

The top ten ways students wish professors used Oncourse

During the 2007-2008 academic year, the Board of Aeons (the student advisory board to President McRobbie) looked at how students use and perceive technology on the Bloomington campus, and how their experience could be improved. In conjunction with a full report, the Aeons created the following list of Oncourse suggestions. Tips for applying these suggestions created by IT Training and Education and the campus centers for teaching and learning are also included.

1. Upload the course syllabus using the Syllabus tool

Students find it helpful to have access to this important document from any computer.

Tips: Posting a detailed syllabus, and keeping it updated, establishes a "learning contract" between the instructor and student. Through hyperlinks to other documents, such as department-specific procedures, campus policy on plagiarism, assignments, and grading rubrics, a posted syllabus can also serve as a central organization document. See [Creating a Syllabus](#). For more information, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/argg.html>.

2. Provide grades to students with the Gradebook

Providing timely, frequent feedback helps students know where they stand in a given course.

Tips: A grade book kept current during the semester encourages student engagement and mastery of course content. Oncourse CL also supports integrating the grade book with the Assignments tool. To start creating a grade book, see [Add an item to a Gradebook](#). To learn more, about grade books that use categories, percentages and weighting, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/arge.html>.

3. Use the Resources tool to upload course materials

Post handouts, lecture notes, review materials, and other course materials in the Resources tool.

Tips: Distribution of course material can take up valuable class time, so posting via the Resources tool allows students to find (and organize) this information on their own. To start working with the Resources tool, see [Adding to Resources](#). To learn more, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/arfs.html>.

4. Use Announcements to highlight important news and cancel a class

Get the attention of students using announcements and email notifications.

Tips: Some tools (e.g., Announcements, Resources, and Syllabus) allow you to send email notifications to site participants. A low-priority email notification will be subject to each participant's notification preferences; a high-priority notification overrides individual preferences and sends all site participants a notification via their regular email. The Announcements tool using email notification can help you immediately relay a review session time and location, a class cancellation, or a special reminder. Also, in the Resources tool, you could upload a new document and by including email notification ensure that students have immediate knowledge of its availability. To learn to use tools that foster the creation of community, including the Announcements tool, see [Basic Community for Instructors](#). For more about the Announcements, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/argc.html>.

5. Use the Oncourse Calendar as a course guide for students, putting links to lecture notes, readings, assignments, and the dates of quizzes and exams

Post readings to the calendar as attachments for each day.

Tips: Posting announcements, assignments, due dates, and resources to the Calendar gives students a holistic view of the course. To learn to set up the Oncourse Calendar tool, see [Creating a Calendar](#) . For more help, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/arfm.html>.

6. Allow and encourage students to submit papers electronically using Assignments or Drop Box tools

This will help save both paper and ink.

Tips: The Assignments tool allows for an organized method of submitting student work that integrates with other Oncourse CL tools (Gradebook) for prompt feedback/grading. Assignment instructions that include grading criteria or a grading rubric facilitate more targeted instruction. To begin work with the Assignments tool, see [Creating an Assignment](#). For more information, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/argj.html>.

7. Have the Oncourse Chat room open during office hours

Open an additional line of communication with students by using the Chat tool.

Tips: The Chat Room tool allows for more informal instructor/student interaction, but can also facilitate more peer-to-peer interaction. You can also paste a web link into a Chat Room session. For help setting up a Chat Room, as well as other communication tools, see [Communication and Collaboration for Instructors](#). For more help working with the Chat Room tool, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/arft.html>.

8. Link your instructor website to the Oncourse site using the Resources tool or using the Web Content tool

Making a link from Oncourse to your external site makes it easier for students to find.

Tips: The Web Content tool allows for easy integration of your own or external web sites. For more help working with the Web Content tool, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/argr.html>.

9. Enhance group projects by using the Oncourse Group function to encourage group communication

Resources, Calendar, Forums, Announcements, Assignments, and Messages can all be configured to be used with Groups.

Tips: Groups allow for more targeted instruction and more effective communication within student groups. Asynchronous, group-specific, or out of class communication can also be facilitated through Oncourse Groups functionality. To learn how to create groups, watch the Feature Demo [Create Groups and Add Site Members](#). For help working with the Groups functionality in a broad variety of tools, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/atcs.html>.

10. Conduct in-semester course evaluation or informal surveys using the Original Test and Survey tool in order to gauge student thoughts on a course

In addition to formal evaluations, the Original Test & Survey tool can be used to gather timely feedback on course structure, learning activities, favorite or most difficult topics, and recent quizzes and exams.

Tips: Mid-semester evaluations prepare students for end-of-semester evaluations, and allow faculty to adjust a course midstream. Guidelines for mid-semester evaluations are identical to those for the end of the semester *except that* with mid-semester ones, you should be sure to describe in class the three crucial comments you identified as from the evaluations, how you will address them, or why you cannot or will not address them at this time.

For help working with the Original Test and Survey tool, see <http://kb.iu.edu/data/aonp.html> and <http://kb.iu.edu/data/anua.html>.