

Canvas Pilot Mid-Term Evaluation Progress Report

Spring 2014

Executive Summary

This mid-term progress report indicates that the program is on track and reflects what we've learned so far. We will conduct more analysis of program activity in all the reported areas at the end of the semester. The following summarizes the detail given below at this stage.

Program outputs are on track. Most Harvard schools are involved. Course activity includes many instances of uploading files and posting discussions, assignments and media recordings, and several tools have been integrated into Canvas so far.

In this early phase, we gained some process learning.

- UserVoice works well for gaining feedback. We adjusted it so that it was clearly separate from seeking assistance through Help Support.
- Surveying all the constituencies achieved moderately good response rates with our current methods. It is difficult to get high response rates from faculty. Aside from instructional support staff members, who responded at a relatively high rate, the highest response rate with the largest numbers was from students enrolled in DCE courses.
- Among faculty who responded to the survey, a high percentage are actively involved in building the course site on a daily basis.
- DCE employs a network of course producers who are relevant to deploying and supporting Canvas in their courses.

We gained information about the value of platform functions and course support.

- In seeking support, faculty and instructional support staff most often turn to: Canvas guides, iCommons Liaisons, and peers or colleagues using Canvas.
- Students would like an early introduction to the platform, and particularly suggested guidance from the teaching staff that indicates how it will be used in the specific course.
- The most commonly valued and used platform functions closely related to course logistics and fulfilling course requirements: assignments, readings, and announcements.
- The next most commonly valued and used functions involve more interaction, but also related to fulfilling course requirements: quizzes, grading, calendars, and online discussions.
- Various and diverse modes of communication were less likely to be valued and used (online sections, chat, online office hours, web conferencing, mobile apps, wikis and blogs).

Action items identified to date include:

- Guide teaching staff toward giving an overview to the class participants on how Canvas will be used in the course.
- Pass UserVoice results to date in raw form to Allison Harrington as consultant working on Canvas documentation and best practices, for content.
- Pass early-term survey open-ended comments with some analysis to Allison Harrington.
- Focus on understanding and responding to feature-use on specific items where teaching staff may value the function less, compared to expectations by instructional support staff.

Introduction

This report summarizes activity and survey results to date for the Spring 2014 Canvas Pilot. The content is based on a logic model that identified participants, key activities, outputs, and outcomes for the spring term pilot, leading to an evaluation plan. The first section of the report reviews metrics and analytics to describe the amount of program activity in different areas. The second section summarizes findings from early-term surveys of three constituencies involved directly in pilot courses: students, faculty, and instructional support staff working locally in the schools or in AcTS.

Spring Pilot Activity: Process and Systems Analysis

The process tracking and system metrics summarize the amount of activity for the program in terms of outputs to date. Metrics based on analytics were current as of 3/27/14.

A. Outreach and Participation

Participation

- 44 courses
- 261 teaching staff members
- 2,824 students
- 35 instructional support staff

Pilot-related Group Meetings and Communications

- Completed: Community Meeting and Spring Pilot Workshop (1/17/14)
- Completed: Communication around early-term surveys (1/29/14-2/24/14)
- Planned: Coffee and Canvas scheduled (4/7/14)
- Ongoing: Communication of platform updates to instructional support staff

B. Canvas Pilot Use, Support and Integrations

Course Activity

- 587 assignments
- 842 discussion topics
- 1,884 files uploaded
- 60 media recordings

Canvas Support: ServiceNow Tickets

- 132 tickets containing the word “Canvas” in the iCommons queue
- 82 help requests submitted to ServiceNow process through the Help link in Canvas
- Average resolution time: less than 17 hours

UserVoice Activity and Support

- 51 comments posted by students (20), faculty (12) and other teaching staff (9), and instructional support staff (3) (7 had unknown role)
- 45 users voted
- 19 of the comments received at least one vote by others, and many received from 4 to 7 votes; two comments received 10 and 14 votes each, raising attention to issues.
- UserVoice comments included:
 - Valid bug reported: 3
 - General commentary: 18
 - Enthusiasm: 1
 - Frustration with navigation: 4
 - Frustration with equation editor quizzes and assignment functionality: 5
 - Comments on course content, not related to the technology: 5
 - General: 3
- Responses provided by iCommons staff included:
 - Link to Canvas Feature Forums: 15
 - Training prompt (link to guides, instructions, help from local support staff): 13
 - Planning of custom enhancement: 2

Tools Integrated into Canvas

- Reserve reading lists (built by iCommons)
- Lecture video display (built by iCommons)
- Skype group chat link (built by iCommons)
- Student locations (built by DCE teaching staff)

C. Canvas Pilot Assessment

Survey Administration

- Three early-term Spring surveys: Students, Teaching Staff, Instructional Support Staff
- Overall response rates and survey methods are shown in the section below.

