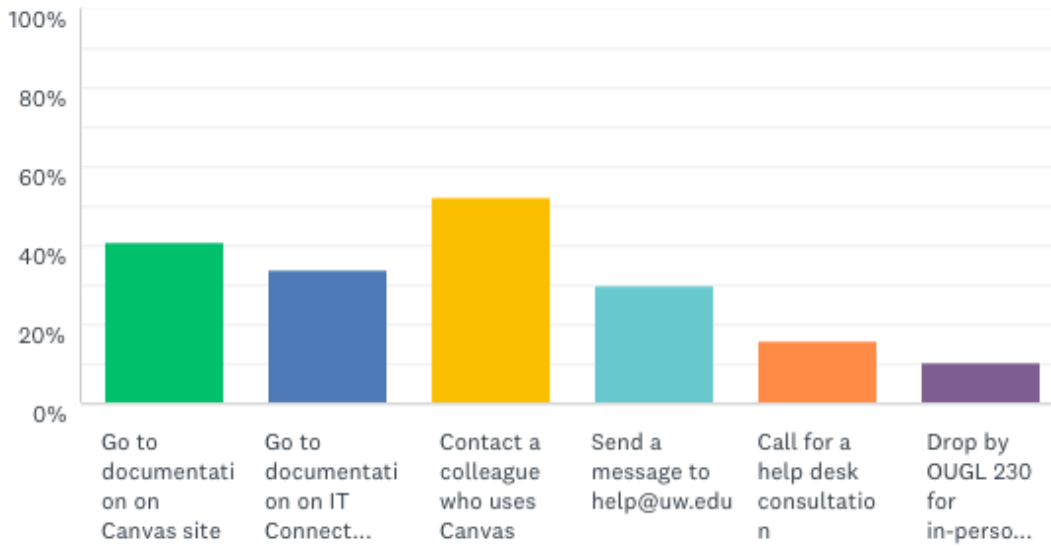
Similarly, while Learning Technologies offers a number of workshops on how to use Canvas, over half of respondents (57%) indicated that they had not attended any of the workshops, and one-third (34%) reported that they were not aware these workshops were offered. While the Beginning Canvas workshops were the most popular (21% reported attending Part 1; 12%, Part 2), very few respondents (between 1-4%) indicated attendance at any of the intermediate Canvas workshops.

UW-IT Learning Technologies offers the following workshops on Canvas. Which of these have you attended, if any?
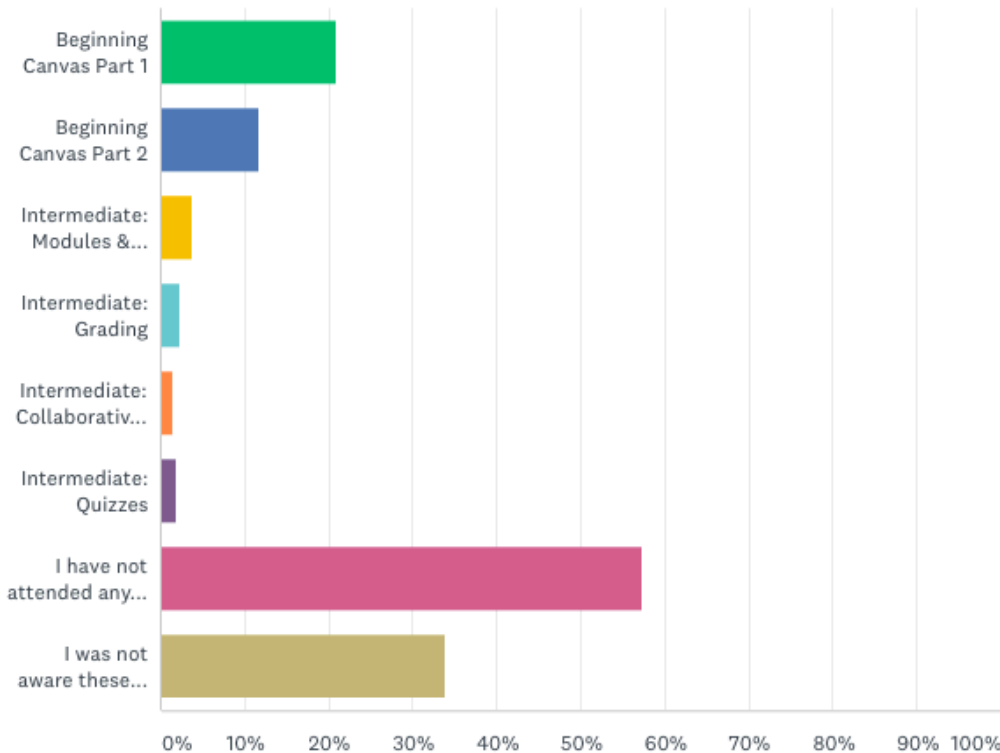
A follow-up question asked workshop attendees if the workshops had adequately prepared them to use Canvas, and to explain their answers. Of the 111 write-in responses, 66 (60%) were positive, 30 (27%) were negative, and 11 responses (10%) were coded as "somewhat."

