Communication in Canvas

Introduction

Canvas gives several options to communicate with your students. This document describes the main communication options and gives some best practices of when to use these. The links will direct you to Instruction Guides that show you how to use them.

Inbox

With the **Inbox** function in Canvas you can send direct messages to individuals or a custom group of people. This function is also called Conversations. It can be seen as an internal email system within Canvas. You can get, and give replies so you can have a "conversation". The layout options are limited so it can be used for basic, plain text communication only.

You have the following options for choosing recipients:

- All Teachers, or All Teaching assistants from a course
- All Students from a course
- All Observers from a course
- All members of a selected group
- All members of a selected section
- One selected user, or a selection of users

Instead of selecting a recipient from the address book, you can also type (part of) their name. If you want to send a message to a custom list of students, the quickest way is to select them from the address book by pressing the CTRL key and then select the students

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A message from the Inbox will also create a notification to the email address of the recipient. They can reply to the message in Canvas by replying directly from their email. These notifications can be disabled.

You can find the Inbox in the Global Navigation Menu.

Announcements

When you want to inform the whole class on an important topic, **Announcements** can be used. Apart from more extensive layout, you can add internal and external links, images and video to an announcement. This gives the possibility to make extensive messages to inform for example about topics for the coming week, or send reminders about due dates with a link to the assignment. Also use announcements to inform students about a cancelled or changed class. You can find and create announcements in the Course Menu through the Announcements link.

By default the last three announcements will also be shown at the top of the homepage.

It is possible to make your announcement available for students on a specific date or during a specific date range, by filling in the 'available from', or 'available until' dates.

If you have created Groups in your course, you can create an announcement specific for that Group on their Group home page. The drawback however is that all Teachers and TA's will receive a notification of that announcement (if they enabled announcement notifications) so we advice not to use this in a course that have a lot of Teachers/TA's.

If you create and populate sections, you can publish an announcement also for a specific section (for example, premaster students that only do one course in a TOM module).

Since we use Announcements mainly as a broadcast of information, by default the option to comment is turned off.

It is good practice to put a text on the Syllabus page, or other page with information about your Course, that you primarily communicate important information through Announcements. Therefore it is important that students leave notifications for announcement to the default "Notify me right away'. The notification will inform them about the Course Announcement in their personal email as well.

Discussions

Unlike announcements, discussions are very suited for letting students post and reply to a topic. To start a new discussion, click **Discussions** in the Course Menu. They can be used to get interaction, let students think about a topic before class or get input from your students. You can also set up group specific discussions on a group homepage.

Feedback on Assignments

If you want to leave assignment-specific feedback for your students, you can leave a text comment directly in the Gradebook. The comment will also show in the Speedgrader. You can also leave comments in the speedgrader. Students can reply on these comments. These replies will also be seen in the Speedgrader.

FOR ADDING A COMMENT, YOU CAN ALSO RECORD AN AUDIO OR VIDEO MESSAGE DIRECTLY IN THE SPEEDGRADER.

With the "Message Students Who" function you can send a message to, for example, all students who scored less than 5.5 points on a specific assignment or to students who haven't submitted yet. These messages can be seen as sent messages in the Inbox function in the Global Navigation Menu.

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