
Assessing Student Engagement

Change Project

Prepared for



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Project Overview: *ILA Self-Assessments*

The Problem

The problem that this Change Project addresses is how to effectively track and assess student engagement and contribution to the learning community in Denver Seminary’s online courses. Most recently, the strategy has been to assign “participation points” for **Interactive Learning Activities** (hereafter: **ILAs**), specifically synchronous and asynchronous online discussions. As an alternative approach to evaluate student engagement, we are testing the use of ILA Self-Assessments which students submit at different stages throughout the Spring 2019 semester. This report details the process as conducted in three online courses and provides both quantitative and qualitative data gathered through Week 10 of a 14-week semester. The report further presents assumptions about the anticipated results of the final ILA Self-Assessments to be submitted at semester-end; projections about the success of the change project overall, and recommendations for revisions to increase the possibility of greater success in the future.

Context and Setting

As of the Spring 2019 semester, Denver Seminary had 22 online courses with approximately 550 students enrolled. Denver Seminary has a strategic initiative to provide a vibrant learning community that involves active engagement both student-to-student and professor-to-student. The expectation is that the seminary’s online courses can provide even more opportunities for professor and student interaction than its face-to-face courses. This is based upon the fact that the online courses are designed with 50% ILAs, as compared to the classic lecture-based, residential classrooms which inherently involve a lack of engagement.

The seminary attempts to cultivate this interactive learning community by offering weekly ILAs: text-based threaded discussion forums; video-based VoiceThread discussions; and online video-conferencing Zoom Sessions. In most courses, the professor evaluates ILA engagement by assigning “participation points” to students who have met the minimum number of posts to each other and the professor within the timeframes required. However, the result is often that students view participation as simply a “graded item” achieved by working through a participation “checklist.” This does not foster the engagement intended by the ILAs.

Instructional Designer Role

As the Senior instructional Designer in Educational Technology, I am directly involved in helping faculty build and conduct online discussions that maximize the potential for student interaction. But an increasing concern is that the assignment of participation points on a weekly basis actually circumvents ILA engagement. Faculty time on administrative tasks diminishes their presence and participation in the online classroom with their students. My role in implementing this change to ILA Self-Assessments sought to address these concerns.

Intervention & Process

The Intervention instituted a new way to track and evaluate student engagement: *ILA Self-Assessment and Professor-Assessment of Contribution to the Online Learning Community*. The ILA assessments involve both a self-assigned and professor-assigned grade and include a mechanism for professor feedback toward student improvement. This project required a variety of adjustments, including the development of an ILA rubric, and the addition of an assessment tool to the LMS.

Project Goal and Rationale

The project goal was to provide an alternative way to gauge students' ILA interaction, one that would serve as a driver rather than a hindrance to active and consistent engagement. By replacing "participation points" with a written self-evaluation, student engagement moved from being ranked solely by *quantity* (X number of points for Y number of posts to Z number of students) to include an element of *quality*. Quality was further defined as "contribution to the learning community" and this change in terminology implied more than a quantitative level of "participation." Furthermore, periodic, written feedback from the professor allowed for a formative rather than summative evaluation. The rationale behind the change was that students who concentrated less on the minimum contact requirements would focus more on conversation and co-learning. In addition, that assessing one's own *contribution* would result in self-reflection and internal motivation for self-improvement. Some of the qualitative data below confirms these assumptions.

The data collection below tested the anticipated benefit that ILA Self-Assessments would influence professor engagement. The instructions to the professor reminded them that they should be actively involved in the online classroom in order to accept, adjust, or veto each student's self-assigned grade. The intent was that the professor would not rely on quantifying participation but would themselves be fully present, not only to know each student's contribution to the discussions, but also to provide formative feedback in the self-assessment.

Online Learning Community and Diversity

The ILA Self-Assessments have been, and continue to be, tested in six (6) of the 22 Spring 2019 online courses and the data provided here is from three (3) of those courses, representing 63 students (24, 20, 19). The three courses selected for data collection were chosen partly because they represented a diversity of subjects, specifically: Apologetics, Counseling, and Theology. Furthermore, these online learning communities included a diverse population of students demographically, geographically, and educationally. This diversity insured that the data represented students with varying areas of focus as well as differing purposes for being in an online classroom organized around required interactive learning activities.

Management Initiative

The request for research into the problem, as well as for implementation of the proposed solution, came from the Associate Dean of Educational Technology. The Instructional Design team had the support of the Administration and had been given the authority to institute the project, train the faculty, develop the assessment tool, and oversee the evaluation plan.