Several responses suggested that learning to use Canvas does not happen in a single workshop:

- *Yes, it does help me to prepare to use Canvas, but I need to find time to take more workshops on different features of Canvas such as GradeBook, Discussion board, Modules, Pages, etc.*

- *It definitely helped for my first foray into it several years ago. It might be nice to take a refresher or some of the more specific courses...*

- *I was only aware of the beginning Canvas workshop, and not aware of more advanced workshops.*

Many respondents suggested something more was needed beyond a workshop to adequately prepare them to use Canvas:

- *Yes, they were helpful. The most helpful thing has been seeing my colleagues use of Canvas and then deciding how to use it myself.*

- *Yes, they were a good overview. I still needed to consult with an instructional designer to decide which tools to use based on the type of materials I would be posting.*

- *It helped get overall skills but I needed to seek help for some of the hidden functions and ways to make some content more accessible.*

- *They were somewhat helpful. A lot of it I learned by trial and error.*

Other comments effectively provided feedback on what was inadequate about the workshops:

- *The workshops help but they usually don't allow sufficient hands-on practice. The workshops encourage faculty to seek assistance from the Canvas team in Odegaard.*

- *I did not learn from the workshops. The workshop leaders move so fast I cannot begin to keep up. The individual help I have gotten in Odegaard and over the phone late at night has been wonderful.*

- *Often they are so general that I can't apply them to how I teach. I'd like to see more specific courses i.e. "how to design a Canvas class for small lecture classes" especially for those of us who are not that facile with computer based teaching.*

- *They were mildly helpful. I think a 'working group' session might be helpful.*

Several respondents from UW-T and UW-B noted that attending workshops on the Seattle campus was simply not realistic.

5. Student Findings

5.1 Use/Pedagogy

Like instructors, students were asked to select a course in which they had used Canvas over the last academic year and to answer a series of questions with this course in mind. The courses students chose were primarily small lecture classes (29%) and large lecture (27%), followed by large discussion-based classes and seminars (18% and 17%, respectively).

How would you describe this course?
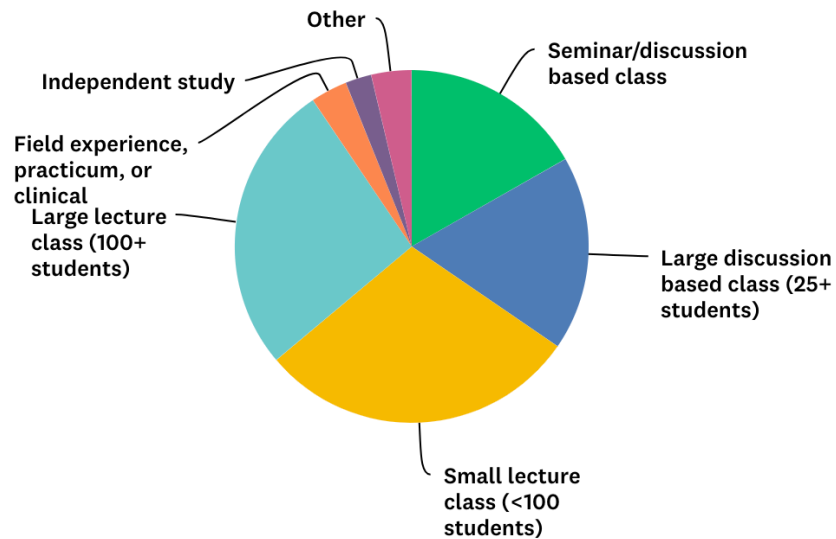
Most of the courses students selected were taught in person (78%), followed by hybrid courses (13%) and courses taught entirely online (10%).

When asked what they did in Canvas for their selected course, students most often reported tasks related to completing assignments and checking grades: between 78% and 90% of students indicated that they accessed readings and other files, viewed grades, submitted assignments, and viewed a calendar of course/due dates in Canvas. Just over half (57%) reported using Canvas to communicate with their instructor, and 45% used it to communicate with other students. The same percentage (45%) indicated that they engaged in discussion in Canvas, though only 29% reported that they engaged in group work or collaboration, and even fewer (6%) said they used the web conferencing/chat features in Canvas.

In this course, what did you do in Canvas?

Access course readings and other documents/files	89.8%	4,038
View grades	89.7%	4,035
Submit assignments and view feedback on assignments	82.8%	3,724
View a calendar of course dates and due dates	77.5%	3,487
Communicate with the instructor	56.7%	2,549
View recordings of course lectures and other course videos	48.4%	2,175
Communicate with classmates	45.4%	2,043
Discuss course materials and concepts with other students	44.8%	2,013
Take quizzes and/or exams	41.9%	1,884
Facilitate student group work, peer review, or other collaboration	28.9%	1,301
Web conference or chat	6.2%	279
Other (please specify)	2.4%	109
Total Respondents: 4,498		

5.2 Impact

Like instructors, students were asked to rate their agreement with statements describing their general experience with Canvas. Students expressed strong agreement with statements about how Canvas saved them time and enriched their experiences in class (81% and 75%, respectively, combined "agree" and "strongly agree"), and over half of respondents also felt that Canvas enhanced their ability to communicate with classmates.

