

Fall 2024 Instructor Feedback Report

Report Summary

Project Summary

Western University transitioned from the Sakai Learning Management System to Brightspace, supported by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and Western Technology Services (WTS). Various resources, including workshops and a self-guided training course, were provided to assist instructors through the transition.

Purpose of the Survey

The Fall 2024 Instructor Feedback Survey aimed to gather feedback from instructors using Brightspace to ensure the success of the migration and to guide future support and training efforts. This survey was actions-focused and geared towards next steps in ensuring continued support for instructors.

Survey Methods

- **Participants:** 1871 instructors invited; 262 responded (14% response rate).
- **Survey Period:** November 25 to December 6, 2024.
- **Methodology:** Instructors were invited to participate via mass email. The survey was conducted via Qualtrics and included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

Survey Results

Participant Demographics: Most participants taught one (n=104, 39%) or two (n=89, 34%) courses in the Fall 2024 term, with class sizes ranging from 5 to >2000 in a single class. Most classes taught were in person delivery.

Prior Brightspace Experience: Most survey participants (67%) had no prior experience with Brightspace before Fall 2024. Of the 33% of participants (n=75) who had used Brightspace prior to the Fall term, most of the previous experience came from teaching in the summer term.

Rating Brightspace Features: Survey participants generally agreed that Brightspace is consistent in its layout and stable for online exams. For more subjective features, like ease of use and intuitiveness, there were more mixed sentiments. On ease of use and intuitiveness, with experienced users rating these features more favorably. However, an analysis of variance comparing groups who have previously used Brightspace prior to the Fall 2024 term against novel users reveal a statistically significant difference in reported agreement levels for these two features that may account for some of the variability in agreement (Intuitive: $p < .001$, $f = 0.3$ and Easy to use: $p < .05$, $f = 0.2$).

Migration Choices: In the fall term, there were two migration options available to support faculty migrating their courses to OWL Brightspace: assisted migration and self-migration. 35% of opted for assisted migration only, 25% chose self-migration only, 19% experienced both, and 23% built a brand new course from scratch (an experience akin to self-migration). Many preferred building courses from scratch rather than using templates. The preference to build courses from scratch may point to the trend suggesting that users are becoming more confident in their ability to navigate and utilize OWL Brightspace independently.

Transition Support: Various resources were used, including the OWL Brightspace Help webpage, the Self-Guided Instructor Training, CTL workshops, CTL and WTS online drop-in sessions, and WTS in-person drop-in sessions. These transition supports were rated by participants on a scale of usefulness. Overall, the feedback on their usefulness clustered in the middle, ranging from slightly to very useful. Suggestions across the listed transition supports included more detailed FAQs and more tailored guidance, which are summarized in the next section.

Key Insights:

Support Resources: The feedback in the self-guided instructor training often mirrored the feedback from the OWL Brightspace Help webpage, as both are self-guided, web-based resources that were regularly updated throughout the term to address evolving needs of instructors. In both instances, survey participants shared that both sets of resources provided general guidance and where they needed specific help, they sought out support from a person, which they often noted was their preferred mode of seeking help. The feedback often requested more extensive FAQ or help pages with more information or topics generally, and a broader spectrum of possible issues or details with topics.

Workshops and Drop-In Sessions: The suggestions for synchronous support resources (i.e., the CTL workshops and CTL and WTS drop-in sessions) often included mentions of slowing down the pace, more detailed coverage of grading features, and consistent guidance from facilitators. It's important to note that the expectation was that participants come to the workshops having reviewed the associated sections of the Self-Guided Instructor Training Course. Once a participant registers, they are provided with the specific sections of the course to review. This is in an effort to help maximize time for hands on activities during the session. This was not always the case, so the Brightspace familiarity and skill set in the room varied in each session. Facilitators tailored guidance based on who was in the training room.

Tool Priorities: In the previous Brightspace Instructor Summer Survey, several questions were posed about the ease of use of available tools. Additionally, in conversation with instructors throughout the term, a list of commonly requested tools or features was derived. In this survey, participants were asked to rank the tools or features listed in order of priority. The results shared a high demand for customizable features and better integration of third-party tools. This desire for customization is not surprising: it was a major issue raised in the Summer Feedback Survey and continued to be a major item raised in the open-ended question at the end of the Fall Feedback Survey.

Action Items:

Western, including units from WTS and CTL, will continue to make regular updates to self-guided training and help webpages, incorporating feedback from this survey and other sources as they arise. In workshops, pacing will be adjusted and there will be more opportunities for questions in workshops. The feedback from this survey will be used in part to determine upcoming piloting opportunities, either for updates to the user interface or to integrating third-party tools.

The CTL developed a suited of detailed instructional videos to further unpack specific workflows in Brightspace. These are called the Brightspace Pro Tips Video series. Instructors are encouraged to review existing self-paced, asynchronous resources to improve the online experience of their learners.

The CTL and WTS meet regularly with D2L and will share the results of this report with them to provide end-user data to help make improvements to their platform. Instructors are encouraged to provide their feedback to D2L as well through the D2L Community forums.

Conclusion

The final question on the survey prompted participants to share any additional feedback they might have about OWL Brightspace. Many participants enjoyed using OWL Brightspace and consider it to be an improvement over OWL Sakai. Many individuals expressed liking the look and feel and consistency of Brightspace, and the features of the quizzes. They often write that the more they work in Brightspace and become increasingly familiar with it, the more comfortable they are with using the various tools.

Several individuals expressed enjoyment with the ability to input rubrics and the overall grading design and set up. They also appreciate the ability to, on a single page, add in-text corrections, commenting, and grading.