Unleash the Educational Power of Brightspace: A beyond-the-basics guide for instructors

Practical Tips, Tricks, Inspirations, and Solutions for Enhancing Education with Brightspace

THE HAGUE
UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES

Preface

As an Educational Advisor and Brightspace trainer at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, I have had the privilege of working closely with our dedicated instructors and witnessing their enthusiasm for embracing new tools and technologies in education. However, I also understand the challenges that come with adapting to a new system. Some instructors expressed feelings of demotivation when faced with the task of learning to work with new platforms like Brightspace. It became my mission to 're-motivate', activate and inspire these instructors, showcasing the incredible possibilities that Brightspace offers while aligning them with the learning goals of their programs.

I am thrilled to present this manual, "Unleash the Educational Power of Brightspace: A beyond-the- basics guide for instructors" to you.`

I want to thank two remarkable student Assistants, Meriem Bekri and Jash Khedoe, whose contributions to conducting field research and structuring the manual have been instrumental in bringing this project to fruition. Their commitment and hard work have enriched the content and ensured its relevance to the needs of our instructors. I would also like to express my appreciation to those who graciously offered their time and expertise in research, proofreading and providing feedback throughout the development of this manual. Your attention to detail and thoughtful suggestions have significantly enhanced its quality.

To the readers of this manual, I wish you an enjoyable and insightful journey as you delve into its pages. It is my hope that you will be moved and activated by the practical tips, tricks, inspirations, and solutions presented here, inspiring you to implement them in your own teaching practice.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the privilege and honor of providing you all with this beautiful manual. Let us embark on this adventure together and unleash the educational power of Brightspace!

Warm regards,

Rynell Offerman
Educational Advisor Blended Learning

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Introduction

We are honoured to present this comprehensive manual designed to empower and inspire educators at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) to unleash the full potential of Brightspace.
Brightspace is the new Learning Management System of THUAS since September 2022. Whether you are an experienced user or just starting your journey with Brightspace, this manual is filled with practical tips, tricks, inspirations and solutions that will enhance your teaching experience and enhance the educational journey of your students.

In today's digital age, technology plays a crucial role in transforming the way we teach and learn. Brightspace is a powerful platform that supports instructors with course management. Furthermore, the right implementation of Brightspace tools can increase student engagement, foster collaborative learning and make learning more personalized. We do understand that navigating all the features and possibilities of Brightspace can be overwhelming. That's where this manual comes in: We have carefully curated 17 articles, each addressing a specific aspect of Brightspace These articles will provide you with inspiration, evidence-informed examples and support, by using examples from practice and our own expertise.

We invite you to (further) get acquainted with Brightspace through this manual. Ready to enhance your education and unleash the power of Brightspace?

24 useful Brightspace keywords and terms for you to know

There are lots of Brightspace-specific terms and words. To help you navigate through Brightspace, we've gathered the 24 most used key-words and terms. Useful for you to know!

A

Announcements
A course specific widget that allows lecturers to create and publish communication related content to students, such as news and updates.

Assignments
A tool within Brightspace that allows teachers to create and set up Assignment submission points for students. Students will find here assignment instructions, maximum scores, and deadlines.
Students can also submit their work through assignments if teachers make that specific assignment visible.

Attendance
A tool that enables you to create registers that track attendance for activities within your course. You can track attendance for any number of activities within a course and customize your registers to suit your needs. *Visit page 21*

Awards
A tool that enables lecturers to provide awards to students based on specific criteria or course activities. There are two types of awards: Badges and Certificates.
Visit page 13

B

Brightspace
Brightspace is a Learning Management System where learning materials can be created, hosted and edited by teachers and students.

C

Classlist
Classlist is a directory of names, emails, and group settings which provides quick access to a full list of the participants in your course. Through Classist, you can (un) enroll participants and assign roles within your course.

Calendar
The Calendar is your personal Brightspace related calendar. On your Absolute homepage, you'll find a Calendar where all deadlines across all of your Brightspace courses are depicted. Within a Brightspace course, you'll find a Calendar depicting course related deadlines.

Content
The content area within a course is the place where course materials are made visible and accessible to students. *Visit page 10*

Course
A Brightspace course is the space where all content, information and activities regarding one specific course is being hosted.

D

Discussions
Through Discussions, users can post messages and react to each other's messages. This is an asynchronous communication tool, meaning that users can read the postings at any time. *Visit page 19*

G

Grade Book
The grade book is an online environment within a course for recording course participant's grades. A Grade book contains a list of items and categories related to the educational activities that are scored within a course. *Visit page 46*

Groups
The Groups tool is used to create groups in Brightspace. Through groups, there are multiple ways to assemble groups out of the available participants within one Brightspace course. *Visit page 22*

H

Homepage
Also known as the Absolute Homepage. This is the first page you see when you log into Brightspace, where you will find all the courses you've been enrolled into as a teacher. From here, you can navigate to all the courses where you are enrolled into.

HTML editor
A tool used to create course content pages in Brightspace. The HTML editor builds course web pages with formatting features such as text, headings, bullets, images, file uploads, links and templates. *Visit page 37*

I

Intelligent Agents
Intelligent Agents make it possible to automate notifications or e-mails in Brightspace. These notifications or e-mails can be either be scheduled or launched by meeting criteria defined by the instructor, such as login activity, course activity, and release conditions. *Visit page 35*

L

Learning Management System (LMS)
An LMS is a software application or web-based technology that is used to create, share and administer learning content by educators to students.

M

Manage files
The Manage Files tool is the file management system for a course. From this area, files associated with a course offering can be organized and uploaded. *Visit page 5*

My Home
My Home is accessed when opening a Brightspace course by instructors and students. This is the place where course related previews are shown through widgets.

N

Navigation bar
The navigation bar is the menu at the top of all Brightspace courses and the Absolute Homepage. The navigation bar contains links to different areas within or outside Brightspace.

Q

Quiz
Quiz is a tool in Brightspace to gather data and to (formative or summative) assess students. There are multiple settings possible when setting up a Quiz in Brighspace, such as different question types, automatic grading or embedding multimedia in questions.

Quick Eval
Quick Eval is a digital assessment tool in Brightspace that allows instructors to evaluate students work. An overview of the submitted work by students that needs to be evaluated, such as Assignments or Quizzes, are shown in Quick Eval. Instructors are able to provide written or video feedback and grades to the desired assignment submission through Quick Eval.

R

Release Conditions
Release Conditions are conditional requirements that restrict access or visibility to specific content, resources, or areas within Brightspace. Users must satisfy the conditions before the restrictions are removed and the content can accessed. *Visit page 16*

Rubrics
A Rubric is a set of grading criteria set for an assignment accompanied by different levels of performance. For each criterion and level combination, there is a score (summative) or label (formative).

W

Widget
A Widget is a piece of specific content displayed on the Absolute and Course homepages. Widgets can include plain text, links, or any multimedia type. The most widely used Widgets in THUAS's Brightspace courses are Calendar and Announcements.

"I can't find my content in Brightspace!"

Practical tips on how to navigate and manage your Brightspace course content efficiently and strategically.

One of the main purposes of Brightspace is providing educational material and content to students. For you, as a lecturer, this is the place where your students can hand in their projects and where you will assess these submissions. It is important to have a game plan on how course information will be added, provided and stored in Brightspace. This will create uniformity across courses, and will make the content of your Brightspace course more clear and accessible for both you and your students. Keep on reading to find tips on how to navigate, store and manage content in your Brightspace course.

3 tips on how to navigate through Brightspace like a pro

One of the reasons we adopted Brightspace at THUAS is because of its easy-to-navigate interface. Brightspace offers various options which will make it easier for you and your students to navigate through your course. We have three tips for you:

1 Create folders in Content
The most used part of Brightspace is the Content tab. Every (educational) content of your course will be placed here by you, and later on, viewed by your students. You can access and re-edit these content through Content. By creating a clear folder structure, you will make the navigation of your students and yourself in Content much easier. Create Units to structure main topics and subjects, and use Lessons and Folders to help you with structuring and dividing your main topics into bite sized content. It is important to discuss a folder structure with your colleagues of faculty to ensure uniformity across the different courses in a program. Remember to make the content 'visible to users' when it's time to make the content available to your students.

Limit the amount of subfolders used in a course, this will prevent that your students will overlook certain content.

