

Canvas Fall 2015 Report: Interim Update and Initial Findings

Methods

In Fall 2015, two surveys were distributed for feedback on the Canvas rollout at this stage: Teaching Staff Survey and Student Survey. This is the fourth time these surveys have been sent to the two populations, with some variation in the surveys, and some ongoing items to track trends. Previous reports detail the survey topics, which focus on user feedback and support needs. In addition, as was done previously, metrics were gathered on Canvas use and support through existing databases.

To send the surveys, contact information for both groups was downloaded from the Canvas system to identify users by email address. Samples were used for FAS (10% students and no guests, 50% teaching staff), DCE (10% students and no guests), and HLS (50% students and no guests).

Each Canvas user received emails and survey links via the standard Qualtrics mailer, including an initial contact and two follow-up reminders (exception: slightly different process for HKS). The signature on the cover emails included the AcTS Program Evaluator and specific school instructional support staff member(s). In the survey itself, respondents indicated whether they were actively using Canvas or not and if they were using Canvas in more than one school.

The same two surveys were fielded in eight schools working directly with TLT on Canvas migration (excluding HBS and HMS). Response rates were relatively high given the topic, with somewhat higher responses rates among Teaching Staff:

- Teaching Staff: 36% (1797 out of 4976) (24% to 47% across schools)
- Students: 29% (2108 out of 7204) (15% to 40% across schools)

In addition to this brief report, school-specific data is provided for local support use. The data will also be further analyzed and examined in a fuller report on the TLT Canvas migration in Spring 2016.

Initial Findings

Operational Metrics

As of fall 2015, all participating schools across Harvard reached a nearly full transition to Canvas for their academic teaching and learning platform. System usage has accordingly grown compared to prior stages of the migration, with approximately four times the number of courses in Canvas from spring to fall in 2015. (See Table 1 below.)

Outreach and Participation

- 4 Canvas Governance Group (CGG) Meetings
- 10 Academic Platform Updates
- 2 Coffee & Canvas Meetings
- 25 Tools Integrated in Canvas as of December 2015

Tickets

- 382 tickets contained the word “Canvas” in the queue (241 at mid-term).
- 452 help requests submitted to ServiceNow through Canvas Help link (367 at mid-term).
- With broader population, changing patterns of support use are seen. (See Table 2 below.)

Evaluation and User Feedback Measures

As indicated in prior reports, at the pilot phase two year ago, we noted:

- With preparation, teachers and students appreciate Canvas' strengths, functionality.
- Positive responses were offered to the teaching and learning experience supported by Canvas.
- The learning curve and transition can be addressed with focused support and encouragement.

Two years after the pilot phase:

- Usage moves forward.
 - Over half of teaching staff remain new users: 60% (N=774). A similar proportion was new in spring (56%), but they comprised a much smaller number (N=97).
 - Among students the majority were new users, with less than one-third reporting that they had used Canvas before this semester (29%).
 - Also among students, as a sign of the turning point, 87% reported that all of their courses used Canvas this semester. As a comparison, in the spring only one-third of students users reported that they had more than one course using Canvas.
- Overall experience with the platform is showing improvement in some areas and challenges in others, with the larger and nearly full population using the technology. (See Table 3 below.)
 - Among students, the responses to statements about using the interface were unchanged essentially from the prior semester.
 - Among teaching staff, variation in responses to the statements likely reflects this stage of the roll-out, with many new users among the teaching staff:
 - The percentage reporting they experienced initial confusion continued to drop (37%). However, compared to prior terms, a higher percentage agreed that the interface was confusing in some way throughout the course (54%).
 - Support for teaching staff is largely positive although not complete: a majority and a growing percentage indicated they had a sufficient introduction at the beginning of the term, comparable to the early "white glove" support stage (61%) and over half indicated that help they needed was available (57%).
 - Not as positive compared to previous terms, the proportion agreeing that there were minimal technical concerns dropped notably with this broader use (26%).
 - At this stage, again with a much broader range of users on the platform, teaching staff seemed hesitant about the value of the platform for students, with a drop in this percentage as the system is rolled out more fully (44%)
 - Linking student and faculty use of the platform: one-fourth of students received a course-specific introduction to Canvas for at least one course.
 - Variation remains in use of the platform's full range of integrated functions. While ratings have not changed much (means), patterns indicate some change in awareness.
 - The percentage of those unaware of a given function is mostly similar to spring.
 - A few functions appear have increased in awareness among teaching staff. These include: discussions, modules, and office hours.
 - Awareness doesn't indicate use, with increases in the percentage aware but not using a function.
- A future comparison of these results with spring results of functional use and awareness, as well as other measures for teaching staff, will be valuable given both terms follow full roll-out.

Table 1. Course Participation and Activity Analytics: Spring 2014, Fall 2015, Spring 2015, Fall 2015

Participation Measure	End-Term Spring 2014 (6/11/14)	End-Term Spring 2015 (5/19/15)	End-Term Fall 2015 (12/3/15)
Courses	47	743	3040
Teaching Staff (unique count)	284	1,747	5,207
Students (unique count)	2,820	14,727	26,495
Assignments	1,006	7,709	31,902
Discussion Topics	1,273	10,741	31,770
Files Uploaded	2,642	55,845	317,080
Media Recordings	165	3189	6,870

Notes: Student counts exclude guests to limit duplication. Canvas analytics figures have limitations.

Table 2. Support Requests: Spring 2014, Spring 2015, Fall 2015

Number of Support Requests	End-Term Spring 2014	End-Term Spring 2015	End-Term Fall 2015
Tickets with “Canvas” in TLT queue / Canvas service	298	349	382
Help requests to ServiceNow via Canvas Help / Qualtrics	125	283	452
Mid-Term Proportion of Total Requests			
Tickets with “Canvas” in TLT queue / Canvas service	44%	73%	63%
Help requests to ServiceNow via Canvas Help / Qualtrics	66%	88%	81%

Table 3. Learning Curve (% Agree or Strongly Agree): Spring 2014, Spring 2015, Fall 2015

Statement	Teaching Staff			Students		
	Spr. 2014	Spr. 2015	Fall 2015	Spr. 2014	Spr. 2015	Fall 2015
The user interface was confusing at first*	73%	53%	37%	49%	32%	39%
The user interface was confusing throughout the course*	27%	19%	54%	22%	13%	15%
I received sufficient introduction to the platform at the beginning of the term	51%	36%	61%	35%	27%	32%
With sufficient introduction, the platform functions well for students	62%	65%	44%	64%	62%	62%
Helpful support on using the platform was available if needed	76%	60%	57%	44%	34%	37%
There were minimal technical concerns overall in using this course platform	47%	49%	26%	55%	56%	55%
*Negative Phrasing						
Number of respondents varies. 2015 Fall: Total N of students = 1,393 to 1,509. Total N of teaching staff = 1,018 to 1,220. 2015 Spring: Total N of students = 1,491 to 2,153. Total N of teaching staff = 379 to 462. 2014: Total N of students = 347 to 546. Total N of teaching staff = 37 to 45.						