Thinking about your overall experience using Canvas in your courses, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:
(5-point scale, Strongly disagree = 1; Strongly agree = 5)
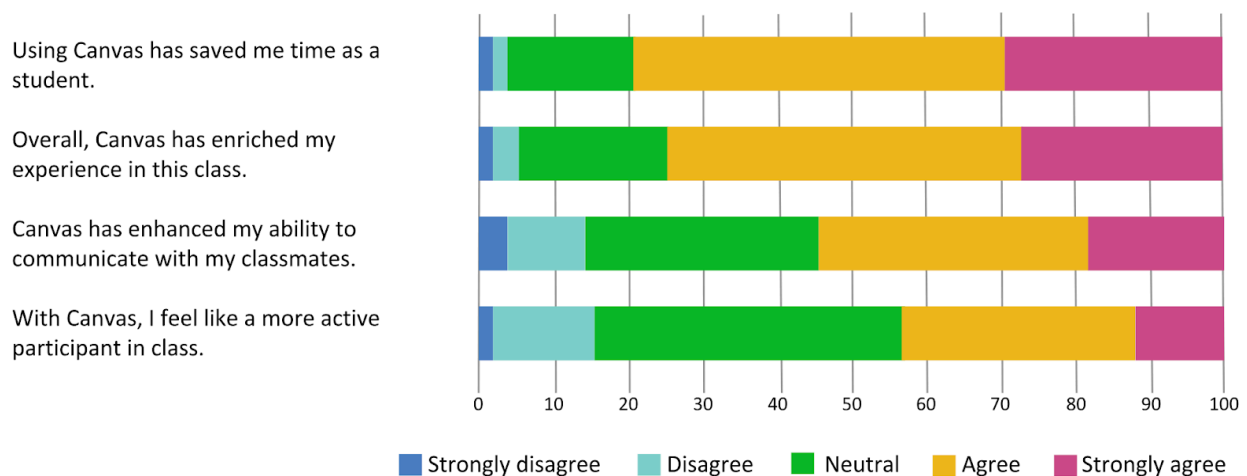
Reaction to the negatively-worded statements was even stronger; a combined 75-82% of respondents indicated that they "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with statements suggesting Canvas was a hindrance to learning, interfered with communicating with instructors, or made it hard to keep track of class assignments. For only one statement ("With Canvas, I feel like a more active participant in class"), the majority response (42%) was "neutral."
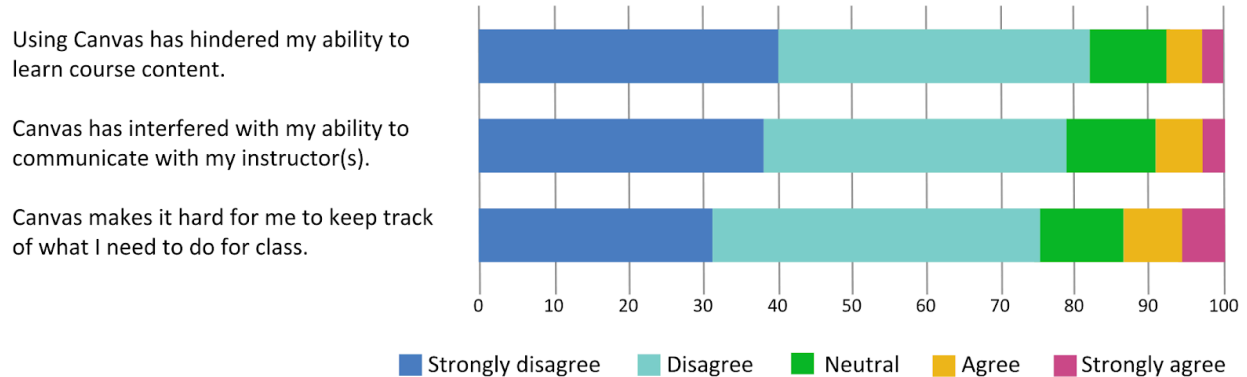
We also asked students if they had seen any effects on their learning (positive or negative) as a result of using Canvas. We coded 200 of 3,732 responses and just over half (54%) described positive effects on their learning. Only 11 responses (6%) in our sample described negative effects, and the remaining were coded as neutral or no response.

The majority of responses related to how Canvas helped students stay organized and easily complete class-related tasks, such as communicating with their instructor or classmates, checking grades, submitting assignments, and accessing or reviewing materials. For many, Canvas was a great aid to their study habits.

- *I believe it has been positive since it helps someone like me who doesn't remember due dates and doesn't keep track of assignments very well. Professors do a good job of keeping everything on Canvas for me to view when I miss anything in class.*

- *It is easier to access files and course documents having them all in one application space. I can easily pop on to it and view grades, view assignments and due dates, consult the syllabus, contact the professor and/or fellow students, etc*

- *I am better at getting homework turned in on time and it helps prioritize work that should be done first.*

- *It's easy to download the readings, which saves me time.*

- *Ability to submit assignments without being in class*

Others spoke about the effect of Canvas on their engagement; for many, the use of specific features encouraged their participation, sharing, and practice or review.