Reporting

- Completed end-term Fall report on Canvas Pilot
- Current Mid-Term Progress Report on results and usage to date

D. Additional Detail: Summary of Spring Pilot by School

The following tables provide participation, course activity and survey responses by school.

Table 1a. Pilot Participation by School

School	# Courses	# Students	# Teaching Staff	# Instructional Support
FAS	24	1739	185	6
DCE	9	859	50	21
GSD	1	10	2	1
HDS	7	85	12	2
HKS	1	53	4	2
HSPH	2	78	8	3
Total	44	2824	261	35

Table 1b. Course Activity by School

School	Assignments	Discussion Topics	Files Uploaded	Media Recordings
FAS	329	234	1196	57
DCE	112	494	319	2
GSD	4	8	41	1
HDS	114	73	65	0
HKS	14	30	81	0
HSPH	14	3	182	0
Total	587	842	1884	60

Table 1c. Survey Response Rates by Course-School

School	N of Survey Responses			Response Rates		
	Students	Teaching Staff	Instructional Support	Students	Teaching Staff	Instructional Support
FAS	327	18	4	19%	10%	67%
DCE	310	6	14	36%	12%	67%
GSD	3	0	1	30%	0%	100%
HDS	12	4	1	14%	33%	50%
HKS	16	1	2	30%	25%	100%
HSPH	32	2	2	41%	25%	67%
Total*	700	31	24	25%	12%	69%

* Note: Totals for students and teaching staff exceeds the count of individual responses; individuals may be connected with more than one course across schools. Missing data also results in estimates.

Pilot Feedback: Early Term Spring Survey Results

A. Response Rates

Table 2a. Response Rates and Methods by Survey Group

Survey Group	Number Contacted	Number Viewed Survey	Number Responded	Response Rate	Survey Contact Method by Email
Students	2824	729	690	24%	TLT to Students; 1 reminder
Teaching Staff (All Levels)	261	28	27	10%	TLT via Instructional Support to Faculty; some reminders
Instructional Support Staff	28	25	24	86%	TLT to Instructional Support; 2 reminders

Note: Number Responded excludes those who did not answer any substantive questions. For each survey, 95-96% of those who viewed the survey responded substantively.

B. Who Responded

DCE courses are well represented among respondents

- Almost half of the student respondents (n=310)
- About one-fifth of the teaching staff (n=6)
- Over half of the instructional support staff (n=14)

FAS courses are well represented among respondents

- Almost half of the student respondents (n=327)
- About two-thirds of the teaching staff (n=18)
- Some of the responding instructional support staff (n=4)

Other school course-representation among respondents

- Approximately 10% of the student respondents in GSD, HDS, HKS, or HSPH courses
- Some teaching staff in HDS (n=4), HSPH (n=2), and HKS (n=1).
- Some instructional support in HKS, HSPH (n=2 each) and GSD, HDS (n=1 each)

Student Breakdown:

- Around 30% Extension Students
- Around 30% Freshman
- Remainder upper-level undergraduates or graduate/professional students (20% each)

Teaching Staff Breakdown:

- Over half of the respondents were faculty (59%, n=16 of 27)
- About one-fourth teaching assistants (26%, n=7); 3 preceptors; one seminar leader
- Only one respondent had used Canvas before this semester

Involvement in Daily Canvas Coursework:

- Most teaching staff who responded expected to be “regularly” involved (n=24 of 27)
- Fewer of responding instructional support expected to be “regularly” involved (39%, n=9)

C. Feedback on Canvas Support

The early-term survey was designed to gauge interest in platform features and anticipated support concerns. The following summarizes the findings.

Resources Used for Learning Canvas: Teaching Staff and Instructional Support Responses

- Many in each group used the guides provided by Canvas (48%, 57%)
- Many also used iCommons Liaisons (44%, 61%)
- Many also turned to peers or colleagues (41%, 57%)
- Instructional support staff used resources more often than faculty, using multiple resources more often
- Among the “other” resources listed:
 - o Instructional support staff use the Lynda.com course more often than faculty (n=5 vs. n=1)
 - o Teaching staff call on individual ATG staff more often than instructional support staff (n=4 vs. n=0)

See table below.

Table 2b. Use of Canvas Learning Resources: Teaching and Instructional Support

Resource	Teaching Staff (Percent)	Instructional Support (Percent)
Guides produced by Canvas	48%	57%
My iCommons Liaison	44	61
Peers or colleagues using Canvas	41	57
On-Line Canvas Feature Forums	30	43
Other (open-ended responses)	30	48
None of the above	11	13
Total Number of Responses	27	23

Percentages total more than 100%; multiple responses possible.