2 Making Assignments easy-to-find
There are multiple ways to make Assignments accessible to students in Brightspace. The first place is through the Assignments tab in Course Tools. The benefit of this option is that all assignments will be visible and accessible in one spot. But for your students, it can be confusing to look for a specific assignment out of a library consisting of multiple assignments. Therefore, it is essential to give your assignments a clear title so students and teachers can find the assignment easier. Another way to make your assignments accessible is through the Content tab (via option 'Add Existing'). This option allows you to add an assignment to the corresponding unit, lesson or folder (e.g. in the unit named week 1). In this way, teachers and students can always access their assignments from a specific and logical location.
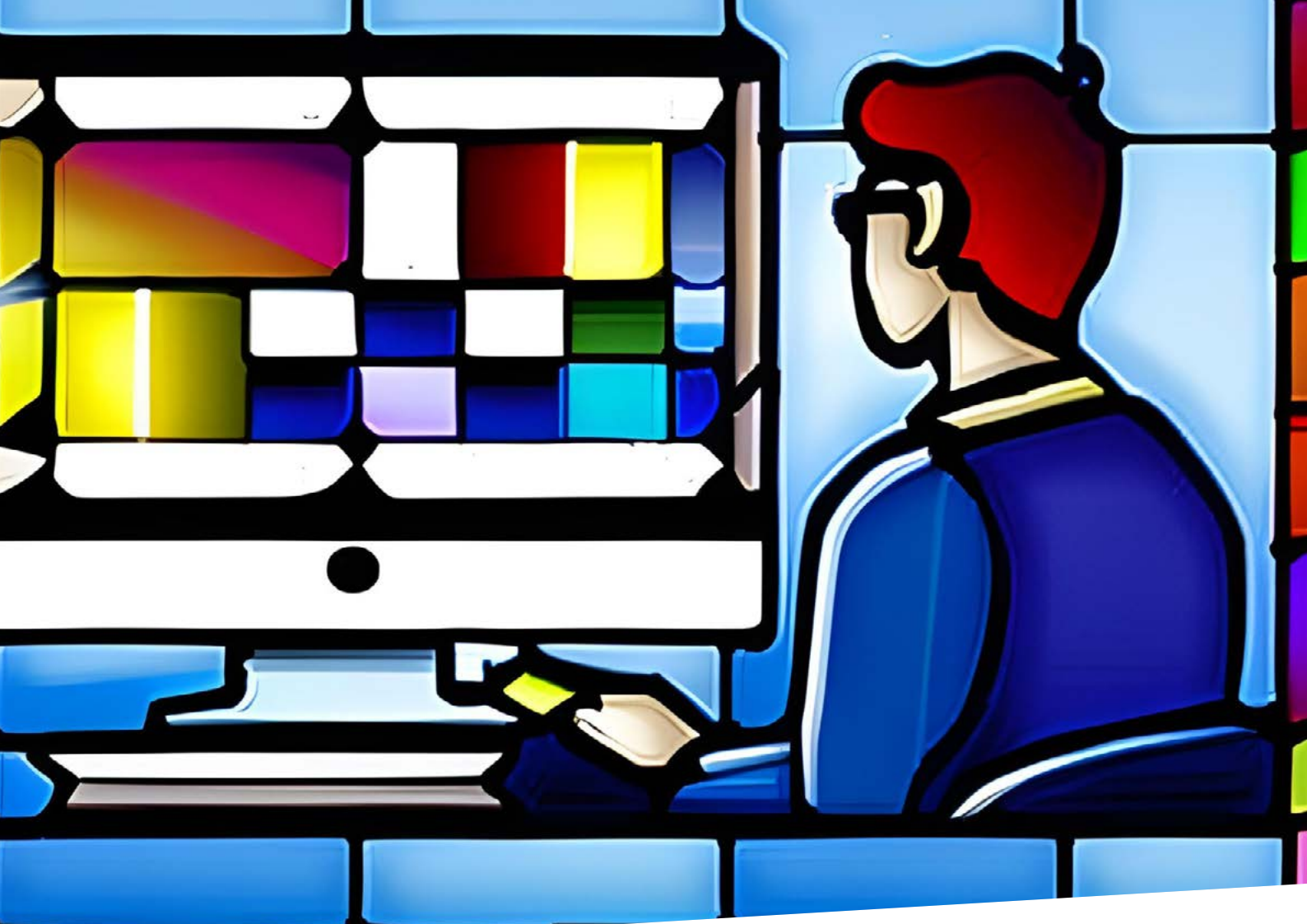
3 **Use Quick Links instant relocation in your course**

Use Quick Links to facilitate navigation in your Brightspace course. Quick Links refer the audience to a specific location within Brightspace. An example is using Quick Links in announcements as a way to guide your students in Brightspace. Add Quick Links and navigate your students to, e.g. group enrollment links, a signup form or a link to today's lecture readings. Another example is creating a Table of Contents document, where Quick Links will be added referencing the different necessary components of your course, such as assignments, group enrollment links or other documents within your course.

Conventions and standardization in three steps

It is beneficial to have standardizations and conventions in place when it comes to creating a structure in your Brightspace course. Follow these three steps in order to standardize the structure of your Brightspace course:

Step 1: Use consistent naming conventions for your Units, Lessons, Folders, HTML-documents and Assignments. This will create uniformity and recognizability for each type of content.
Step 2: Reach consensus among the members of your team about the conventions. This will create uniformity and will increase the findability of content in your Brightspace courses.

Step 3: Use descriptive names that accurately reflect the content of your materials. By using descriptive filenames, you support students in the selection of the relevant content.

Manage Files

Did you know that there is a repository of all the content you've added to your Brightspace course? These contents are stored at 'the back' of your Brightspace course in Manage Files.

This means that you won't have to add the same content twice into your course, because you could simply access these contents through Manage Files.

When adding a file for the first time in your course, it is important that the file has a clear name, for this is the name that will be used to save this file into Manage Files. By accessing Manage Files through Course Admin, you will

To create structure in your Manage Files, create your own folders. Think for instance, folders for pictures, video's, PowerPoints or documents.
From now on, if you want to add a previously uploaded file to your course Content, just access your Manage Files through the 'Add Existing' option.

TIP
Do a twice a year clean-up
of your Manage Files
to remove any duplicates
or irrelevant documents
in you

"How cool is this: I've earned an award!"

Promote course engagement through Brightspace Awards

Awards are digital badges or certificates that are earned by students when they achieve specific milestones set by the instructor. Awards acknowledge students' work and commitment to the course, fostering motivation. Students will feel seen by receiving these awards, and this will in turn result in more course engagement.

You can view Awards as an automatic feedback tool from you to your students. Students will receive relevant feedback when conditions are met, which can be experienced as positive reinforcement. As an instructor, you can create your own set of Awards, by adding badges or certificates to your course. You can even customize your Awards by creating your own unique set of badges or uploading your personally designed certificate. There are also pre-made badges to choose from. With the addition of release conditions, you will determine when and how these Awards will be assigned to your students. You can create as many Awards as you like, for whichever learning goal or fulfilled activity.

Reasons to use Awards

There are countless reasons why Awards could be a great addition to your course. Below, we have gathered a couple of good practices where Awards are used to their fullest potential. Also, a couple of reasons to use Awards are being presented.

- **Reward behavior that contributes to positive work ethic**
  At Michigan University, Awards are used to reward behavior that supports and reflects positive work ethic. Here they assign an Award when students did their required readings before attending a lecture.

  Do it yourself: You can achieve this by attaching an Award to a Quiz, that requires students to answer short questions about the required readings.

- **Reward skills that are important but not required in the evaluation process**
  Calgary University uses Awards as a means to reward behavior or criteria that are important to the learning process, but not required in the evaluation process. An example here is safety training for lab experiments. In the course manual, it is mentioned that this training is not mandatory, but it is of the upmost importance that students know exactly what to do in a lab. To promote participation in this safety training, students will receive an Award in the form of a certificate when completing the training.

- **Provide (intermediate) feedback**
  Feedback does not always have to be text or a grade. Awards can function as a means to provide intermediate feedback. For instance: Students need to hand in a proposal for approval before conducting their research. In the event that a proposal is approved, assign an Award named 'Approved Proposal' to your student. This Award will appear on the home screen of your student when they log into

Brightspace. This is also a fun and low threshold means to provide feedback to your students.

- **Gamify the learning process**
Receiving Awards is considered to be fun by learners. Have you built Release Conditions, or have you created a student journey in your course? Use Awards as an indicator that students have met, finished or can continue with a specific activity. You can even combine the earned Awards, so that together they form an end product. For instance: By meeting certain criteria in my course, students will receive an Award in the form of a (digital) fruit for each criterion that is met. At the end of my semester, students will be able to create their own fruit salad or smoothie with the earned awards. I could even translate this to the real world, by bringing the actual fruits to the classroom at the end of the semester.

- **Tracking Awards earning progress**
Not only can instructors assign Awards to students, but they can also keep track of the awards their students have received. By opening the Awards page through Course Admin, you will see an overview of all of the assigned Awards. Do you want to make it a competition in class for the most earned Awards? Show this overview as a leaderboard on your screen. Or do you just want to keep track of the assigned Awards? Use the overview to see what the completion status is of your students. This can also function as a conversation starter between you and your students, by either providing more support or discovering where your students' interests lie.

In a nutshell

Earning Awards can help promote course engagement through extrinsic motivation. Before implementing Awards, make sure to define why you want to use Awards in your course. Is it to provide recognition, feedback or rewards? Also, define and determine an awarding sequencing, meaning when you want to use Awards. For example: at the end of a specific activity, when specific criteria are met, or after assignment submissions? Last but not least, consider which type of Award you want to use. Do you want to use badges (more informal) or certificates (more formal)? Are you designing your Awards yourself, or are you using one of the premade designs by Brightspace?

The contribution of conditional processes in your Brightspace course
When and why use Release Conditions

One way to motivate and engage students in their learning is by providing them with instructional material that is challenging yet feasible for them to complete. Motivation can also be fostered by providing them with just-in-time support and the right educational materials. Brightspace offers a functionality that enables you to build automatic conditional processes which can provide (instructional or educational) materials to the right person and at the right moment in time. Allow us to introduce you to the functionality Release Conditions.

Release Conditions

Release Conditions enable you to build automatic processes in your Brightspace course based on criteria that are pre-set by instructors. You can ensure that a consequence or activity within Brightspace will take place the moment your pre-set criteria are met by a student. By building Release Conditions within a course, you are able to create multiple (personalized) learning paths for your students. These learning paths can be determined by e.g., their performance on assignments or (the intensity of) their activity within your course. Release Conditions help to keep an eye out for your students who need extra support within a big class, by providing them with content or information that is automatically released based on the criteria that have been set.

Reasons for when to use Release Conditions

There are multiple reasons to use Release Conditions. We would like to present you a couple of scenarios that illustrate how you can use Release Conditions as a means to help you in your course to motivate and engage your students.

Reason 1: **Create personalized learning paths for students**
You can create a personalized learning path for students by providing them with additional learning materials based on their performance level. This can be achieved by attaching a Release Condition to the score of an Assignment or Quiz.

Example: Students with a score lower than 55% on my Quiz will receive access to a Unit consisting of extra instructional materials to support them in achieving a higher score at the next assessment. Students with a score of 56% or higher will receive access to the next assignment, where they can continue with their tasks. The first group of my students will also receive access to the next assignment after scoring a 56% or higher on the quiz on their next attempt. This example can be executed by creating and attaching the Release Conditions to the Units that you want to release.