- *Personally, I have been much more involved in class discussions and sharing of information than I am in an in person class.*

- *Canvas allows me to connect with classmates. We share Quizlets and links to helpful material. Without this, I would never have found out about other resources.*

- *The interactive assignments where I am required to comment on other students work has been interesting and positive.*

- *I'm able to participate without feeling too shy as I'd be in person, and doing assignments, quizzes, and discussions are more enjoyable on Canvas. I learn more on Canvas when a teacher posts lectures and such since I'm able to go back and review.*

- *Practice exams on canvas are really helpful to my learning. Recorded lectures as well as just organized files for where all the course material is is also super helpful and aids my efficiency in learning.*

For one student, Canvas was a better accessible alternative than lecture alone.

- *Being deaf, this helps me understand what I need to do to help communicate with my teacher on grades or future assignments.*

Students' negative responses primarily described the confusion created by the way instructors used Canvas. These comments echoed those in response to another survey question that asked students to "List 1-3 things you wish instructors would do to better support your learning or ease of use with Canvas." Out of a sample of 200 responses from 3,539, half (49%) related to organization of the course, followed by comments related to grading and communication (each 13%).

The way instructors organize their courses in Canvas remains a frustration for many students. Students complain that they cannot find course elements where they expect them to be, or that labels are not clear, or that there is little consistency in how courses are organized.

- *For the non-tech savvy or for the people new to using Canvas, instructors should navigate through Canvas and all the modules (like a quick tutorial) in class and show the students. This would help make Canvas easier to use.*

- *Utilize all aspects of the Canvas infrastructure. Put things like the syllabus in the syllabus section, rather than having it as a download on the main class page.*

- *Put the whole syllabus/expectations/grading explanation on the homepage*

- *Separate lectures from readings, worksheets, etc so [they're] actually using the folders in Canvas to organize files by categories.*

- *It would be easier if the instructors all put information in the same sections in Canvas. Sometimes I find resource files in "files" or "Modules" or similar things in "Discussions" or "Assignments". It's probably the professor's individual preference, but it would be easier and faster if they were consistent in where things are in Canvas.*

Other comments suggest that students find components of Canvas to be inefficient, or that the way instructors use these components does not meet students' needs or expectations.

- *Make the discussion board like email style, where you can see the subject, and can see other messages while you are looking at the one you are looking at.*

- *Canvas is hard to use for math class discussion since typing out math formulas without text editors is very tedious.*

- *The canvas collaboration rooms are very clunky. I wish the instructor had a different option for collaborative spaces, like google hangouts for example.*

- *Allow students to view all the assignments ahead of time so that we can better manage our own time accordingly.*

- *The classes that use modules are more organized. Open up modules sooner so people can work ahead.*

- *The remote experience was not great because our way of participating is through chat and the chat questions didn't always get asked. It was easy to fall behind and get stuck while the live classroom was moving along. There are things that can improve this, like checking in with online students and interacting with them via moderator and chat discussions*

Many student comments about grading echo those of instructors. Students want to view their grades on a 4.0 scale, have transparency around grading and extra credit, and greater clarity around the grading process generally.

- *Many instructors don't know how to use Canvas to its full potential in my experience. Mostly when it comes to grading, they don't know how to weigh things correctly or add extra credit.*

- *Input grades faster, have an easier option to include extra credit, show the GPA (4.0 scale grade) associated with the percentage*

- *Post details about grades (median score, standard deviation, GPA scale vs. letter grade, etc.)*

- *Grading rubrics could be more effectively used (brings clarity for the students and increases efficiency for the instructor/grader).*

5.3 Satisfaction

Despite their frustration with some aspects of Canvas or how some instructors organize elements within the LMS, most students were positive when asked to rate their overall experience with Canvas. A combined 89% of respondents indicated that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied." Overall, these ratings show an improvement in student satisfaction since the 2014 Canvas survey.

How would you rate your overall experience with Canvas?
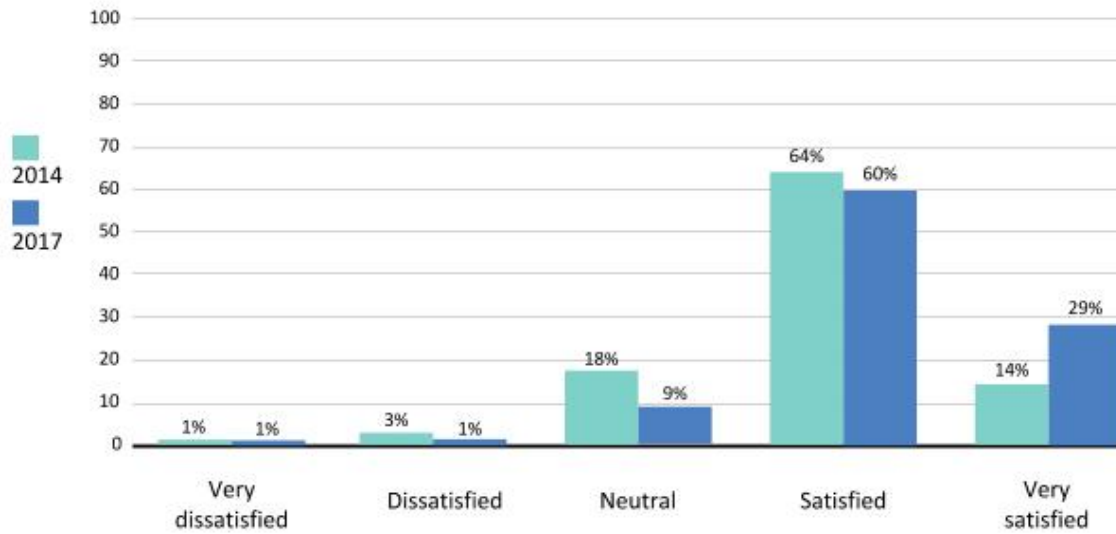
When asked to rate their experience with specific tasks in Canvas, the vast majority of students (60%-85%) indicated that they had encountered "no problems" completing each task. "Navigating the course space" and "Accessing course materials" were the tasks for which students reported the greatest percentage of "minor problems" (31% for each). A very low percentage of respondents (between 1.4%-3.6%) indicated major problems with any of the tasks; the tasks receiving the greatest percentage of negative reports were "Communicating with instructors" and "Collaborating with classmates."