Ease/Difficulty of Setting up Courses: Instructional Support and Teaching Staff Responses

Note that more of the teaching staff reported active involvement than Instructional support.

- Almost one-fourth of teaching staff indicated “Difficult” or “Very Difficult” (23%)
- Almost one-third of teaching staff indicated “Easy” or “Very Easy” (30%)
- Only 5 percent of instructional support indicated difficulty and 45 percent indicated it was easy
- Small percentages of both teaching staff and instructional support checked “very easy” (4% and 9%)
- About half of each group checked “neutral” indicating no particular inclination.

Support for Students: Interest in Early Introduction and Other Suggestions

- Substantial interest in receiving at least brief guidance on how to use Canvas early on:
 - Thirty percent checked “Fairly” or “Very” important (n=207 out of 689)
 - The others checked “Neutral” (15%) or indicated less interest (55%)
- When asked how to receive guidance, the most commonly suggested methods were:
 - Initial introduction by the teaching staff providing an overview of how the software would be used in the specific course (at least 30% of 101 responses)
 - On-page help (at least 22%)
 - On-line tutorials (at least 22%)
 - Multiple sources desired, including those listed above
 - Other suggestions included face-to-face meetings, wikis and chat

Features Used: Students; Instructional Support; Teaching Staff

A list of course functions was presented to each group, with a different question for each:

- Students: How important is it to you to have a course provide the following functions in the course website?
- Teaching Staff: How important are each of these functions to your course website(s) overall?
- Instructional Support: How likely is it that a course you support will use the following features in the Spring Canvas Pilot?

Summary notes:

- Except for the top item, faculty interest is lower on all functions compared to students’.
- Rankings create three sub-groups of functions in terms of interest and use.
- Top three items had substantial agreement among all three groups and high use
 - Provide Course Assignments
 - Provide Course Readings
 - Keep Students Posted via Announcement
- Four items with higher interest and some difference between faculty and students
 - Provide and Grade Quizzes/Problem Sets
 - Provide Course Assignment Grades
 - Use Online Course Calendar
 - Create Online Class Discussions

- Seven items with lower interest, variation and uneven use
 - Create Online Sections
 - Hold Online Office Hours
 - Web Conferencing with Class
 - Use a Chat Feature for Course
 - Use a Mobile App for Course
 - Integrate Wikis into a Course
 - Integrate Blogs into a Course

- On almost every function listed, instructional support staff expected to see more use than teaching staff reported. In addition, for some functions the gap was large (from 30 to almost 50 percent). This suggests there may be hurdles to using some features that teachers perceive more than others do. The largest gaps suggest a need for more clarity related to these features, leading to targeted support or new technical solutions. The items with the biggest differences include:
 - Course Calendar (89% ISS vs. 48% TS, with a 42% difference)
 - Online Sections (63% ISS vs. 17% TS, with a 46% difference)
 - Announcements (100% ISS vs. 70% TS, with a 30% difference)
 - Chat Feature (47% ISS vs. 17% TS, with a 30% difference)

The following table rank-orders all the course functions in order of the mean value based on the student responses; it also summarizes the responses for all three groups (ranked by mean value; percentages).

Table 2c. Ranking Value/Use of Platform Functions Across Survey Groups (Ranking by Means; Percentages)

	Rankings Based on Means			Percentage in Top Two Categories			
Course Function	Students	Faculty	Instructional Support	Students %	Faculty %	Instructional Support %	SUMMARY - based mostly on rankings of means
Provide Course Assignments	1	1	1	96%	96%	100%	All see it as in the top 3
Provide Course Readings	2	2	3	92%	74%	84%	All see it as in the top 3; faculty somewhat lower
Keep Students Posted via Announcements	3	3	2	90%	70%	100%	All see it as in the top 3; faculty somewhat lower
Provide and Grade Quizzes/Problem Sets	4	6	5	81%	52%	68%	Students show a bit more interest; more use expected
Provide Course Assignment Grades	5	7	8	75%	50%	47%	Students show a bit more interest; some use expected
Use Online Course Calendar	6	5	4	68%	48%	89%	Close to even rankings; use expected
Create Online Class Discussions	7	4	6	44%	57%	79%	Faculty show a bit more interest; use expected
Create Online Sections	8	8	7	36%	17%	63%	Even in ranking; more use expected
Hold Online Office Hours	9	13	12	33%	17%	37%	Students higher interest; low overall; some use expected
Web Conferencing with Class	10	10	14	32%	13%	26%	About even and low interest; less use expected
Use a Chat Feature for Course	11	11	9-10	30%	17%	47%	About even and low interest; more use expected
Use a Mobile App for Course	12	14	9-10	31%	13%	32%	Students higher; low overall; some use expected
Integrate Wikis into a Course	13	9	13	17%	9%	32%	Faculty higher; low overall; some use expected
Integrate Blogs into a Course	14	12	11	17%	13%	32%	Faculty higher; low overall; some use expected

Open-Ended Comments: Students, Teaching Staff, and Instructional Support

The surveys also included open-ended questions for all three of the survey groups. Program staff reviewed the comments to note action items for the future and the range of reactions to the platform. Note that this survey was not designed to gain explicit feedback on Canvas at this stage; the comments that provide that feedback are therefore notable for having been volunteered. Some overall bullet points based on these comments follow.