Reason 2: **Provide students with just-in- time content**
With Release Conditions, you can release content at just the right time for your students.

Example: I want to make sure that my students have done their readings prior to coming to my lecture. Because there are lots of templates that my students need to use during the different lectures, I want to make sure I provide them with the right template right before the lecture, and after they have completed their mandatory reading. To ensure this, I build a Quiz, consisting of a series of (short and concise) questions which will test the content of the mandatory reading. I will attach a Release Condition to this Quiz, by setting up that the template for this lecture will be released after my students have filled in their Quiz questions. This will prevent my students from becoming overwhelmed by lots of different documents and will also promote engagement prior to coming to class

Reason 3: **As a tool to gamify your course by attaching Awards to conditions**

Gamification elements can motivate your students if the educational activities are rewarding and contribute to the knowledge and learning process of students. Did your students hand in their assignments on time, or did they actively participate in a Quiz by creating their own discussion thread? Attach an Award through a Release Condition via the corresponding Brightspace tool, and make them feel seen, celebrated and appreciated.

Reason 4: **To isolate information from specific groups or individuals**

Release Conditions can also be used to provide specific groups or individuals with information. To explain this, we will use the announcement tool. After asking students to self-enroll in the correct groups, let's say you want to send each group a specific welcome message. But you want half your groups to receive Announcement A and the other Announcement B. Create both announcements and attach a group release condition to the specific groups.

Important note

It is important to have clear communication with your students that Release Conditions are being used in your course. Students will not see any content till the pre-set conditions are met. A potential risk here is that students might think that there are no materials available or that they are prematurely done with their tasks at hand.

To sum up

There are multiple scenarios where Release Conditions can support you in your course by providing your students with just-in-time feedback or content. Before implementing Release Conditions, make sure to define why you want to use this functionality. Ensure all content is already made prior to attaching Release Conditions. This will be a lot easier. Attach Release Conditions to the place or material you want to release when conditions are met. Lastly. Don't forget to communicate with your students that Release Conditions are being used in your course.

TIP
Want to learn more on Release Conditions? Visit our Support website and search

Or click on this button.

How setting up Discussions contributes to course improvement

Why use Brightspace Discussions to promote students course engagement

Did you know that Brightspace has a discussion tool which makes it possible to initiate and promote conversations between students and between teachers and students? Introducing Brightspace Discussions: a tool where you can set up discussion forums and topics for whichever topic or purpose.

Having an online discussion forum in which students can give each other feedback or chime in on the ideas of their peers, promotes the feeling of autonomy, competency and relatedness, which are three basic psychological needs to enhance and foster motivation. This will result in more course engagement in the form of active participation. Note that creating a safe online discussion forum is extremely important, so students feel invited to share their thoughts, ideas and input.

When to use Discussions: Inspirational scenarios and contexts
There are several scenarios in which instructors can use Discussions.

1. **Use Discussions as a feedback tool**
   Discussions can be used as a tool to gather feedback after an (educational) activity such as a lecture. An instructor can create question threads within a Discussion Topic where students can reply with their questions, answers or by rating.

   An example: I want to ask my students how they experienced the first lecture of my course. By creating a forum 'Feedback on lectures' and by creating a topic 'Feedback lecture 1', I can post questions where I can allow my students to give me input. My questions in this case would be: a. How do you rate lecture one? and b. Where do you require extra support on the topics of lecture 1? For question 'a' I will set up a five-star rating scheme and for question 'b' I'll allow students to answer anonymously if they wish to participate and give their feedback.

   By sharing this Discussion Forum or topics through my Announcements or making them visible through content, I can invite my students to participate in this feedback discussion. Students will also have the option to read and react to the answers of their fellow classmates.

2. **Create a Q&A**
   If you run out of time after a lecture to tackle the questions by your students, implementing a Q&A in your course could be a solution to this problem. Allowing students to post their own questions – in their own time and terms – promotes their willingness and inclination to ask course related questions. As a lecturer, you can answer these questions – which in turn are visible for your whole class - and furthermore gain insights into the knowledge gaps of your students. To promote peer learning, it is also possible to let students answer each other's questions. In this case, as a teacher, you can moderate the given answers.

3. Subject deep-dives

Allow students to deep-dive into subjects lectures or other activities in an informal way. Students can share their view and take on these subjects with each other through a Discussion Topic. They can rate each other's ideas or chime in and present their own takes on the subject at hand. Start by creating a deep-dive Discussion Forum, consisting of multiple topics (that you have created yourself or where you are allowing students to create their own topics).

An example: I am teaching a course on marketing. By creating a Forum 'Deep dive into marketing strategies' I create an online space where my students can deep dive with each other into topics related to marketing. The two topics I will create are

'Stakeholders for a marketing strategy' and 'Benefits of making a marketing strategy''. I will also allow students to rate each other's answers, and will keep the option on for my students to create their own topic(s) based on their interests. I will moderate this online space to make sure that the posted content is related to my course.

By using discussions for this purpose, you can also promote critical thinking in your students. By posting weekly questions, topics or scenarios, you can engage students in thinking and participating further than what is presented during lectures.

Additional tips & tricks

1. **Allow students to participate anonymously**
   Student participation in Discussion Topics could increase by allowing students to participate anonymously. Students will feel more inclined to participate without fearing embarrassment or judgement.

2. **Allow students to vote**
   Students can rate given answers by teachers or students. This is a way to let students indicate what they find interesting and useful. This provides insights into students' interests.

3. **The use of images or videos**
   Post a question or Topic accompanied by a video or photo. This would engage and grab the attention of your students. Allow students to reply with images or videos.

4. **Moderator**
   You can decide to be a moderator in your Discussion Forum by authorizing which posts are allowed. This is a way to filter out inappropriate or undesired posts in your Discussion Topics. This is a solution for instances where students misuse the option of posting anonymously in discussions.

5. **Use Release Conditions**
   Use Release Conditions to create automatic processes when your students participate in discussions. You can reward students for actively participating in your discussions by providing them with additional information in your Brightspace course.

6. **Make Discussions part of your educational design**
   Instructors have an active role in ensuring the use of Discussions in their course. Students should be able to see the importance of engaging with the Discussion Forums, for them to feel invited to actively participate in conversations. Instructors can keep students engaged by addressing the questions asked through the Discussion Forums during lectures. In this way, instructors will have input to use during the lectures, which has been provided by the students before the lecture.

TIP
**Check our extensive article on how to set up Discussions on our Brightspace Support site. Just search for: Create Discussion Forum
Or click on this button.**

How and why to create groups and promote collaboration in your Brightspace course

Practical and time-saving options in Brightspace Groups

Using random person selectors on the web to divide students in groups, or printing Excel sheets to randomly select students for group projects. Does this sound familiar? Isn't it inconvenient? We have creative, practical and time-saving options in Brightspace to create groups. With these options, you can create groups in order to promote collaboration and, in some cases, responsibility amongst your students.

When to – and what to use groups (for)?

There are lots of ways and moments to use groups. We've summarized the ways we've seen Brightspace Groups be used in the past, as well as in other universities. See examples to promote collaboration or as an administrative solution below.

- *As a filtering and communication tool*
  Are you lecturing your course with multiple lecturers? Then divide the course participants into subgroups, where each teacher will have a group consisting of their own students. Benefits of doing this is that teachers can filter to view their students in Class list, Grades, Assignments, and even send their students an email through Class list.

- *Assignments, projects, and collaboration tasks*
  You can create multiple group categories in Brightspace, which will be independent of each other. For instance, if you have five subprojects in your course and, in each project, students need to work in a different group? No problem! Just create separate group categories and attach these to the relevant Assignments.

- *Personal and targeted guidance*
  You can create groups based on course performance of participants. You can differentiate with content that is provided to these groups. An example is beginner and advanced level groups, where the participants in the beginner level groups can receive more targeted content through Release Conditions. This is one method to target learning needs.

- *To create an intake list*
  Do you want your students to register for a specific timeslot or an activity? Groups can be used to achieve this. Just rename each group in a category with the desired timeslots or activities.

Three ways to create groups

The Groups tool in Brightspace offers lots of options for dividing your class into groups. Make sure to define the purpose of your groups which will be referred to as your group category in Brightspace. In some cases,

it is possible for you to set up the size of the group or the number of groups you want to set up in a group category. We've mainly divided these options in three categories:

a. **Randomized grouping**
   Students will be randomly assigned to one of the available groups in a Group Category. By randomly dividing students into groups, you can promote mutual contact between students that would not normally work together.

b. **Lecturer-led grouping**
   Here, lecturers will manually assign each individual student to a specific group. Lecturers can form groups for collaborative assignments or group projects based on criteria such as performance, learning styles, or assigned topics.

c. **Self-enrollment by students**
   Students have the option to enroll themselves in groups. As a lecturer, you'll first have to create the groups where students can enroll themselves into. This option saves you time and promotes responsibility in students to enroll (on time). It also gives students a feeling of autonomy over their work since they can choose which group, they want to be a part of. In addition, instructors can set up a time limit on self-enrollments.

Important to know when using the Groups tools in Brightspace

1. We have an extensive article on how to set up Groups on our Brightspace Support site. Just search for: Create Groups

2. Identify the activities where collaboration is a key aspect

3. Define how you want the groups in your course to be composed

4. Self-enrollment? Make sure to make the self-enrollment link available to your students through an Announcement or the course documents using a Quick Link.

In conclusion

There are multiple ways to create Groups in Brightspace. Out of all the available options, we have addressed the options within Brightspace Groups that support lecturers in creating and using groups within a Brightspace course. We are excited for you to experience the power of Brightspace Groups yourself!

The time-saving tool to keep track of Course Attendance

The benefits of using Brightspace Attendance to track students attendance

The days of using Excel to keep track of students attendance are over at the end of this article. Brightspace offers a time-saving and user-friendly tool to support you in tracking the attendance of your students. In general, Excel is widely used as the attendance tracking tool by instructors. Though Excel offers lots of benefits, we would like to inspire you with the benefits of this Brightspace tool.