Research

There are two areas of research relevant to this project, one regarding the use of student self-assessments, and another about rubric development, more specifically, for online discussions.

Using Self-Assessments

The benefits of using self-assessments have been firmly established by research. In the change project described here, at least for our six professors who opted in for the change, we overcame what Sackstein (2015) considers one of the main hurdles in using self-assessment: shifting the institutional mindset away from grades. Sackstein suggests that self-assessment provides for both a progress transparency and performance self-reflection that cannot be achieved with traditional grading. One of the reasons our change proposal was successful was because we “rebranded” (Sackstein) the assessments as their own formative learning experiences in and of themselves.

Klemmer (2013) begins his Peer and Self-Assessment video by explaining the key importance of rubrics, and ones that are highly customized to each task or assignment. Klemmer also points out that creating a rubric is a revisionary process; instructors benefit from making ongoing revisions to their rubrics after multiple trials. Sloan & Linardopoulos (2011) concur by stating that their online discussion rubric is a dynamic document that is revised each term.

Klemmer (2013) directs us to Boud (1995) as providing us with a classic on self-assessments as a teaching and learning methodology. Boud describes the nature of self-assessment as formational as compared to graded assignments in that self-assessment is “essentially formative and not absolute, though it can be used for summative purposes” (p. 23). Boud further points out that pressures of examinations can force some students to shift to a “surface approach” to learning by attempting to focus on the words of their teachers and memorize material in their textbooks. In contrast, self-assessment provides for more student autonomy and self-direction, which then results in “deep learning” (pp. 25-26). However, self-assessments are not easily developed and Boud suggests they require planning for good practice and implementation. This is advice well-taken as one discovers during the process of developing a self-assessment rubric and writing clear instructions for both students and teachers; tasks which must be taken on with focused thought and intentionality.

Other research (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009) reinforces the understanding that self-assessments should be formative. In fact, Andrade & Valtcheva subscribe only to formative evaluation with goals toward revision and improvement. They cite various studies showing students will inflate those self-evaluations that count toward formal grades. Equally important, Andrade & Valtcheva explain, is the inclusion of a self-assessment rubric because it “takes the guess-work out of understanding their learning targets” (p. 13).

Evaluating Online Discussions

The more commonly used strategy for evaluating online discussion participation has been a rubric based upon points and itemized performance criteria. For example, University of Calgary’s Teaching & Learning Centre (2011) presents an online discussion grading rubric that does not involve self-assessment but rather a points scale. They provide a sample of a rubric involving points earned from 1 to 4 based upon criteria e.g. application and interpretation of reading materials, organization of thoughts and ideas, and appropriate grammar and spelling. The research of Solan & Linardopoulos (2011) resulted in a similar strategy of rating online discussions but by the four criteria: quality and quantity of discussion posts, timeliness of participation, and writing proficiency (or, communication proficiency, if audio was used). Their research considered a variety of parameters for timeliness, whether requiring posts at any time three or four of seven days of the week, or requiring one initial post by day five and response posts on days six and seven. Solan & Linardopoulos’s four criteria formed a grading continuum with a list of tasks that were more prescriptive than descriptive as a self-assessment might be.

As mentioned in the project overview, most of our evaluation of ILA engagement is based upon professor-assigned “participation points,” oftentimes 10 points for each weekly discussion. Similar to three of Solan & Linardopoulos’s four criteria, participation requirements include a minimum number of posts within a specified timeframe during the week, as well as qualitative criteria for critical thinking and constructive interaction. Points are awarded either as “all or nothing” (10 points for meeting all requirements or 0 points for less than), or divided by initial posts and reply posts, rated for quantity and quality. (In regards to the fourth criteria, our experience has shown that grammar and spelling, and formal citations or references, steer participation more toward essay-style exchanges; so we removed writing style requirements.)

Rationale for introducing Self-Assessments: Overall, the participation points system with its weekly itemized checklist seemed to stifle discussions due to students being overly focused on meeting minimums and earning points. *This was the reasoning behind introducing the ILA Self-Assessments.* The intent was that a self-assessment would result in more authentic conversation without as much distraction or pressure about grades, or professor grading.

Rules of Engagement and Self-Responsibility: Even so, it was determined that discussions do require parameters and standards. As shown in the ILA descriptions below, there are still requirements for number of posts and schedule for postings. There are qualitative guidelines as well, including the goal of having “vibrant and vigorous discussions” and going beyond mere

affirmations. But following these guidelines is assumed; and they are not in and of themselves part of a grade or even the ILA Self-Assessments.