Students:

- Around half to two-thirds of the comments pointed to a concern or desired change to the system.
- The top foci of attention from the student perspective include:
 - Lack of integration of functions and site locations
 - Speed and reliability, probably largely related to streaming and videos
 - Multiple and confusing issues related to communication in various ways
 - Issues or confusion regarding uploading assignments and responses
 - Multiple log-ins, related to general navigation issues and complexity

Teaching Staff:

- Some enthusiasm for trying new functions
- Some uncertain related to robustness for desired functionality and default settings.
- Of 18 who comments, 15 cited specific concerns about the implementation to date, while often also indicating sufficient support was provided locally or otherwise.

Instructional Support Staff:

- Some concerns, including with regard to large-scale migration and support.
- Some concerns about robustness of platform for all desired functionality.
- Suggestions regarding finding out what faculty need before fall roll-out.
- Suggestions to create templates that will help support widespread use.

Below is a sample of positive and negative comments; the full set is available in a separate file.

Quotes From Students:

- *I like the current platform that you are using. CANVAS is very easy to use. I also like the Blue Button conferences. They work on my Mac and PC. I have trouble with Adobe Connect on my Mac. I've not had any trouble with the Blue Button Conferences at Canvas.*
- *This new platform and its features simply make it much easier to be a student for a working professional.*
- *I really like how easy it is to download course readings through Canvas! Especially great that you can download all readings for the day or the entire course at once.*
- *canvas website is not up to the mark (i would rate 1/5), i would rather prefer using sites.*

Quotes From Teaching Staff:

- *Overall, the online course platforms are well designed. At first, Canvas was a bit of a surprise and took some getting used to. That said, I like the way the grading platform works in Canvas. A student can easily see what grades have been posted. I have not tried to, but it does not look like it would be easy to submit additional files once an assignment has been submitted.*
- *Canvas is fairly good. Don't change it too much. It seems to work well as is it and is much better than the existing system.*
- *I did an online quiz, which was great.*
- *I'm afraid at this point I don't see an improvement over isites. Some things are easier to do, but a lot of the built-in features just get in the way. I feel like most course websites were pretty well served by isites, and with Canvas fewer professors will be able to figure things out on their own.*
- *In spite of these substantial challenges, I basically am thrilled to be part of this project and find it much more supportive of my pedagogy than the previous course platform. Also, my IT resource person has been very responsive and helpful.*

Quotes From Instructional Support Staff:

About Support and Migration

- *As a course producer, I think it is probably best to use a template Canvas site structure, and be the first one to set up each Canvas site for each of the courses I produce. I should be the person who uploads/transfers the syllabus, and the person who organizes the site BEFORE instructors and TAs get there -- that way they are working within a structure I have already setup and every course I produce is consistently designed. If we give instructors/TFs links to their Canvas sites and say "here you go...good luck" we will be back to iSites -- a plethora of structural motifs with no consistency between courses. My \$.02.*
- *There were some glitches at the beginning when the TF was trying to add or modify content. However, the support we received from iCommons support was exemplary.*
- *it's a big leap and learning curve.*
- *I think when we have a lot of people trying to do it at once it's going to be a support nightmare*

About Canvas

- *While we have been able to provide a great deal of support for our Canvas courses, I am worried about the scalability. Canvas is not just a different platform, but is an entirely new way of looking at course websites, and that is attainable for a pilot but might be hard to convey to an entire school population.*
- *I must say I'm quite pleased so far. The most challenging aspects have been the Harvard-specific issues such as access during shopping period, lecture videos etc. but this is to be expected during a pilot. Also it would be nice to be able to manage the People section directly from Canvas and I hope this will become available after the spring.*
- *Blogs still seems like a tool that isn't integrated well for classes that need a strong student voice and directed content, is there a way to integrate a blogging tool more natively into Canvas? I managed to integrate a blog being used through the commercial version of Wordpress with API, but could not manage to do it with our beta.blogs.harvard.*
- *So far, Canvas is a fun adventure!*
- *rather than focus on the available features, I feel like my faculty still have a laundry list of things that they want to see. I also don't know the level of customization that is available with canvas. I suppose anything is possible, but it would be good to know what pieces are core only and what features can be extended.*