Before going into the details of this tool, we would like to point out that there is nothing wrong with having a preference of using Excel over Brightspace or vice versa. Always check what works best for you and supports you best in providing quality education to your students.

Brightspace Attendance

We present to you Brightspace Attendance: an administrative feature in Brightspace that allows teachers to manage and track students' attendance. In this tool you can record the attendance activities of your students using your own set of criteria's and schemes. It is also possible to record attendance for multiple cases or events in one course by creating separate attendance registers. All attendance data from one course will be accessible in one central spot, which will make attendance management more efficient.

The benefits of Brightspace Attendance

In our field and literature research on the use of Excel versus Brightspace Attendance, we found mainly 3 benefits of using Excel for attendance tracking. See these benefits below, with some suggestions on how to achieve the same or better benefits using Brightspace attendance:

Benefit of using Excel	Benefit of using Brightspace Attendance
You have control over how your attendance data is presented and displayed to you.	You have control over how your attendance data is presented and displayed to you by different filter options in the attendance data of your desired attendance register. An example is filtering the amount of present students who are part of a specific subgroup in your course to gain insights into their physical presence during lectures.
You can create separate sheets and tabs in Excel for different activities in your course where you want to keep track of attendance.	With Brightspace Attendance you can create multiple independent registers in one course. This means that you are able to keep track of the attendance for multiple different activities and events in your course. The data for each register will be displayed in its own separate overview.
The use of Excel as an attendance tool is familiar and known by many lecturers. So using the same method is time-saving.	Setting up your Attendance register will take up to five minutes, and you'll have this for the whole duration of your course. A benefit is that you will always know where to find your attendance tool, because it is a built-in feature within your course. There is considerably less room for errors because the tool will take over the manual part of the work. By selecting the right box, you will record the attendance of your (individual) students.

Cause for Concern

Something that Excel cannot provide is an automated note to you as a lecturer when a student is repeatedly absent. This automated note can be realized through the functionality Cause for Concern. When Cause for Concern is enabled, an icon will appear next to the name of the students in your attendance register who have failed to meet the attendance requirements. This will give you an indication as a lecturer which students might need a nudge or a check-in.

Important notes on how to do it yourself

Are you excited to save-up some time with Brightspace Attendance? Here are five important points to take with you:

- Set up your attendance register
- Do you have your own attendance criteria? Feel free to create your own attendance scheme. We have built a default attendance scheme for THUAS to help you out.
- Define for yourself at which timestamp you want to fill in the attendance register: at the start, during or nearing the end of your lecture or event

- Be consistent with filling in your attendance register(s) so you can have a complete overview of the attendance activities of your class.

In closing

Brightspace Attendance is a tool that offers a modern, time-saving and user-friendly solution to track and manage students' attendance. After setting up your Attendance registers, you can benefit from different functionalities such as targeted filtering and Cause for Concern. And not to forget that you will have every course related content in one central spot, including your attendance management. We are aware that Brightspace Attendance might not be useful for each and every attendance management needs. In this case, make sure to use the platforms or functionalities that work best for your unique needs

TIP
We have an extensive article on how to set up attendance on our Brightspace Support site. Just search for: Attendance or click on this button.

Tips on making your Brightspace course accessible and inclusive to different learning needs

Tips from us and a fellow lecturer at THUAS

Developments in the digital world are creating opportunities for people with specific learning needs to have similar learning experiences as a person without specific learning needs or disabilities. Brightspace provides settings to make a course accessible and inclusive to students with specific learning needs, by giving them the same opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions and enjoy the same services as their fellow students. It is therefore important to understand which tools are available and how to use these tools. This article will show you how to design a course in an accessible manner to make students with specific learning needs equal in the face of learning.

How to be accessible and inclusive using Brightspace

Each student has their own unique learning journey. There are students that need extra support in order to have a suitable learning journey. In this section, we are uncovering the settings and functionalities that are available in Brightspace to support you in instructing students with e.g. visual impairments, auditive impairments, dyslexia, ADHD and performance anxiety.

Releasing content earlier

Releasing content early can help students with specific learning needs to prepare accordingly. Many disabilities require students to spend more time preparing to be able to engage with the task at hand. Additional time to prepare is valuable for them to feel well-prepared before participating in a lecture or submitting an assignment. Releasing content earlier can be achieved through Release Conditions or by making a Unit in Content only accessible to a group of students in your course.

Fonts and additional HTML-documents tips

D2L, the supplier of Brightspace, advises using Sans Serif font styles and sizes when writing text in Brightspace. This font is supportive to students with visual impairments, as it is easy to read and can be magnified without losing resolution. Additional formatting tips are: do not write in all caps, because this can be difficult to read; make use of clear headings, as this creates a clear structure within text for students; make use of a table of contents, so students know what to expect within a document. Last but not least, when uploading an image, use the Alt text option to provide a description for images that are included in content.

Stimulate students with visual or reading impairments to use the 'Read aloud' functionality through Microsoft Edge browser

When content is placed in an HTML-document instead of a pdf-file by a lecturer, students with visual and reading impairments can use the Read aloud functionality in Microsoft Edge to have the text played back. It is therefore important to write in a clear and concise manner and to add descriptive tags or titles to pictures that

are supportive of the text. For example: "Image 1 displays a visual graph depicting the six levels of Bloom's taxonomy, with level one being understanding and level six being created" – instead of: "Image 1, Bloom's Taxonomy".

Keep students with low attention span engaged with Feedback Fruits Interactive Video

Feedback Fruits Interactive Video is a tool embedded in Brightspace that allows you to create question cards within videos. These questions will appear at pre-set timestamps during the video, where students would have to answer these prompted questions. These questions can even be locked, which means that the students are required to answer a question before being able to continue to the next questions and finish the video. This way, students are able to absorb more information and are stimulated to stay engaged with the content.

Provide additional time

Through the option 'Special Access', students can be provided with additional time to hand in Assignments despite deadlines. This can be an option for students with performance anxiety

Eva Willems' `top 6 practical tips` for creating an accessible and inclusive Brightspace course

Eva Willems, Lecturer at the faculty BFM, is eager when it comes to creating equal opportunities and learning experiences for students in her courses. In an interview, Eva shared her top 6 tips that she uses to make her course accessible and inclusive. Eva shares tips that are related to Brightspace as well as general agreements with her students. Read these practical and easy-to-implement tips and get inspired.

1 **Create options for submitting non-compulsory subprojects.**
This option allows students to receive intermediary formative feedback on subprojects that will contribute to their end project. This approach supports students with ADHD and performance anxiety, by guiding them and providing them with insight on whether they are heading in the right direction.

Brightspace tip: Provide intermediate feedback using Learning Outcomes within multiple

submission points. Providing textual feedback within the Assessment editor is also an option.

2 **Oral and written assessments are available.**
By applying both oral and written assessments in your course design, you are able to assess students in a way that better fits their talents and capabilities. This gives each student the possibility to complete their course with a satisfactory grade, as some students are stronger in writing than in speech and vice versa.

Brightspace tip: When creating submission points, there are options to select 'Observed in Person' as submission type. This will ensure that students won't have to hand in a submission, but that an instructor has the same feedback providing features as when assessing a document submission.

3 **Be open for students' feedback and questions.**
It is the responsibility of educators to invite students to actively participate and contribute to your course. This will increase their feeling of being included, which in turn has a positive effect on their study success and well-being.

Brightspace tip: Create an intake list through Groups, where students can sign up for a 1-on-1 session with a lecturer to go over any questions or feedback they have. Create Discussion forums to allow students to give feedback or ask questions regarding course topics or the course design.

4 **When uploading a Word document within Brightspace, use Korps as font.**
This is especially pleasant for students with dyslexia.

5 **Follow the NAP-rules** (nabij, activerend en praktijkgericht in Dutch, meaning Proximity, activating, hands-on)

Acquire and foster proximity with students by keeping track of their course engagement (through e.g. Class Progress); by communicating when, where and how students can approach lecturers for inquiries; and by facilitating ways where students can interact with each other (through e.g. a Q&A made in Discussions). Activate students in courses by promoting the importance of participating in class and its contribution to meeting deadlines and assessments. Lastly, students receive hands-on activities that are aligned with their future working practices.

6 **We treat one another respectfully.**

Last, but certainly not the least. The effect of having this mutual and joint agreement in class will ensure that students feel safe and free to express themselves. For students to be able to learn, there should be a good atmosphere in class that makes them feel relaxed. Clear rules, friendliness and kindness are important facilitators.

Brightspace tip: Share an Announcement with 'The Golden Rules' of your course through a Video Note.
This is a low threshold way for students to be introduced to these rules, and an easy way for instructors to share their rule

Conclusion

As instructors, we can ensure that all of our students are able to receive and engage with information according to their specific learning needs. Brightspace offers tools and workarounds to enhance the course experience of students with learning needs, such as dyslexia, ADHD, visual impairments and performance anxiety. Take your time in discovering which tools are best at supporting the needs of your students, and which tools support you in the best in conveying what you want to convey. Step by step, we are all making the digital learning world more accessible and inclusive for all.

Gamification in Brightspace

The why and how behind using tools to gamify your Brightspace course

Educational trends such as personalized learning, flexibilization, digital literacy, and student-centered approaches have led to a greater emphasis on creating engaging and interactive learning experiences for students. Adding game-related elements to their learning materials and experiences can contribute to creating more engaging and interactive learning experiences. This process is called gamification.
Incorporating gamification in an environment that did not have game-elements prior will enhance student motivation, which will result in higher levels of student engagement.

Gamification is an effective way to address these educational trends by providing students with a more active role in their learning, promoting collaboration, healthy competition, and providing immediate feedback. However, it is important to identify which tools are complementing - instead of distracting from your course framework. This will ensure more traction with the intended learning outcomes of the course. In this article, we are uncovering the tools that can help instructors to gamify their Brightspace courses.