Please rate your experience with the following tasks in Canvas. If the task is something you have not done for Canvas, select "N/A."

	No Problems	Minor Problems	Major Problems	N/A	Total
Checking grades	84.7%	11.4%	1.8%	2.0%	4,197
Submitting assignments	76.3%	19.9%	2.2%	1.7%	4,205
Checking course schedule and due dates	73.7%	22.5%	2.2%	1.6%	4,206
Taking quizzes/exams	73.1%	13.5%	1.7%	11.6%	4,200
Participating in discussions	72.2%	15.7%	2.0%	10.2%	4,200
Communicating with instructor(s)	68.8%	16.5%	3.6%	11.0%	4,202
Learning to use Canvas	65.9%	28.6%	1.4%	4.1%	4,210
Accessing course materials	65.7%	31.0%	2.4%	1.0%	4,207
Navigating the course space	65.1%	31.2%	2.0%	1.7%	4,207
Collaborating with classmates	60.8%	18.5%	3.6%	17.1%	4,195

5.4 Support

When asked what they do when they need help with Canvas, the vast majority of respondents (75%) indicated they consult a friend who also uses the LMS. The next highest category (21%) was "other" and 15% of respondents said they would "send a message to help@uw.edu."

What do you do when you need help with Canvas?
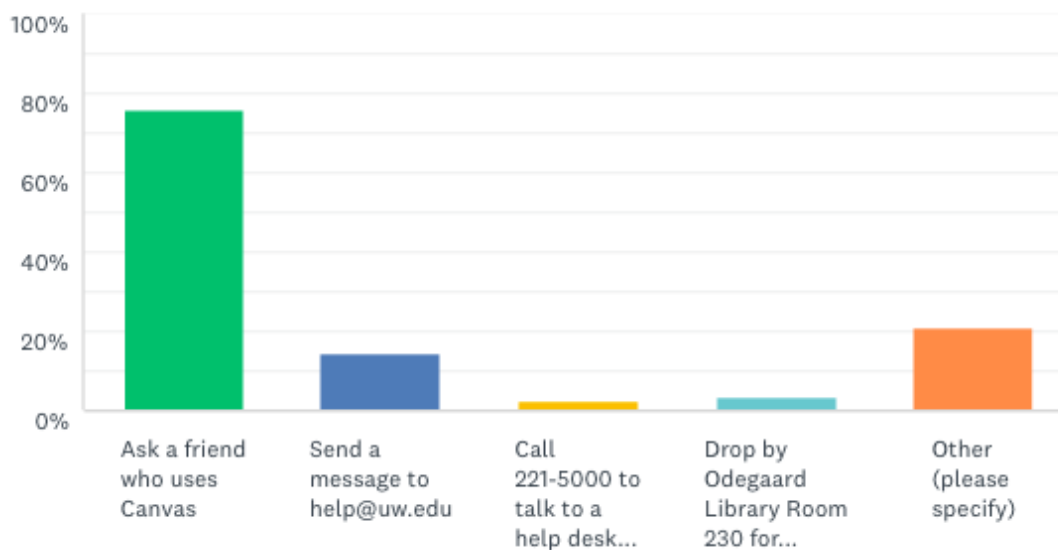
Among a sample of 200 responses from the 856 who wrote in "other" options, the greatest number (43%) reported that they would ask the instructor or TA for help or clarification, and 21% described figuring out the problem on their own (trial and error). Smaller portions of the sample said that they had not needed help with Canvas, or that they searched online when they needed help (16% and 10%, respectively). Finally, some students used the space to note that they did not know options for help existed. As one student wrote, "I didn't even realize there was actual tech support available to students on campus."

6. Conclusions

Below we highlight broad take-aways from the survey findings.

6.1 Canvas works well for course management, less well for innovative teaching.

Instructors are using Canvas primarily for course management and administration, and survey findings indicate that the LMS adequately meets these needs. Instructors appreciate the functions of Canvas that, as some instructors noted, are the basis of any LMS: the ability to organize course materials, create and collect assignments, track scores and calculate grades, and communicate with students. Frustrations with Gradebook still exist; many instructors reported that the features in Gradebook were not flexible enough to support custom grading practices or the ways they want to deliver feedback.

