Using the Quizzes Tool: Considerations and Effective Practice

Automatically score and put grades into the grade book? Great! …Or so it would seem at first.

Using the Quizzes tool in D2L can save time, but using an online tool vs. giving a quiz in class is not necessarily the same. Consider the following before you make the leap from paper-based to online quizzes:

- Objectives
- Questions
- Testing Environment
- Time to take the quiz
- Your own preferences

The following reviews these considerations, as well as effective practices, tips, and resources to make sure that you and your students get the most out of using the Quizzes tool.

Consider Your Objectives

- What do you want students to learn from taking this quiz?
- What do you want to learn about your students and what they have learned in class?

Your quiz should reflect the answers to these questions and help you determine if D2L is truly the best tool to use. Not sure? Talk to the instructional designers in the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning (CATL) (Kristin Koepke and Jen Snook), Assessment Coordinator Patrick Barlow, or D2L Administrator Cari Mathwig Ramseier to help you.

Resources

- “Writing Course Objectives” by Kristin Koepke and Bill Cerbin (CATL, Presentation, September 2009)
- “Developing Course Objectives” from the University of Illinois Online Network

Consider the Questions

Not all questions are alike. Some questions only require students to recall or restate information, while others ask students to draw relationships, make calculations, or create something new based on what they have learned. The bottom line: Use questions that support your objectives.

Tips

- Create and use higher-order questions to “go beyond the book” and help students use what they have learned in class to make inferences, construct new meanings and ideas, or assess and make choices.
- Review your questions (especially those from a test bank) before including them in a quiz. Make sure they support your objectives and what students have learned and studied.

Resources

- “Writing Better Objective Tests” by Bill Cerbin (CATL, Colloquium Handout, November 2009)
- “How to Write Better Tests: A Handbook for Improving Test Construction Skills” by Lucy C. Jacobs, Ph.D.
- “Writing Effective Questions” from The Learning Management Corporation

Questions? Contact the Eagle Help Desk: 785-8774 or helpdesk@uwlax.edu
Consider the Testing Environment

Under what conditions do you want students to be taking the quiz? Should they be in a computer classroom, does it need to be proctored? Or can students be taking the quiz from a location of their choosing?

Your answers to these questions may be affected by your objectives, and at the same time, the testing environment may also affect the questions in the quiz just as the objectives do so.

Tips

Consider Logistics. Do you want students to work together? Use a book or other resources? If students have the opportunity to take the quiz off campus, you have less control over the environment and conditions that students will be taking the quiz.

Plan Ahead. Do you need to reserve a computer classroom for students? Or is one available for them to use? For online quizzes, students are responsible for making sure they do everything possible to ensure they have a stable connection. Thus, taking the quiz on campus and using a wired connection is preferred over a wireless connection.

Resources

- “Managing Assessments” from Old Dominion University
- “Promoting Academic Integrity in Online Distance Learning Courses” by Robert T. Kitahara and Frederick Westfall (MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, September 2007)

Consider the Time to Take the Quiz

The time it takes students to complete a quiz will largely depend on the type and number of questions. However, a few other factors should be considered:

- When (time of day) are students able to take the quiz? At class time? Over a period of days?
- Under what conditions are students taking the quiz? (see previous section: Consider the Testing Environment)

Tips

- If you are concerned about cheating, consider reducing the time frame and length of time allowed to take the quiz (less flexibility to look up answers or share).
- Preview the quiz to see how long it takes you to take it. Even if you can breeze through the quiz, it can provide a baseline of how long it takes to read and answer the questions.

Resources

- “The Value of Time Limits on Internet Quizzes” by Thomas Brothen and Cathrine Wambach (University of Minnesota, Teaching of Psychology, January 2004)
- “Should Tests Have Time Limits?” by Graham Whisen (Posted on http://ideaconnect.edublogs.org/2011/01/19/should-tests-have-time-limits/, January 11, 2011)
Consider Your Own Preferences

- How much time do you want to spend reviewing student answers?
- How concerned are you about cheating?
- What resources do you have to develop questions?
- What are your reasons for using online quizzes?

Tips

- In addition to your objectives, take into account what students want to learn from the quiz. Is feedback important?
- Take the time to learn what is possible in online quizzes. Randomizing questions, time-release of feedback, and hints are all available options and may be helpful in the design of your quiz.

Summary

Consider what online quizzes can offer you. If time savings is important, consider shorter, more frequent quizzes that you can use to guide your teaching and that students can use to receive feedback on their learning. Examples might include weekly or chapter quizzes and practice tests.

As you think about all of the questions posed in this document, you might find that a different approach would be more effective. These suggestions may lead to bigger changes in your course design overall. Again, if you are unsure about using quizzes online or have any questions, contact the instructional designers in the Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning (CATL) (Kristin Koepke and Jen Snook), Assessment Coordinator Patrick Barlow, or D2L Administrator Cari Mathwig Ramseier to help you.

Other Tips

- Regardless of the type of questions, consider putting only one to three questions per page. This step ensures that students will save their work and will mean less headaches for you if students have issues with their internet connection or D2L.
- If you are offering students to take the quiz on their own time, consider reducing the stakes of the quiz.
- Preview, preview, preview! No other step or tip is as valuable as ensuring that the quiz is set up and works exactly as you intend.

Resources

- “The Effect of Short Formative Diagnostic Web Quizzes with Minimal Feedback” by Olle Bälter, Emma Enström, and Bernhard Klingenberg (Computers and Education, January 2013)
- “Test Enhanced Learning” by Bill Cerbin (CATL, Student Learning blog)

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