The benefits of gamification in a course

Gamification is often used as a tool to enhance student motivation and engagement within a course. Besides these benefits, gamification contributes to:

- positive academic performance, by strengthening (intrinsic and extrinsic) motivation;
- increased course enjoyment, by providing students with meaningful and unique learning experiences;
- the decrease of cognitive load, by automatically and logically releasing educational content in chunks and at the right moment in time;
- the reinforcement of good learning habits, by awarding exemplary behavioral patterns;
- an increased feeling of approachability to educational content, by embedding playfulness and low-threshold activities within a course.

The gamification tools of Brightspace

Brightspace offers various tools that can contribute to gamifying a course. Each tool will be presented below with an explanation of how it can support lecturers in gamifying their course.

1. **Awards & Badges**
   Awards and Badges are digital tokens that can be assigned to students for completing Brightspace related tasks, such as Assignments submissions, Discussion participation and receiving grades. Awards contribute to gamification by providing students with external motivational factors, that reward the intended and exemplary behavior within a course. Students will receive tangible (e.g. badges, certificates) and non-tangible (e.g. praise, fame) rewards for their participation within the course. The Awards functionality has its own leader board, which can be displayed during class to show the intermediate ranking of Award scoring by students.

2. **Quizzes and Assignment submissions**
Brightspace Quizzes and Assignments can be used as the submission and course input points, in order to subsequent activity related to that input point. Quizzes are widely used as a tool to ask students short questions.
Students' scores on these Quizzes can be attached to Release Conditions, Awards and Announcements to create a personalized and performance based journey within the course. The same goes for Assignment submissions, where the received score can result in a personalized and performance related student journey.

3. **Score boards**
Brightspace Grades offers an option to create a course score board, which allows instructors to create their own point systems. Instructors can combine scores from Assignment submissions or Quizzes to create a leader board of

the group performance. Scores can also be attached to conditional processes, which can create a gamified student journey within your course. Note that it is advisable to use this option only for formative evaluations or gamification purposes, as comparing scores on actual assessments can cause a feeling of discomfort for students.

4. **Conditional processes**
Conditional processes can be built within a course using the Release conditions tool. Release conditions allow teachers to set prerequisites for certain content or activities in the course. The gamification element here lays in creating a sense of progression and accomplishment for students as they work through their course material. The title that is assigned to the Brightspace Units, Lessons or Folders that are released, contributes to the gamification of the course.

5. Naming Units 'Level 1, Level 2, ...' are more in line with gamification than names such as 'Folder 1, Folder 2, ...'.

6. **Intelligent Agents**
   Intelligent Agents are customizable tools that can be set up to send personalized messages and reminders to students based on their activity within the course. Positive behavior can be reinforced by automatically sending an email to students when they have met the set criteria within the course. An example here is using Intelligent Agents to send an encouraging email to students when they are halfway through completing the course. Students can also be encouraged to participate when, there hasn't been any course activity by the student within a set period of time.

On a final note

Gamifying your course can promote student engagement and motivation. Gamification is also a great way to provide educational content in a playful and fun way to students. In order for gamification to be successfully implemented within a course, it is important to always have your course objectives and learning goals in focus. Gamification should be an enhancement of student's experience of the course, not a distraction. Our main tip for you is to take baby steps. Have fun gamifying your course!

TIP
Do you want to learn more on Gamification in Brightspace? Follow our Expert Training on Gamification here

6 hacks on how to personalize and customize your Brightspace course

At THUAS we find it important that there is uniformity across all Brightspace courses. This will ensure that students can access educational material in the same way and at the same places across all their Brightspace courses. Creating a clear and recognizable learning environment enhances student engagement within the course and simplifies the tasks of instructors in providing educational content.

Although Brightspace has already been configured, there are options available to personalize and customize your Brightspace course. This article will therefore touch on 6 hacks for the personalization and customization of your course.

Hack #1: **Customize your Course banner**
The course banner is one of the first things instructors and students see when selecting and opening their course. Having a banner that is unique, inviting and relevant that aligns with the course content will facilitate navigation to a course. Especially if a lecturer or student has lots of courses in their Brightspace environment. It distinguishes a course from others and adds aesthetic appeal. You are free to create and add your own banner to your course, which will appear on the course title and in the course banner. There is also the option to select a banner from the library. Make sure that the banner size has a 1200 x 300 pixels format for correct alignment and display of the banner.

Hack #2: **Create personalized Announcements for students**
Brightspace has the option to automatically generate the name of a student in an Announcement, in order to make the message more personalized. This functionality is called Replacement String. By using this code {FirstName} in the text when creating an Announcement, the name of a student will automatically be generated when the Announcement is published and displayed in their Brightspace course. Your students will feel more personally addressed in a course consisting of multiple fellow students. How cool is it to see "Dear Rynell, today..." Instead of "Dear students, today…?"

Hack #3: **Customize your Course Content**
The most common way of customizing your course content is by creating and using Units, Folders and Lessons, which are the three folder levels in Brightspace. There are three ways to easily customize your course content. First, limit the amount of folders used in a course, which will make accessing files much easier for lecturers and students. Second, feel free to add images that are supporting the Unit topics in Units. This will make navigation through the content more visually pleasing. Note that these images will only be visible through the browser and not through the Pulse App. Third, add a short description of the Unit content on the Unit page. This will support the navigation through the course by giving content insights prior to opening each sub folders. Do note that in this case, these descriptions are only visible through the browser and not through the Pulse App.

Hack #4: **Customize and personalize Notifications for yourself**
Did you know that you can personalize which Brightspace notifications you receive through

email? This can be achieved by ticking the desired Notifications through your profile settings in the top right corner of your Brightspace environment. You can even decide to receive daily or weekly emails with a summary of the activities of each of your courses.

Hack #5: Create your own custom Awards for students

Awards can be handed out to students to represent certain accomplishments in a course or program. These Awards are customizable and can be issued by your own defined criteria. They can be customized by name, image and conditions. Do you want to learn more about when and how to use Awards? Read our article on this topic on page 10.

Hack #6: Customize your profile and contact information

A way to become more approachable to your students is by presenting your contact information in a clear and fun way. There are two ways to do this. The first way is by editing your profile. This can be done through the 'profile tab' after clicking on your picture in the top-right corner of your Brightspace environment. Feel free to fill in your tag line and hobbies: this could lower the threshold and

pressure that students sometimes experience when they want to approach their lecturers. The second way is to edit the 'Contact Details' HTML-document in the General Information Unit. Here you can add your name, job title and email address. Also indicate how you could help your students when they contact you. Don't forget to add an inviting picture of yourself. You can even add a video or GIF of yourself here! Students will love the latter.

On a final note

Which hacks are you going to implement? We're confident that these customizations will make it enjoyable for you to shape and design your course, as well as enhance the navigation for students.

TIP
Want to use more Replacement Strings? Click on this button lo learn more.

Intelligent Agents: Your personal assistant in maintaining course-related contact with your students

The why behind using automated messaging in Brightspace

How can we as educators embed just-in-time contact with our students? This question is widely raised in educational forums. Sometimes it is difficult to keep track of your students' engagement and involvement in course activity. Because we have so much to do, we lack the time to set up processes or habits to help us identify and act on the moments when our students are less engaged.

Brightspace offers a solution for this: Intelligent Agents. You can view it as a personal and automated contact-seeking assistant. You'll just have to set up when and how this personal assistant will act on your behalf in seeking contact with your students.

Intelligent Agents

Intelligent Agents makes it possible to automate notifications and e-mails in Brightspace. These notifications or e-mails can either be scheduled or launched when a student meets the criteria defined by the instructor. Some of these criteria are the level of login activity of students, the course activity of your students, or assignment completion by your students. You are free to set up a personalized e-mail to your (individual) students, which will automatically be sent the moment the criterion at hand is met.

Why use Intelligent Agents?

The best way to answer this question is to present to you an example from practice. We are not going too far for this one, we are staying in The Netherlands. A University in Delft uses Intelligent Agents as a check-in tool when there has not been any course activity by their students during a certain period. In this case, the criteria are set to send an automated email when the system identifies

that a student hasn't been active through the pre-set period by the teacher.

Word such an e-mail carefully: the risk in using Intelligent Agents is that students might feel watched. But by reaching out and asking if everything is okay – without referring to the fact that they have been inactive – you will show involvement and open up the opportunity to find out what is potentially going on with your students. This way you can also provide your students with the individual support they need at that moment – just-in-time.

Another way that this university uses Intelligent Agents is by promoting positive course-related behavior. When students have been active during the whole period of this course, they receive an encouraging e-mail containing compliments and appreciation for their involvement in the course. For this, as mentioned previously, make sure to word your e-mail in a way that your students do not feel watched. Our tip to take this one step further is to attach an Award through a Release Condition. This will ensure that the moment the e-mail is

sent, your students will automatically receive an award in their Brightspace environment.

These are the main benefits of using Intelligent Agents.

There are countless benefits of using Intelligent Agents in your course or program. These are some of these benefits:

- Saving time: e-mails are pre-written and sent to students at the specific moments when they might need it the most.
- Teacher involvement: teachers can be more involved in their students' education by providing them with just-in- time support.
- Motivated students: by receiving just-in- time support, students can continue with their course-related work. Additionally, students will have the feeling that their teacher is there for them.

Important notes on how to implement Intelligent Agents

1. Make sure you have a well-thought-out plan of action by answering these questions: What do I want to achieve by using Intelligent Agents? How will I make it clear

to my students that I am supporting them and not watching their every move? What are my criteria's for using Intelligent Agents

2. Do a practice round with a colleague before launching your Intelligent Agent, to make sure that the criteria are set up correctly.

3. Do not overuse Intelligent Agents. It is important to be mindful about the repetitions and scheduling of this feature. Overuse can cause spamming and result in students ignoring (important) e-mails.