Instructors encounter challenges when they want to use features in Canvas to structure and capture interactions among students and between students and course material. Many instructors wanted to set up discussions, collaborative activities, and even quizzes in ways that differed from the design of these features within Canvas, and these desires are not new. Some respondents suggested that Canvas is built on a very "traditional" model of teaching. Instructors attempting to use Canvas for more advanced or innovative practices with their students may be employing legitimate and appropriate teaching methods that are simply not (yet) supported by the LMS.

These findings have remained consistent across multiple evaluations of Canvas. Despite improvements Instructure has made over time to Gradebook and other features in Canvas, many instructors still experience Canvas as "clunky" and a poor fit with their desired teaching practices.

UW-IT's strategy to date has been two-fold: to advocate for improvements and change with Instructure product management, and to develop UW customizations to address the most pressing unmet needs.

6.2 Satisfaction with Canvas remains higher among students than among faculty.

This finding has been consistent across all evaluations of Canvas, though overall satisfaction with Canvas has increased over time among both faculty and students.

In 2017, almost 90% of students expressed that they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with Canvas generally. In addition, very few students (1-4%) indicated that they had any "major" problems completing specific tasks in Canvas. The data suggest that although students may complain about some aspects of Canvas, they are generally able to do what they need to do within the LMS.

In contrast, a significantly fewer portion of instructors (70%) reported that they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with Canvas in general. When asked about specific tasks, instructors expressed greater satisfaction with tasks associated with course management; a consistent 11-15% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the ease of completing each of the eight tasks listed. Again, this may suggest that the relevant features are not meeting users' needs or do not function as desired or expected.

6.3 Use of Canvas has a positive impact on teaching and learning.

Over half of instructors reported making a change in their teaching practices as a result of using Canvas, and found that this change had a positive effect in their classroom. Instructors appreciated the ability to post a wide variety of materials in one place, the greater efficiency in collecting and grading assignments, the transparency in grading, and the way that posting a question or other activity before class allowed for deeper discussions and other interactive activities during class.

In the 2014 survey, just under half of faculty responded that they had made or planned to make "a significant change or innovation" in their teaching. These changes included making grading practices more efficient and transparent, "flipping the classroom," introducing online discussions and group collaboration activities, and making use of enhanced assessment techniques (such as use of multimedia feedback and rubrics). Responses from the 2017 survey suggest that these types of activities continue to

be of interest to instructors using Canvas, and that the more experience instructors have with the LMS, the more likely they are to expand their use of the tool beyond course management alone.

Students credited instructors' use of Canvas with helping them keep up with assignments, stay organized and better manage their time, track their progress, and prioritize their work. Students also reported more engagement, particularly when instructors set up discussions, peer review, or other group/collaborative work in Canvas *and participation in these activities was not difficult or onerous*. The ability to review course materials, including recorded lectures, and to complete practice exams also added to student learning.

Students had much to say about the way instructors organized materials within Canvas and the effect this had – positive or negative – on their ability to easily find what they were looking for, complete tasks within Canvas, and fully participate or engage. Students recognized good use when they saw it (with some even naming their instructors as exemplars) and appeared overall to prefer instructors' use of modules and/or intuitive and logical use of the categories within Canvas.

6.4 Instructors miss opportunities for support in instructional design.

Both instructors and students turn to the people most readily available when they need help with Canvas. Students appear to have few problems with Canvas that they can't figure out on their own, but when they do, they typically turn to a classmate or the teacher for help. Instructors frequently turn to a colleague who uses Canvas to get answers to their questions, or they go to documentation on the Canvas website or IT Connect. It is unclear if the answers they get from these sources help instructors with the design of their course.

Support options that would put instructors into direct contact with members of the Canvas support team were utilized far less often. Similarly, over half of respondents indicated that they had not attended any of the workshops on Canvas offered by Learning Technologies, and one-third reported that they were unaware the workshops were offered. While the workshops are sequenced to help instructors move from learning about administrative features to getting more in-depth with modules, collaboration tools, quizzes and grading, very few respondents reported attending any of the advanced workshops – the workshops designed to address pedagogical goals. Given the number of students who were frustrated by poor course design within Canvas or a lack of consistency in how instructors used its features, it appears that many instructors could benefit from advice on best practices in Canvas, advice they are not getting from their current just-in-time sources of support.

7. Next Steps

The UW-IT Canvas service team has and will continue to communicate evaluation findings to Instructure product management and leadership, in order to bring the vendor's attention to the unmet needs of UW faculty and the challenges faced by both instructors and students. The goal of these efforts by UW-IT is to influence the direction of product development, and encourage changes that will improve the experience and teaching practices of faculty at UW.

These efforts include
- sitting on the Internet2 Net+ Canvas product advisory group
- bi-weekly calls with customer success managers to discuss issues and needs
- participation in the Canvas R1 Peers group, a national interest group of over 70 peer universities that use Canvas
- escalating help desk issues to Canvas support
- arranging user research site visits by Instructure staff to UW
- piloting new features and providing feedback
- sharing user data and survey reports with Instructure researchers and leadership, and
- arranging topical meetings with product managers.

