





Alliant International University
Center for
Teaching and Excellence - Newsletter

May 6, 2024

The [Center for Teaching Excellence](#) monthly newsletter provides information about events sponsored by the CTE as well as around the university and beyond. We also highlight resources available to Alliant faculty on the CTE site and elsewhere.

Dalia Ducker

Center for Teaching Excellence on Demand Events	
	<p>GenAI Garage is a 90-minute online workshop for beginners who have a desire but little experience exploring and tinkering with Generative AI tools. Through a hands-on approach, participants will learn by doing while discovering the potential and limitations of Generative AI, creating content using various tools, and sharing insights and feedback with others. Webinar link - GenAI Garage Webinar</p> <p>Art and Science of the Prompt is a 60-minute online workshop that teaches how to craft effective prompts for GenAI tools. The workshop requires active participation from attendees, as they will be asked to write, share, and discuss their own prompts throughout the session. Participants will learn the principles and techniques of prompt engineering, practice with different GenAI tools and domains, and evaluate the quality and reliability of the outputs generated. Webinar link - Art and Science of the Prompt</p> <p>A Guide to the Essential Canvas Features and Functions You Might Be Missing is a 60-minute online webinar suitable for anyone who wants to improve their skills with Canvas. Participants will discover and explore some of the hidden and advanced features and functions of Canvas that can enhance the learning experience and outcomes for instructors and students. They will also have the opportunity to ask questions and share feedback with the webinar facilitator and other participants. Webinar link - Canvas Features and Functions Webinar</p>
Resources from the Department of Online Teaching	
	<p>SpeedGrader Feedback: Encouraging student engagement and prioritizing originality</p> <p>Instructor Inquiry</p> <p><i>Dear Online Learning Team,</i></p> <p><i>I'm seeking advice on ways to strengthen our students' interaction with feedback and their commitment to producing genuine work. Despite providing detailed feedback, I fear it may be disregarded or that students may not even know how to find it. Also, the possibility of AI-generated work concerns me. Your insights will help me to</i></p>

address these issues while encouraging students to value feedback and prioritize originality.

Warm regards,

Instructor E.V. Aluate

Online Learning Team's Reply

Feedback is a critical component of the learning process, offering students valuable insights into their academic performance and areas for improvement. It is equally important to foster student originality and ensure that the use of GenAI (Generative Artificial Intelligence) technology when creating submissions is done ethically, following all stated course guidelines. It is a missed opportunity when students do not engage with feedback nor cultivate their own unique ideas. The students' potential growth, as well as the instructors' efforts are lost.

Directing Students to Feedback

First, do students know how to access the feedback provided? It is important to familiarize students with the feedback features each instructor utilizes in SpeedGrader while also highlighting the value of feedback. At the beginning of the term, post a video using screen-sharing that provides a demonstration of:

- How to find and locate feedback in SpeedGrader starting from the home page of the course
- The SpeedGrader feedback features used
- Explain how feedback ties into the course grading criteria
- The importance of reviewing feedback
- How using and reflecting on feedback is tied to academic success

Instructors need to create the video only once, as they are encouraged to produce reusable content that can be utilized across multiple courses. Alternatively, if creating a video seems like too much of a chore, consider pointing students to this tutorial, [How do I view annotation feedback comments from my instructor directly in my assignment submission?](#)

Instructors are encouraged to remind students periodically to examine feedback provided on their assignments, emphasizing examples in announcements or during live sessions that pertain to most of the class. An example of this would be addressing the frequent mistake of students not alphabetizing their reference lists. Collectively addressing issues and reminding students to review comments on their submissions highlights feedback's vital role in course dialogue.

Feedback in Course Design

For students to understand the value of reading and acting upon the suggestions and nudges provided to improve upon an artifact, opportunities for utilizing this feedback need to be built into the course design. If an assignment is submitted only for summative feedback at the end of the term and assessment focuses on the overall achievement of course learning objectives, students may not see a need to review the instructor feedback. After all, the assignment grade is final, why bother?

By designing a course in which portions or multiple drafts of a long-term summative assignment must be submitted periodically, instructors can provide specific,

actionable insights that students can use and immediately apply. Remember that when providing formative feedback for assessments, only one or two previously identified problem areas need to be addressed. Then, at the end of the term when a summative evaluation of the artifact is completed, many of the potential problem areas will have been addressed, allowing for a more streamlined evaluative process.

Preventing Cheating While Encouraging Originality

The added benefit of providing continuous feedback on formative assessments throughout a term is that there may be a reduction in the overuse of GenAI, such as Copilot or ChatGPT. While these tools can aid in the writing process, they also pose risks for academic integrity. It is important to educate students on the ethical and acceptable use of AI (Artificial Intelligence), when applicable, while emphasizing the importance of originality and critical thinking.