In closing

So, what do you think? Isn't it great to have a personal assistant that can send automated e-mails for you? And what's handy is that this assistant will only be active when your pre-set criteria are met within your Brightspace course. Be transparent in communicating the use of Intelligent Agents to your students, and be mindful of how to effectively use Intelligent Agents in your course.

TIP
Want to learn more on Awards and Release conditions? Check the additional articles on these topics in this manual.

6 tips on how to make your HTML-documents visually appealing to your students

Brightspace is an online learning management system. This means that most documents, lessons and presentations are presented in an online environment and in plain text. When educational content is not presented in an appealing manner, it could have a negative impact on students' engagement and retention. By making your HTML-documents more engaging, you will support students by making their learning experience more enjoyable. In this article, we will discuss how instructors can make their documents in Brightspace visually appealing to students by using different editing and designing functionalities provided in Brightspace's HTML-editor.

The Tips

Use visual aids
Visual aids such as images, videos, infographics, and diagrams will enhance plain text and make the content more engaging. These aids also provide visual support to the text. Adding these aids to documents can be done through the option Insert Stuff.

Use templates
Did you know that THUAS created a set of HTML templates for lecturers? Within an HTML-document, you can access these templates by clicking on 'Select Template'. The use of templates will ensure uniformity in how information is being presented across different courses to students. These templates also offer a structured way to present your information to your students. Examples of the available templates are contact details, grading information and lesson structure template.

Add Quick Links
Consider Quick Links as a shortcut to components within your Brightspace course. Instead of adding an extensive description of a concept within a document, you could just refer to the actual readings – which have been uploaded and added in Content within your Brightspace course – via a Quick Link. This will prevent information overload and will create an intuitive navigation for the students in your course. Quick Links are added in a document through the HTML-editor task bar – right next to the option 'Insert Stuff'.

Embed multimedia content
Interactive multimedia content such as quizzes, games, and canvases can be used to enhance the learning experience and keep students engaged. Embedding multimedia content in an HTML-document can be achieved by exporting and copying the embed code from whichever website, and pasting this code in Brightspace through the option 'Insert Stuff'.

Adopt text formatting
Even when you're using plain text in an HTML-document, ensure the text has a nice flow to it. Proper use of headings and subheadings will help students navigate through the text with more ease. Headings also provide a clear structure for the content, which will make the content easier to comprehend. A way to create extra structure is by using different accent colors, bold lettering, or highlighting topics. These are all options available in the HTML - editor in an HTML-document. It is however, important to remain consistent in the use of your text formatting options.

Use data arrangements for statistics
Tables and lists can help organize information in a clear and concise manner. This can be particularly useful when presenting data, statistics or summaries.

In a nutshell

Ensure that your learning goals for your course or educational activity are clear before creating a document. This will guide you in creating a more mindful and purposeful document for your students. It is advisable to add multimedia to your documents that will best support your learning goals. Think, for instance, of embedding a YouTube video or infographic to support a textual explanation

of a specific framework. Random multimedia may result in distraction from the content.

TIP
We have an extensive article on HTML-documents on our Brightspace Supportsite. Just search for: How to Use HTML editor
Or click on this button.

Gain insights into the skills and knowledge mastery of students

Learning outcomes in Brightspace as a tool for formative evaluations

The learning journey of each student is different, as each student has their own individual and unique needs and learning process. Therefore, it is important to have tools in place to assist instructors in identifying these individual and unique learning needs of students. Summative assessments are widely used to assess the performance of students, especially at the end of a program or block. But the risk of only assessing once at the end of a program or block is that it is difficult, to gain insights into the learning process leading up to that end score of the students. Formative evaluations provide students with input during their learning process from their instructors, which will support them in meeting the course learning goals. Moreover, the results of these in formative evaluations will provide lecturers with insights into where and how to support their students in their individual learning journey.

Tracking the learning process of students is beneficial to gain insights into the support needs of students and to identify areas where instructors can improve and refine the educational content. A functionality in Brightspace that can provide these insights is Learning Outcomes.

Learning outcomes

Learning Outcomes in Brightspace are statements defined by instructors that describe the knowledge or skills students should acquire at the end of an assignment or course. By incorporating these Learning Outcomes in Assignments, lecturers can assess students' work by identifying at which "level" the work of the student is situated.

There are four achievement levels in Learning Outcomes: Beginning, Approaching, Meeting or Exemplary. A lecturer can assess an assignment submission by selecting one of these levels. The selected level will indicate to which extent the student demonstrates skills or has knowledge mastery. Through the right integration of feedback, students will gain a clear understanding of what the expectations for the next assignment submission are.

Benefit of learning outcomes

What are the benefits of using Learning Outcomes in Brightspace? Let us list some of the benefits for you:
Gain insights in the mastery level of multiple Learning Outcomes at once for your individual students and entire class (Mastery View)

- Identify knowledge gaps among individual students relative to the performance of your entire class
- Individual and group data can be an indicator for lecturers regarding when and how to adjust educational material based on the performance and needs of the students
- Create a personalized learning path for individual students: providing additional support or challenges as needed

Practical tips

Each student has their own unique learning experience and needs. Using Learning Outcomes in Brightspace can support instructors to better meet these individual needs of your students. Using Learning outcomes can also serve as an insights tool to identify to which extent the course activities and content are supporting the entire class. Therefore, it might be good to build in formative data points within your course.

To successfully implement Learning Outcomes in your course, take these practical tips into consideration.
First, make sure your Learning Outcomes are pre-defined and determine the allocation of them across your (formative) evaluations.
Second, build your Learning Outcomes through Course Tools and attach these to your assignments through Content.

Third, assess the submissions using Assignments or Quick Eval. It is important to provide additional written feedback to your students, explaining the selection of the achievement levels.

Last, but certainly not least, see all results through the Mastery View in the Grade Book of your Course. Here you will find the individual scores of your students and the group scores (at the top of the table) of your entire class.

TIP
Follow Expert Training Student Journey to learn more about Learning Outcomes

Or click on this button.

The why and how behind navigating through Brightspace as a student

The benefits of experiencing Brightspace as a student before publishing content

"Dear lecturer, I cannot seem to find the submission point for this week's assignment". This is a common phrase teachers hear when the due date of an assignment is near. You probably forgot to toggle the visibility in order to make this assignment visible to your students. If only there was a way to test or experience your Brightspace content before it's published...

Luckily, there are three ways in which instructors can navigate through a Brightspace course as a student. Impersonating students in your course can provide you with valuable insights into how your students will experience or are experiencing your course. A benefit of navigating through Brightspace a student is identifying usability and course design issues. By experiencing your course from a student's perspective, you can identify usability issues that may be hindering the students' learning process. For example, you may discover that certain course materials are difficult to find, that instructions for an Assignment are unclear, or that certain content is not engaging enough. You may also discover how you can make your course content more engaging and how to enhance effective communication with your students. These insights can help you to evaluate your course design and identify areas for improvement.

Navigate through Brightspace as a student

Allow us to introduce three options to navigate through Brightspace as a student:

1. View as Student
    If you want to see whether you've made content visible or if content is displayed to your students, we advise you to use this functionality. You can find this functionality in your profile settings by clicking on your name in your Brightspace Course.

2. Dummy Accounts
    Use one of the three THUAS original Dummy Accounts to impersonate a student in your Brightspace environment. With this option, you can navigate more in-depth through Brightspace by interacting with your Brightspace content, e.g., submitting assignments.

By searching for 'Haagse test student' account in the Add Participants section of your Classlist, you can enroll one of these Dummy Accounts in your course. Make sure to select the role 'Haagse Test Student' when selecting one of the available Dummy Accounts. After enrollment, select the name of the Dummy Account and click 'impersonate' to start impersonating a student.

3. Enroll as a student
    Use this option when you have multiple lecturers in a course. One of your co-lecturers can assign you the role of student, which will allow you to navigate through your Brightspace course as a student. Using this option allows you to have the same viewing rights as the students within your course. Make sure that your co-lecturer reassigns you the instructor role after you finish doing your desired tests.

On a final note

As we have discovered, it could be beneficial to navigate through your course as students. Viewing your course through the lens of a student can provide you with valuable insights into course details that aren't visible or as obvious to you as an instructor. Which ones of these tools are you going to use?

TIP
We have an extensive article on impersonating students on our Brightspace Support site. Just search for: Experience course as student or click on this button.

Allow videos to support you in your education

Why and how to create simple videos in Brightspace

The use of videos in education has increased. Instructors have become aware of the benefits of using videos that support their educational content. Not only do videos match the learning desires of students, but they also help students in understanding complex matters in a visual way. Moreover, the use of videos can support students with reading impairments in following the same educational content as their peers. Videos are also considered to be a fun way of providing educational content to students.

Brightspace offers a couple of tools to support you in creating or embedding videos in your Brightspace course.

Brightspace video tools and its benefits

There are many ways to incorporate videos in Brightspace, such as recording videos in real time from your course or embedding external videos in your course. In this section, we will provide you with different video tools in Brightspace along with their benefits.

1. **Record knowledge clips through Video Notes**
   Video Notes is an option available in the HTML-editor to record videos and upload these instantly in your Brightspace content. Through Video Notes, a lecturer can create knowledge clips which provide information, instructions or in-depth information to students. The length of these videos are is important: the videos should be short and concise and no longer than 7 minutes. They serve as support to the lecture or educational content previously provided by the instructor. Students can view these videos asynchronously, allowing them to watch them at their own convenience and whenever it best suits their needs.

2. **Enrich your Course or Blended Design using embedded video's**
   Brightspace offers the option to embed external videos – e.g., YouTube or Microsoft Stream – in your Course. Embedding videos can be done through the 'Insert Stuff' button and by copying and pasting the video embed code in Brightspace. Videos can be embedded in your Brightspace Course to provide students with external and additional explanatory material, particularly when you lack time to create videos yourself and there are good videos already available.