The service team will continue these activities going forward.

The findings from this and previous evaluations show that Canvas generally does a good job meeting the University's need for a learning management system. Satisfaction is high and continues to trend upward, and students and faculty report that Canvas increases efficiency, supports administrative tasks, saves them time, and has a generally positive impact on teaching and learning. From an IT perspective, this is success.

The pattern of usage, however, suggests that IT needs to continue to work with faculty, and with college and departmental instructional support, to help them expand and deepen their use of the features in Canvas to increase engagement and maximize efficiency. While some instructors report encountering limitations on their ability to innovate, it is clear that many more still can benefit from expanding or improving their use of the basic functions. Focusing on transforming how training is delivered, and exploring how central support services could work in concert with departmental support, will be important aspects of supporting Canvas use moving forward. This plan aligns with the overall strategy for enterprise teaching and learning technologies; during this current period of stabilization, the priorities are to increase growing adoption of the key enterprise systems, and improve support models.

Canvas Instructor Survey Spring 2017

UW Information Technology wants to know about your experience using Canvas, and any impact it has had on your work and courses. We will use your feedback to improve our service.

The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be confidential. No identifying information will be included in the report. Your participation is voluntary; you may skip any question you do not wish to answer.

If you have questions about this survey, please contact Karin Roberts at kroberts@uw.edu, 206-616-8153.

I. Use of Canvas

1. How long have you been using Canvas for teaching at UW?
   - This is my first quarter
   - 1 year
   - 2 -3 years
   - Over 3 years

Select one course in which you used Canvas over the last academic year. Answer the following questions with this course in mind.

2. How would you describe this course?
   - Seminar/discussion based class
   - Large discussion based class (25+ students)
   - Small lecture class (<100 students)
   - Large lecture class (100+ students)
   - Field experience, practicum, or clinical rotation
   - Independent study
   - Other (please specify)

3. What was the course format?
   - In person (each class session took place in person)
   - Hybrid (substantial online content and activities, reduced in person sessions)
   - Online (content and activities online, no in person sessions)

4. In this course, for what purposes did you use Canvas? Select all that apply.
    To distribute course readings and and other documents/files
    To post recorded course lectures and other course videos
    To collect assignments online
    To provide feedback on assignments
    To administer quizzes and/or exams
    To provide a calendar of course dates and due dates for students
    To have students engage with the course materials through discussion or other learning
    activities
    To have students interact with each other
    To communicate with students
    For synchronous communications (web conference, chat)
    To track and post student grades
    To facilitate student group work, peer review, or other collaboration
    Other (please specify)

5. People use the features of Canvas in different ways. Which way best describes how you have used
Canvas in your course?
    I used only Canvas (including any tools available on Canvas, such as Google Docs). [skip to Q7]
    I used Canvas but replaced some Canvas features with other tools (e.g., I used GoPost for
    discussions, I used a third-party tool for assignments).
    I used some features of Canvas but did not use Canvas as a course web site.

6. Which of the following tools did you use in addition to Canvas? Select all that apply.
    eTextbooks and/or publisher sites (Pearson, MHCampus, Cengage)
    WebAssign
    Catalyst Gradebook
    Excel
    Course Web site
    Discussion tools (GoPost, Piazza, TodaysMeet)
    Class email list
    Social Media (Facebook, Twitter)
    Video content hosting (Youtube, Vimeo, Flickr)
    Scheduling (Google calendar, Doodle)
    Collaboration (OneDrive, Google Drive)
    Poll Everywhere
    Other (please specify)

7. Is there anything you would like to be able to do with Canvas but have not been able to? Please
explain.

II. Impact

8. Have you changed anything in your teaching practices as a result of using Canvas? Please explain.

9. Have you seen any effects on your class (positive or negative) as a result of using Canvas? Please explain.

10. Indicate your agreement with the following statements about your overall use of Canvas:
Ratings: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree

Using Canvas requires more time, and has made teaching my course(s) less efficient.
Using Canvas has increased students' participation and engagement with the course content.
Canvas makes it difficult to communicate with my students.
Students in my Canvas class(es) communicate with each other more than than they would without Canvas.
My instructional practices have improved as a result of using Canvas.
Using Canvas has enhanced students' experience of the class.
Using Canvas has detracted from the quality of student assessment in my class.

III. Training and support

11. What do you do when you need help with Canvas? Select all that apply.
Go to documentation on the Canvas company Web site
https://community.canvaslms.com/community/answers/guides
Go to documentation on IT Connect website http://itconnect.uw.edu
Contact a colleague who uses Canvas
Send a message to help@uw.edu
Call 221-5000 to talk to a help desk consultant
Drop by Odegaard 230 for in-person help
Other (please specify)

12. UW-IT Learning Technologies offers the following workshops on Canvas. Which of these, if any, have you attended? Select all that apply.
Beginning Canvas LMS: Part 1
Beginning Canvas LMS: Part 2
Intermediate Canvas: Modules & Navigation
Intermediate Canvas: Grading
Intermediate Canvas: Collaborative Tools
Intermediate Canvas: Quizzes
I have not attended any of these workshops
I was not aware these workshops were offered

13. [For those that selected any workshop above] Did the workshops adequately prepare you to use Canvas? Please explain.

