Canvas Best Practices Term Dates

The objective of this document is to outline instructor best practices when using the Canvas LMS system to deliver online content to students regardless of the modality of instruction (Online, Hybrid, Face to Face). This document will focus on the steps to be taken by the instructor before during and after a course is released.

Term Dates

The RCCD and CRFO have an official, negotiated academic calendar that formally establishes the boundaries within which course curriculum is delivered. The dates establishing the Beginning of the Term (BOT) and the End of Term (EOT) are set in the Canvas system and are referred to as the term dates.

Impact on instructors

An instructor will have full access to their Canvas classes from the time they are created until one year after the end of the term. Course information and syllabi can be published by the instructor any time after the course shell is created. After a year, the instructor will be able to copy any component of the class but will not be able to change or update it. Eventually, class sections will need to be deleted to make room for more current content.

Instructors have full control over when students can access course materials. However, no graded class work or assignments should be available to students until the official beginning of the term.

Impact on students

Before a course is published, it will show only in the students list of upcoming enrollments and not in the Canvas drop down courses menu. As soon as the course is published, it will display in the Canvas login Dashboard and students will have access to all published course materials.

At the end of the term, student access will automatically move to a read only state in which they can access the course site but may no longer participate in any way. In addition, the course will be removed from Canvas login dashboard and will display as a past enrollment. Instructors should provide information to students about accessing their courses after the term ends.

See: How-do-i-view-my-grades-in-a-concluded-course

Controlling student access in Canvas

If an instructor is using Canvas to allow students to submit assignments online or participate in activities online, then they need to make sure those activities are not available until the official beginning of the semester. Canvas provides numerous ways of controlling student access to courses, course content and course tools. The main objective is to provide students access to the syllabus and other critical course information without letting them participate in graded activities.

Strategies may consist of publishing items, setting availability dates or restricting navigation. In the simplest scenario, the instructor does not publish the course until the first day of class. This however does not give students access to the syllabus or other important course information. To provide access to the syllabus, a course must be published. Before publishing the instructor should make sure that students can not submit or participate in any work prior to the beginning of the semester.

For example, if the instructor is using only the Canvas gradebook and syllabus, an easy way to limit access is to set the "Available From" date for assignments to be after the beginning of the semester. If an instructor is using modules, then leaving the modules unpublished will restrict access to all items in the modules. Some strategies may work better than others depending on the circumstances. If you have questions contact the instructional technologist to discuss your specific needs.

Instructors Beginning of Term (BOT) recommended procedures:

Before Publishing:

- Update the syllabus
- Configure Student Navigation links
- Use assignment shells for incomplete or works in progress
- Check assignment availability dates and settings to ensure no assignments are available before the term officially begins
- Set up a home page with information about the course and the start dates
- Check that your content is properly published.
- Use "Student View" before publishing to make sure students have proper access to your content.
- Check your Course for broken links: How Do I Validate Links In A Course?
- Post an announcement about the course and how to access it

Not all material needs to be completed before publishing your course. However; it is a good idea to let students know what to expect and when. One way of accomplishing this is to create an assignment shell for all assignments that are works in progress. An assignment shell is basically the name of the assignment, the number of points it is worth, and the due date. Just by adding the assignment, you create an item in the syllabus, in the grade book and on the calendar so students can plan ahead, even if you don't have the full instructions or content of the assignment yet.

See: How-do-i-create-an-assignment-shell-in-an-assignment-group

The home page for your course can be used as an information page for your students and can easily be updated or changed anytime during the course. You could create a separate home page for information about the course before class starts, the first week of class, the midsection and one for the last week of class. Once the pages are created, you can set them as the home page at the appropriate time.
See: How do I set a Front Page in a course?

Things to include on your home page

- Clear information about the course structure and access to assignments
- Course or course topic information
- Links to Canvas help and Technical Support
  http://www.redwoods.edu/online/Help

First day of classes check list:

- Publish any unpublished assignments that students need access to
- Change the home page If necessary
- Check navigation links are set correctly
- Check the student view to confirm any changes.
- Send a reminder that the course has started and is now open.

Important tips for an active course

- Keep the gradebook up to date and clear of ungraded assignments
- Check your email and canvas messages – students may choose to send you a message instead of talking to you in class.
- For online courses, regular effective contact is critical
- Download completed student submissions – this will save time at the end of course if you want to archive all your online student submissions.

End of class check list:

- Before the end of class, inform students about the end of the semester process
- Complete the gradebook
- Download and archive the gradebook
- Finish downloading student submissions

A week or so before the end of class distribute information to students about the end of the semester process in an announcement or from a home page.

How do i view concluded enrollments in a course

Technical support and help

Access after 12 months

After the class has ended you will have 12 months of full access to it. During that time students will have read-only access to the class, but will still be able to view assignments and other course materials. If you do not wish for students to access any course materials after the class has ended you can remove any or all navigation links to prevent student access. Students always have access to their own submissions from their individual file lists. Canvas will automatically move the instructor to a read-only state after 12 months.

Any class in which you are listed as an instructor is available for you to copy materials from regardless of what state it is in. You can import course materials from a class any time before the class is deleted.

Course Deletion

Canvas courses will eventually need to be deleted and when that happens, all course content and student submissions will disappear. If you wish to archive any content, it must be backed up before the course concludes, which happens one year after the end of the term. Consider archiving the following items:

- Student submissions
- Gradebook
- Course content.

Student online submissions can be backed up by simply downloading them when an online assignment is completed and has been graded. It is a good idea to do this as you go so you don't have to do them all at once at the end of the semester. Keep in mind that student submissions fall within FERPA regulations and should be treated accordingly See: How-do-i-bulk-download-assignment-submissions-in-canvas

At the end of the term, check to make sure that each assignment has a grade and that your grades are accurate. Download and save the gradebook to a secure place. Keep in mind that student grades fall within FERPA regulations and should be treated accordingly See:

How-do-i-download-scores-from-the-gradebook

Grade-book-setup-tips

Instructors can copy course materials from any courses in which they are listed as an instructor, up until the course is deleted. You may never need to archive any course materials if you are continually updating and copying them to the current term. However, you can at any time before the class is concluded (one year after the end of the term) export all or any part of a course for backup See:

 How-do-i-export-a-canvas-course

Keep in mind that Canvas exports do not include backups of student interactions or grades. Only course materials, not including student submissions are exported.