   Embedded videos can engage students to participate in the Blended activities that are expected of them. This is how embedded videos can support lecturers in realizing a Blended Design

   a. *Before class:* Embed a video regarding the subject to ensure students have the same pre-knowledge before heading to the lecture. A video prior to the lecture can result in stimulation of interest and can be a fun way of introducing the topic at hand. This will ensure that there will be more focus on the higher order thinking during class instead of knowledge introduction or retention. For example: embed a YouTube video by an influencer that explains the impact of climate change on traveling.

b. *During class:* Use embedded videos during class as a way to share examples or visually explain complex subject matters. For example: embed a Stream Video where your colleague explained climate change concepts in front of a Green Screen. Students can watch this video asynchronously through Brightspace or this video can be synchronously shown on screen during class.

c. *After class:* Use embedded videos after class to provide students with additional in-depth information, references or examples. The benefit here is that students can access these videos anytime and anywhere, according to their needs. For example: add the recorded lecture to stream and embed this video in Brightspace.

3. **Provide Assignment instructions with recordings**
    There are multiple ways to provide students with assignment instructions within the Assignment tool. The most used way is instructions through text. But did you know that you can provide students with video instructions? Just click on the 'Record Video' button at the bottom of the textbox to record and upload your own video instructions in real time. Students are then able to hear and see what is expected of them. Use this option if there are concepts you'd like to elaborate on when providing assignment instructions.

4. **Provide assignment feedback with Video Notes**
Besides text, providing feedback through a recorded video is also possible in Brightspace. On the Evaluation page of Brightspace, there is a 'Record Video' button at the bottom of the text box. Here you can provide your students with visual and recorded feedback. Use this option when you want to give feedback that is more difficult to explain through text. For instance, providing feedback on pronunciation after an oral language exam or presentation.

5. **Be inclusive with the use of videos**
Videos can be used as a way to support students with reading and visual impairments. Embed videos, record Video Notes or record video instructions and feedback for students that could benefit from receiving this. Recorded videos provide students with the flexibility to access them 24/7, whenever they need it.

6. **Engage and interact with students with Video Notes through Announcements**
Video Notes can also be created and published through Announcements. This is a fun way to engage with your students by providing them with visual Announcements instead of only textual Announcements. This can potentially create a connection between lecturer and students, because students can see their instructor on screen.

Increase interaction with video content using Feedback Fruits

Feedback Fruits Interactive Video is a tool that can be added to the content of a course, which allows instructors to add question cards and Discussion Threads at specific timestamps within a video. Instructors can decide which questions are compulsory to answer before students are able to move to the next question. This way, instructors can ensure students are actively engaging with the video content. Instructors can also track students' performance to intervene when necessary. In addition, students can add their own questions or Discussion Threads within a video.

Conclusion

There are multiple ways available to create, embed and publish videos in Brightspace. It is important to use the tools and options that work for you and support you in your education. One thing is for certain: videos are beautiful helpers in providing students with additional visual support. Instructors can reuse their videos for the upcoming years by copying them to a new Course. So, what are you waiting for? Are you allowing videos to support you in your educational practice?

TIP
Want to learn more on how to make educational videos and how to fit these into your Blended Design?
Contact The Blended Learning Desk and plan a session!

Email: hblend@hhs.nl

Mastering the Grade Book

10 Essential Tips for building and utilizing Brightspace's grades center

The grade center of Brightspace is called Grades. This is the environment within a course where all results from Assignments to Quizzes are gathered. It is possible to combine results and assign weights to the Grade Items in your course. However, the Grade Book can become disorganized when there are lots of grades in the Grade Book. In this article, we are providing you with 10 tips on how you can have an inviting Grade Book and how you can maximize its potential.

Tip 1: Color Labels

By utilizing color labels in the Grade Book, instructors can enhance their organization, simplify communication, and ultimately provide a more efficient grading experience for themselves and their students. Color labels provide a visual aid for instructors to quickly and easily identify differences in scores. By assigning specific colors to different Grading Criteria or performance levels, instructors can visually convey important information about student progress or assessment types. For example, instructors can use a red color label to indicate Assignments that require further attention or a green label to highlight exceptional performance. It is important to consider the student's viewpoint when deciding whether or not to incorporate color labels, as the presence of a red 'fail' mark can be disconcerting to students.

Note: Add your color labels when creating your Grade Items through Manage Grades, by selecting the desired Grade Scheme. Ensure to show the Grade Scheme color at the Display options.

Tip 2: Create Grade Categories

By creating Grade Categories in Brightspace, instructors can establish a well-structured Grade Book, and accurately calculate student grades. Through Grade Categories, instructors can organize and classify different types of assessments or grading components within their course. Grade Categories allow instructors to group similar types of Assignments, Quizzes, Discussions, or other assessments together, creating a structured organization within the Grade Book. This structuring is especially handy when there are a large number of grading components within the Grade Book. Furthermore, grade categories in Brightspace offer the functionality of weighted grading. Instructors can assign different weights or percentages to each Grade Category, reflecting the relative importance of various assessment types in the overall grade calculation of the course.

Note: Want to create Grade Categories? Visit our Support website for an extensive explanation of how to create Grade Categories.

Tip 3: Grade Display Options

By setting up the display options in the Grade Book, instructors can tailor the presentation of grades to their specific needs and enhance clarity and understanding for students. Instructors can choose which options they want to display in the Grade Book for themselves and their students in terms of Grade Item. These options are the points grades (a number out of the maximum score), the weighted grades (the proportionate contribution of each category or item to the final grade), the grade scheme symbol (the selected display of a specific score) and the grade scheme color (the color that is attached to a specific score; the color label). Furthermore, instructors can choose to display the class average and the grade distributions to students

Tip 4: View by filter

Instructors are able to filter their Grade Book to see the grading components of specific students or groups. By using the View By option in the Enter Grades tab, instructors are allowed to filter through their Grade Book by users or groups.
This functionality is handy to use when an instructor is only interested in the scores of a specific group within their course.

Tip 5: Export Grades

As Brightspace is not the official Grades repository of THUAS, it might be useful to know where instructors can export their Brightspace Grades. The Export Grades option in Brightspace allows instructors to leverage the grade data outside the platform for data analysis and reporting. Instructors can manually import grades to Osiris, by exporting Grades in the Osiris export format.

Tip 6: Standard and spreadsheet view

Brightspace Grades offers two possible views: standard and spreadsheet. Each has a different goal. The standard view can be used for an overview of all the grades within the Grade Book, including all enabled Display Options.

The spreadsheet view can be used to see all grading components and manually fill in the scores for each grading components in the Grade Book.

Tip 7: View statistics

The Statistics option in the Grade Book offers instructors valuable class-level and individual student insights. Instructors are able to monitor class performance, identify areas of improvement, provide targeted support, and ultimately enhance the teaching and learning experience in their Brightspace course. The data available to instructors are for example, the minimum, maximum, median, average, mode and standard deviation scores of the students on a specific grading component. The grades distribution is also available to the instructors. Note: Access the Grades statistics by selecting Statistics on the Grade Items options (drop down menu) in the Enter Grades tab.

Tip 8: Delete Grade Items

Knowing how to delete Grade Items in the Brightspace Grade Book is handy for instructors as it gives them flexibility and control to rectify errors, update the Grade Book, reflect course revisions, and maintain accurate assessment records. It ensures the Grade Book remains

up-to-date and organized. Thus benefiting both instructors and students in the grading process. Note: Grade Items should first be detached from the corresponding Assignment or Quiz before deleting. Grade Items can be deleted under the Manage Grades tab. Click on More Actions and then on Delete. Select the relevant Grade Items and click on Delete. Removing a Grade Item will not automatically remove the corresponding Assignment or Quiz. This should be done manually.

Tip 9: View Event Log

The event log in the Brightspace Grade Book keeps a record of all actions and changes made within the Grade Book. This log documents each modification, update, or deletion of grade items, categories, or settings. By accessing the event log, instructors can review and track the history of changes made, providing a level of accountability and transparency. In case of any discrepancies or issues, the event log can help identify when and by whom the changes were made, facilitating troubleshooting and resolving any grading-related concerns.
Note: The Event log can be accessed under the Manage Grades tab. Click on More Actions and then on Event log.

Tip 10: Create your own Grade Scheme

By creating Grade Schemes in the Brightspace Grade Book, instructors can establish a consistent and transparent grading system. They can automate grade calculation and customize grading criteria to suit the specific needs of their course. Grade Schemes allow instructors to define and customize the grading criteria with corresponding labels or numeric ranges. For example: An instructor can personalize their own grading scheme by creating 'in progress' and 'on track' schemes instead of using 'pass' or 'fail' during evaluation. Once the grade scheme is established, instructors can input grades as numeric values or percentages, and the Grade Book will

automatically map them to the corresponding label or grade ranges defined in the scheme. This saves instructors time and effort in manually calculating and mapping grades, reducing the chances of calculation errors.

Note: There are a number of pre-made Grade Schemes available under the Schemes tab in your Brightspace Grade Book. Do you want to create your own schemes using your own criteria and labels? Click on New Scheme. Don't forget to attach this scheme to the relevant Grade Item.

In conclusion

In this article, we have explored ten essential tips that empower instructors to build and utilize Brightspace's Grades Center effectively. Mastering the Grade Book in Brightspace is crucial for instructors seeking to streamline their grading processes. By implementing these tips, instructors can improve their grading workflows, gain valuable insights into student performance, and maintain accountability and transparency. Know that mastering the Grade Book is an ongoing process. Now, it's time to put these tips into action. Review your Grade Book settings, consider the benefits each tip offers, and make the necessary adjustments to optimize your grading experience in Brightspace. Reflect on which tips you were not aware of before reading this article, and consider how implementing them can benefit your teaching practice and student outcomes.

TIP
Follow the Evaluation and Grades Expert training to learn more about Grades in Brightspace.