IV. Satisfaction

14. How would your rate your overall experience with Canvas?
Ratings: Very dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied, Very satisfied

15. In general, how satisfied are you with the following aspects of Canvas?
Ratings: Very dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied, Very satisfied
       Reliability
       Ease of creating and administering quizzes
       Ease of creating and administering assignments
       Ease of assessing student work
       Ease of creating and organizing course content and materials
       Ease of communicating with students
       Ease of tracking and posting grades
       Ease of facilitating student collaboration or group work
       Ease of facilitating discussions
       Ease of providing feedback on student work

16. Please explain what experiences led to you to be dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with any aspect of Canvas noted above.

17. Is there anything more we should know about your experience with Canvas?

18. What broad category best describes your academic area?
       Arts & Sciences - Arts
       Arts & Sciences - Humanities
       Arts & Sciences - Natural Sciences
       Arts & Sciences - Social Sciences
       Built Environments
       Business
       Dentistry
       Education
       Engineering
       Environment
       Information
       Law
       Medicine
       Nursing
       Pharmacy
       Public Affairs
       Public Health
       Social Work

Canvas Student Survey Spring 2017

UW Information Technology wants to know about your experience using Canvas and any impact it has had on your work and courses. We will use your feedback to improve our service.

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

Your participation is voluntary; you can skip any question in the survey. Your responses are confidential and will not be shared with your instructor, nor impact your grade.

At the end of the survey, you will have the option to enter into a drawing to receive one of ten $25 Husky card credits. To enter the drawing, please provide your contact information at the end of the survey.

I. Use

1. How long have you been using Canvas at UW?
      This is my first quarter
      1 year
      2 - 3 years
      Over 3 years

2. Please think of a specific course in which you used Canvas during the last academic year. List the course number or name, e.g. "PSYCH 101" or "Intro to Psychology" (does not need to be exact).

3. How would you describe [piped answer from Q2]?
      Seminar/discussion based class
      Large discussion based class (25+ students)
      Small lecture class (<100 students)
      Large lecture class (100+ students)
      Field experience, practicum, or clinical
      Independent study
      Other

4. What was the format for [Q2]?
      In person (each class session took place in person)
      Hybrid (substantial online content and activities, reduced in person sessions)
      Online (content and activities online, no in person sessions)

5. In this course, what did you do in Canvas? Select all that apply.
      Access course readings and and other documents/files
      View recordings of course lectures and other course videos
      Submit assignments and view feedback on assignments
      Take quizzes and/or exams
      View a calendar of course dates and due dates
      Discuss course materials and concepts with other students

       Communicate with the instructor
       Communicate with classmates
       Web conference or chat
       View grades
       Facilitate student group work, peer review, or other collaboration

6. In [Q2], was there anything you wish your instructor had done differently with Canvas? Please explain.

II. Impact

7. Thinking about your overall experience using Canvas in your courses, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:
Ratings: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree
       Using Canvas has saved me time as a student.
       Canvas makes it hard for me to keep track of what I need to do for class.
       Canvas has interfered with my ability to communicate with my instructor(s)
       With Canvas, I feel like a more active participant in class.
       Using Canvas has hindered my ability to learn course content.
       Canvas has enhanced my ability to communicate with my classmates.
       Overall, Canvas has enriched my experience in this class.

8. Have you seen any effects on your learning (positive or negative) as a result of using Canvas?

9. List 1-3 things you wish instructors would do to better support your learning with Canvas, or make it easier to use.

III. Satisfaction

10. How would your rate your overall experience with Canvas?
Ratings: Very dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied, Very satisfied

11. Please rate your experience with the following tasks in Canvas. If the task is something you have not done for Canvas, select "N/A."
Ratings: No problems, Minor problems, Major problems, N/A
       Learning to use Canvas (getting started)
       Navigating the course space
       Checking course schedule and due dates
       Accessing course materials (lectures, readings, links, etc.)
       Submitting assignments
       Taking quizzes/exams
       Participating in discussions
       Collaborating with classmates
       Communicating with instructor(s)
       Checking grades

12. Please explain any of the major problems you reported experiencing when completing the tasks listed above.

13. Is there anything more we should know about your experience using Canvas?

14. What do you do when you need help with Canvas?
        Ask a friend who uses Canvas
        Send a message to help@uw.edu
        Call 221-5000 to talk to a help desk consultant
        Drop by Odegaard Library Room 230 for in-person help
        Other (please specify)

15. Which of the following best describes your class standing?
        Freshmen
        Sophomore
        Junior
        Senior
        Graduate / professional
        Professional / non-matriculated
        Other (please specify)

16. What broad category best describes your academic area?
        Arts & Sciences - Arts
        Arts & Sciences - Humanities
        Arts & Sciences - Natural Sciences
        Arts & Sciences - Social Sciences
        Built Environments
        Business
        Dentistry
        Education
        Engineering
        Environment
        Information
        Law
        Medicine
        Nursing
        Pharmacy
        Public Affairs
        Public Health
        Social Work