Incorporating reflective practices and multiple draft submissions into the curriculum not only deepens a students' understanding of the subject matter but also instills a habit of seeking external advice and iterative improvement. This approach mirrors the process of dissertation writing, where students are expected to refine their work through continuous feedback and self-assessment. Through this write-feedback-revise cycle, students learn that an initial draft is just a starting point, and it will undergo significant transformations based on feedback from others before it reaches its final version.

Conclusion

Instructors spend a lot of time, effort, and energy providing feedback to students. However, it is all for naught if students do not use it. To ensure the efficacy of feedback, it is crucial that students are clearly guided on where to locate and how to utilize the insights provided by their instructors. Ideally, feedback can be used to create a dialogue between students and instructors, further encouraging active engagement and understanding. By doing so, we help students to become more engaged, informed, and adept at applying feedback constructively.

For information about using SpeedGrader in Canvas to provide feedback, see the Online Learning Team's article in the February 2024 CTE newsletter - "SpeedGrader in Canvas: Personalizing Feedback While Saving Time."

Teaching Tips



Designing Effective Collaborative Learning Experiences

Collaborative learning is an active learning process in which two or more students work together to learn. Collaborative learning exercises can be used with an entire class, small groups, or pairs. These exercises can serve a variety of functions, for example (a) to facilitate active learning and discussion of a topic; (b) to help students develop their ideas or brainstorm solutions to a problem; or (c) to create a group project that results in a formal presentation, paper, or other product. Collaborative learning involves reframing student roles: from passive listener, observer, and note-taker to active problem-solver, contributor, and discussant. It necessitates social interactions, which promote sharing of ideas, support, and resources. Thus, collaborative learning involves students working together and, in the process, not

only teaching each other but also improving their own learning. Below are some suggested guidelines:

1. Organize groups with a purpose; have a learning objective in mind and share this purpose with students.
2. Do not simply put students in groups with vague directions to discuss a topic; instead, focus the discussion with a question or a specific task to complete.
3. Structure the task so that students are required to respond to one another's ideas, create a product together, or teach each other.
4. Design the activity so that individual success depends on group success
5. Require that every student contribute to the work of the group and all participants be responsible for its success.
6. Always require a product of groups' work, even if it is as informal as a summary of the discussion.
7. Discuss with students some of the problems that may arise in each stage and explain the benefits of working collaboratively.
8. Incorporate team-building exercises and teach communication and conflict-resolution skills.
9. Establish clear expectations for group members by setting ground rules and/or using team contracts.
10. Explain to students how they will be graded; prepare and distribute a grading rubric.
11. Increase individual accountability by combining group assessments with individual assessments.
12. Incorporate self - assessment and peer assessment for group members to evaluate their own and others' contributions.
13. Ask participants to reflect on and evaluate the group process and come up with ideas for improvements.
14. Keep groups small, ideally no more than 4 or 5 members.
15. Create groups that are heterogeneous with respect to knowledge, skills, and perspectives.
16. Designate some class time for group meetings and monitor group activity to provide clarification of the task and monitor progress.
17. Assign roles (e.g., e.g., recorder, facilitator, reporter, and summarizer) or encourage students to do so.
18. Do not overuse this technique.

Other Resources




Resources for Improving Study Skills

Many universities provide resources for students to help them improve their study skills. Although it is reasonable to expect that students will have learned these skills earlier in their educational careers, it is apparent that some students have not done so. These lessons may be useful for some Alliant students, either as an introduction to the topic or as a quick reminder. Here are examples:


- [How to Study Less and Remember More](#)
University of California/San Diego
- [Improve Your Study Strategies](#)
Ohio University
- [Active Studying](#)
Oregon State University
- [Note Taking](#)

	<p>Oregon State University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Study Cycle University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill • How to Study Effectively University of Wisconsin/La Crosse
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Shared Resources

	<p>AI News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are Your Students Cheating? This is an instrument developed by a faculty member at another institution that faculty can use to self-evaluate whether their assignments are of the sort students are more or less likely to cheat on. • Wonder Tools: This substack provides links to a plethora of online resources. Here are examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How to Use AI to Plan a Trip ○ The Best New AI Search ○ Create Cool Maps
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Faculty Success and Well-Being

	<p>Book Contracts</p> <p>In this article in the <i>Chronicle of Higher Education</i>, the author addressed the question: "When Will I Get a Book Contract?" Noting that a book contract is a legal agreement between the author and the press that covers many specifics, she cautioned that "When you get an offer can vary from press to press, editor to editor, and project to project." She did, however, provide some general information on the process. Specifically, she discussed the stages of review for a scholarly book project: (a) internal review of the proposal by the acquiring editor and colleagues; (b) peer review of the manuscript by external experts; and (c) review by an editorial board. As described on the publisher's website, a contract may be offered at any time during this process. (Sometimes authors are offered advance contracts earlier in the process, but they still need to go through the full review process.) The writer estimated that if everything goes well, it is possible to get a "board-approved" contract within six to eight months of submitting a full manuscript. She cautioned, however, that the entire process of publishing a scholarly book tends to take two years.</p>
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