Collecting intermediate course-related feed-back from students in Brightspace to optimize your course design

The why and how to collect feedback from students from and within Brightspace

Students are unsure to which extent their input for and improving their program is taken into consideration. This is a finding from the Student Participation Survey that took place in December 2022. Involving students in improving courses and programs is key in promoting course engagement and motivation. Lecturers can benefit from these inputs, which give insights in how the course design can be updated to better meet the needs of their students.

In this article, we will tackle ways how Brightspace can help lecturers gain insights into student's behaviors and needs. We will also explore how Brightspace can be used as the vehicle to gather intermediate course feedback from students.

Why involve students in intermediate course feedback

The standard way of evaluating courses and programs usually takes place at the end of the program or block. Evaluations are great for future developments of the program. The benefits are however, not visible for the students who have given their input for bettering their program. Adopting intermediate feedback within a course will allow students to share their input so that it can be instantly implemented to improve the program and better fit the needs of students. This is inherent to blended learning: respond to what is being shown and what is happening.

Intermediate feedback can give lectures different insights into student's behavior, which can incentivize the optimization of the course design. Motivation and well-being can be examined, to see what motivates students to participate in the educational activities of the program.

Furthermore, interests and preparation needs of students can also be examined in order to provide them with educational content that better fits their interests and learning styles.

How to involve students in intermediate course feedback?

Open communication is essential in creating a safe environment where students feel invited to share their course-related feedback. Through communication, it should be clear for students why their feedback is wanted and how it will be processed. Students are stimulated to be part of the implementation of their feedback, which will result in an increased

feeling of ownership and course engagement. By making giving feedback an integral part of your program, e.g., through peer feedback, students will learn how and why providing feedback to others is beneficial. Not only for the learning journey of others, but also for the development of their own feedback giving skills. This will ensure that giving feedback becomes an integral part of your educational culture. Rewarding students can also motivate students in providing feedback.

Brightspace as a tool to gather intermediate course feedback.

How to extract information from Brightspace to help formulate questions:
- Content Reports: Use Content Reports to gain insights into the course activity of students. These insights are:

which content do or do students not visit? To how many and for which students are course areas available? What is the average time my students spent in specific course areas?

- Class Progress: Use Class Progress to gain insights into the overall scores of students. These insights can be viewed for the individual student or for specific groups within your course. The overall scores on Quizzes, Assignments and overall content activity can be viewed here.

- Grades statistics: Use Grades statistics to gain insights into the distribution of student scores on a specific Assignment. Insights here could be e.g. the amount of students that have low, average or high scores. It is possible to filter between the entire class or a specific group within the class.

There are different integrated tools in Brightspace that can be used to gather intermediate feedback from students. Each tool can be either embedded or added to the content tab of a Brightspace course.

- **Wooclap:** An online feedback-gathering tool, which can be used asynchronously (by adding a link or QR code in the content of a course) or synchronously (by providing a QR code on screen).

- **Microsoft Forms:** Another online feedback-gathering tool, which is widely used as an asynchronous data gathering tool. Forms can be embedded within the content of a Brightspace course, where students can fill in their feedback in their own time.

- **Brightspace Discussions:** An online discussion forum, where students can introduce their own topics or react to topics of instructors or fellow students. Discussions are widely used as an asynchronous data gathering tool, in the form of a Q&A or input drop box. Instructors can use Discussion topics as a mean to gather feedback on certain topics in a course.

- **Brightspace Surveys:** An online and asynchronous data gathering tool within Brightspace which allows lecturers to create a survey within Brightspace that can be added to the course content.

On a final note

In this article, we have uncovered the benefits of gathering interim feedback from students to better fit their needs and to instantly implement their feedback within a program. It is important to be mindful of privacy guidelines and student perception when utilizing course data for decision-making. This is why we want to emphasize this article, which taps into the privacy and rules in using course related data. Collecting intermediate feedback from students will be a process. Be patient and try out different data gathering tools and methods until you find your perfect blend that fits the characteristics of your students.

Recommendation
There are important rules and guidelines for instructors when using course data.

Check out our dedicated support site for a broader take on privacy. Search for Privacy Statement Brightspace

How Brightspace can support lecturers in achieving the pedagogical objectives of their course

An online learning environment offers multiple opportunities for students to become involved with their lectures, instructors and fellow students. Motivation to actively engage with educational content and have meaningful interactions with the educational material can greatly enhance student engagement and positively influence their learning outcomes. It is therefore important to consider the pedagogical underpinnings when designing a Brightspace course, especially with regard to fostering course involvement and commitment by students. Brightspace provides a variety of tools to support lecturers in realizing their pedagogical objectives.

The micro-learning module 'Know how to Strengthen Inclusion in Digital Learning (ECHO - Martinus, 2022)' outlines multiple points of consideration* for course design for an online learning environment. It is important to note that these considerations are based on the Community of Inquiry (CoI) principle for meaningful learning. CoI suggests that there are three interconnected and intersecting elements – the teaching, social and cognitive presence – that collectively affect learning outcomes.

Teachers can encourage cognitive presence of students (e.g. deep learning) through offering multiple meaningful course items through a pedagogical design (teaching presence) that is safe and purposeful for community engagement (social presence). Together, these elements contribute to a sense of presence, which in turn has positive

effects on course involvement. We refer you to the micro-module for more information on the didactic background and selection of the pedagogical objectives.

These consideration points have been paired with Brightspace tools that can assist in integrating and achieving the pedagogical objectives in your course. Four components are presented in the schematic overview below.

- Pedagogical objectives: student specific learning outcomes, such as skills
- Course design elements: elements in the designing and structuring of a course
- Course activities: activities that are students are expected to do or complete
- Brightspace tools: the tools in Brightspace that can be used to realize the pedagogical objectives

	Pedagogical objective*	Course design element*	Course activities*	Brightspace tool*
1.	• Self-regulation • Self-direction • Self-discipline	• Multiple means of engagement • Automatic processes in course	• Clear communication on what is expected of students, such as timelines, assessment criteria and deadlines. • Room for personal input and action	• Announcements • Brightspace Calendar • HTML-documents • Release Conditions • Discussions • Groups Self-enrolment • Make assessment criteria (e.g. Rubrics) visible through Content
2.	• Perception • Comprehension	• Multiple means of representation	• Offer different types of educational content (e.g. multimedia-based) in line with students' needs	• Release Conditions • Video Notes • Embedding YouTube or external video's • Embedded content
3.	• Expression • Communication	• Multiple means of action and expression	• Create and facilitate discussion and feedback options	• Brightspace Discussions • Wooclap • Feedback Fruits • Brightspace Quiz • Assignment submissions • MS Teams link • Collaborate link • MS Forms
4.	• Shared knowledge • Responsibility • Motivation	• Multiple means of collaboration and ownership	• Offer collaborative assignments • Build in automatic processes based on performance	• Group enrollment • Group Assignments • Feedback Fruits Peer Feedback • Awards and Badges • Intelligent Agents • Release Conditions

Conclusion

Brightspace offers many tools that can be used to support lecturers in achieving the pedagogical objectives of their course. Want to learn more about the Brightspace tools mentioned in the schematic overview? Please refer to the articles concerning these tools or visit our Support website.

TIP
Check out this article if you'd like to find out more about inclusion in digital learning: Know how to Strengthen Inclusion in Digital Learning - e-Inclusion (einclusion.net)

Take home message

Brightspace's educational power has been unleashed for THUAS instructors! This manual serves as an inspiration for instructors in how they can implement Brightspace tools to enhance their educational practices. Implementing new methodologies or tools can be challenging yet motivating when the goals are achieved and efforts come to fruition. Taking it step by step is the way to go. Our tip is to start implementing the tool that you feel the most comfortable with. Use your Sandbox to try different tools out before adding these to your courses. Ask colleagues how they do it and what their experiences are using these Brightspace tools. Last but not least, embrace the journey, keep going and keep the magic flowing. But, make sure you have fun while doing so!

To help you implement these practices in your course, we've created a **Top 10 Checklist**.

Checklist when implementing Brightspace tools and functionalities

Define the goal and pedagogical objective of the course, lesson or educational activity

Define what the target group is: what are the needs and characteristics of the students?

**Which (Brightspace) tool or functionality supports the instructor in realizing the objectives
of the course and fits the needs of students?**

Determine where this tool or functionality is to be placed within the course

Define and set up important settings within the tool or functionality, such as instructions and deadlines.

Is having a student journey a prerequisite? Make sure to implement functionalities to facilitate a student journey, such as Release Conditions, Intelligent Agents and Awards

Optional: Preview and test implemented tools or functionalities by impersonating a Dummy student

Ensure that the content is inclusive and accessible for all students

Make sure content is visible for students

Analyze use and effect of content through Content Reports or course performance by using the relevant statistics options within Brightspace

The **B** Brightspace **Infographic**

SUPPORT
We are here to support you!

Visit the support site for manuals, instruction videos and contact options

Specific question

📞 070 - 3052300

@ brightspace-support@hhs.nl

🖥 Teams chat

📱 iFrontoffice

Need a more detailed explanation? Prefer to speak to someone?

@ **Make an appointment via brightspace-support@hhs.nl for a 1-on-1 session**

Need more information about the didactical use of Brightspace?

📍 **Visit our Blended Desk at ST1.31**

TRAINING COURSES
Expand your Brightspace Knowledge

Online aTeacher Training	Getting the basics of Brightspace
Interactive Education	Using Interactive elements to engage students in Brightspace
Evaluation & Grades	How to evaluate submissions and structure the Grade book using grade items and categories
Blended Learning	How to use Brightspace as an environment for blended learning to achive high quality education
The Student Journey	The use the of 'release conditions' and 'learning outcomes' through different cases and user challenges
Gamification	Learn how to Gamify your course using motivating and engaging tools

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Brightspace: The Next Step

Brightspace Community

The knowledge network about Brightspace

Enhance your education with Brightspace: A beyond-the-basics guide for instructors

In this manual, we are unleashing Brightspace's educational power and provide instructors with practical tips, tricks, inspirations, good practices and solutions for common educational challenges.

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