Enhancing student engagement in online learning at Texas Tech University

**USING**
- Peer Review
- Interactive Video
- Interactive Audio

**COURSE FORMAT** | **CLASS SIZE** | **LMS**
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Online/Blended | 3500 | Blackboard

**DOMAIN** | **LEVEL**
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English Kinesiology | Undergraduate

**Background**

**ABOUT THE INSTITUTION**

*Texas Tech University* prides itself on being a major comprehensive research university that retains the sense of a smaller liberal arts institution, and committed to enhancing the cultural and economic development of the state, nation, and world.

**ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR**

*Dr. Justin R. Louder* serves as the associate vice provost for Texas Tech University eLearning & Academic Partnerships. Dr. Louder is the primary consultant for college and department leaders on the development of new, high-demand eLearning degree and certificate proposals. He also oversees Blackboard support and instructional design, as well as compliance and regulation for online and regional site programs.

**Course objectives**

Students were able to actively **process** the study materials, **engage in** group discussion, and **critically evaluate** their peers and other groups’ work.

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**BLOOM’S TAXONOMY**

The learning activities, according to Bloom's Taxonomy, were mainly at the level of:

- **Understanding** the concepts introduced in the study materials
- **Analyzing** and reflecting on the given materials
- **Evaluating** own and peers’ work according to a given rubric
The challenge

Texas Tech University’s fall semester kickoff in 2020 was like none that preceded it, as the pandemic caused traditional in-class teaching to suddenly be moved entirely online. This major change presented faculties such as the English department with a challenge: to ensure an active learning environment in online settings, with effective feedback, meaningful interaction, and continuous engagement.

In the ‘normal’ year, students of the English 1301 and 1302 courses would take part in peer assessment for each of their writing assignments; exchanging written reports with their peers and providing comments and feedback. Coordinating efficient peer feedback back among all 3,500 students was already difficult in the face-to-face setting; therefore, a different approach was needed to make that possible online. That’s why the faculty reached out to Dr. Louder, who proposed integrating the FeedbackFruits tools to get peer assessment up and running once more.

The solution

Under Dr. Louder’s instructions, the English department integrated several FeedbackFruits tools namely Peer Review, Interactive Video, and Interactive Audio into Blackboard. Thanks to the seamless integration, instructors were able to successfully design and facilitate online peer feedback activities. Furthermore, the data overview feature, allowed faculties to gain insights into students’ performance and make proper adjustments.

Besides the two English courses, FeedbackFruits continued to prove effective when being adopted in other online modules: the Kinesiology and Exercise Physiology classes. These courses were organized in either online or blended forms, with inclusion of peer assessment activities to foster “self-driven learning” and critical thinking. To facilitate these elements, Peer Review, Interactive Audio and Video were utilized.

“They [the faculty] were able to talk to students that might not be as active as others... They were also able to manage and look at how students look at feedback, interacted with others, then integrated any comments or changes.”

JUSTIN LOUDER
Associate Vice Provost, Texas Tech University
The setup

English 1301 and 1302
Peer review was used to set up 6-8 peer feedback activities, in which students reviewed each other’s assignments and instructors also provided comments.

Due to the big class size of 3500, the faculty divided students into groups to work on different projects. This process was also supported by the Peer Review tool.

Kinesiology and Exercise Physiology classes
With Peer Review, instructors issued two learning activities throughout, which are:
1. a pre-class activity in which students reviewed, and left comments on the study materials
2. a peer-based discussion where students exchanged thoughts and questions during the lectures. These subjects were then addressed by instructors after the classes.

Interactive Audio and Video tools were used to help students learn medical terminology. Instructors uploaded short videos explaining medical concepts, with added in-line questions to check students’ understanding. This learning design allows for students’ active participation, and formative assessment.

The outcomes

“The faculty loved the Peer Review, Annotation tools, and Interactive Video”, remarked Dr. Louder about the adoption of FeedbackFruits tools. As Texas Tech University has aimed to promote feedback, interaction, and active learning in their online/hybrid classes, FeedbackFruits proves to be effective in helping faculties realize these goals.

According to Dr. Louder, using FeedbackFruits tools “has saved the faculty members a huge amount of time” thanks to the smooth LMS integration, and user-friendly interface. Furthermore, instructors were able to foster collaborative learning in online classes by using the tools.

Data analytics was also the element much appreciated by faculties when mentioning FeedbackFruits tools. By seeing students’ progress and performance, instructors can identify underperforming students, make adjustments, and manage student engagement.

Above all, the Texas Tech team managed to foster an active learning environment where students could engage in meaningful interactions and become active learners.

To learn more about Texas Tech University’s success story, visit Dr. Louder’s presentation at inspirEd 2021.

“ When we did the pivot back in the Spring, we were concerned about how they would be able to have that collaboration in the online world. By using online tools, they were able to foster this."

DR. JUSTIN R LOUDER
Associate Vice Provost, Texas Tech University