ILAs: Interactive Learning Activities

From the Syllabus: The online classroom includes weekly *ILAs (Interactive Learning Activities)* designed to give students an opportunity to work with the content of the course and to engage with their professor and peers. These require *thoughtful preparation in advance* of participating in the activity and active engagement in the discussion throughout the week.

Synchronous Live Discussions

Zoom Sessions (live online video-conferencing): live, synchronous (simultaneous) sessions using Zoom online video-conferencing software (similar to Skype). Zoom logs student attendance.
Professor-Student Zoom Sessions: live meetings with the instructor and students.
Student Group Zoom Sessions: live meetings in student small groups.

Asynchronous Online Discussions

VoiceThread (video) and Threaded (written) Group Discussions with group members.
The purposes of these discussions are to 1) hone our critical thinking skills and 2) help each other understand our different points of view. Go beyond affirmations in posting your replies. Evaluate, assess, state, and defend an alternate understanding, or identify specific things that were strong points of your fellow student's posting.

- *Threaded Discussions (TD):* text-based online using the Moodle Discussion Forum.
- *VoiceThread Discussions (VT):* video-recorded using VoiceThread, an asynchronous application that allows for posting comments to each other using a webcam and microphone on a personal computer (see Technology & Equipment Requirements).

TD/VT Initial Post (1 Initial Post required no later than 11:55 PM MT):

Post a substantive, clear, and concise response to the discussion topic. For written TD Initial Posts 2-3 paragraphs. For video VT Initial Posts: 2 minutes min. to 3 minutes max.

TD/VT Posts (At least 3 Reply Posts required no later than 11:55 PM MT Saturday):

Between Wednesday and 11:55 PM MT Saturday of the discussion week, read/view the posts of your fellow group members and the professor. Reflect critically on what they have written/said. Replies should imitate the character of any vibrant and vigorous discussion. Converse with at least one group member and the professor, for a total (minimum) of three (3) Reply Posts by you to others. Plan on revisiting the discussion threads several times throughout the week to review new postings and respond. TD written Reply Posts: 1-2 paragraphs. VT video Reply Posts: 1-2 minutes.

The Rubric

Once it was decided that the ILA Self-Assessment would be an effective form of evaluating online discussion engagement, the focus turned to developing the rubric. Our research had shown that using a rubric was critical, but only if it had clarity and effectively expressed learning objectives for online interaction. In the end, *writing the rubric was one of the most important aspects of implementing the self-assessments*. Much discussion took place in regards to terminology, performance levels, and descriptive language.

The decision had already been made that the rubric would not be about *prescribed tasks*. Thus, the first question addressed was: what exactly were we aiming to assess? ILAs are most certainly not merely about *participation* because this could equate to quantifiable activity but not necessary investment in the online classroom. Similarly, other commonly used terms such as *engagement* and *interaction* seemed inadequate. Theoretically, a student could exchange posts while still only passively interacting.

Through a collaborative effort, we agreed that our goal for ILAs was two-fold: student engaging in a fruitful activity within a particular online context. It was determined that *contribution* best described what we were looking for, and even more, within a *community of online learners*.

- The rubric was aptly titled: **“Contribution to the Online Learning Community.”**

Learner Levels

Three levels were established with “3” as the highest and “1” as the lowest level of contribution. A core term defined each level along with key descriptive phrases (Appendix A).

- **Level 3 Learner – Remarkable Contribution:** *regularly engages; consistently invests; always active; never a bystander.*
- **Level 2 Learner – Sufficient Contribution:** *often engages; usually or eventually active; not a bystander.*
- **Level 1 Learner – Insufficient Contribution:** *fails to, or is inconsistent to, engage; does not invest; rarely draws upon; is a bystander.*

Self-Evaluation & Grade Percentage

After review of the rubric, student self-assessment involved two steps: a written description and a percentage grade (see below and Appendix A: ILA Self-Assessment Questions (page 2).

1. Write out a short (4-5 sentence) evaluation of your own engagement and contribution to the online learning community. Include: **a)** areas of strength and **b)** an area or areas for improvement.

2. Provide the Numeric score (ex: 88 or 93 **NOT** Level 2 or Level 3) you believe best represents your involvement (see rubric for criteria). Use the following score ranges to determine the score that best reflects your contribution.

90-100 - Excellent/Remarkable: **Level 3**

70-89 - Sufficient: **Level 2**

69 or less - Insufficient: **Level 1**

Questions & Revision Considerations

Levels vs. Percentages – Some confusion arose from having two ways to describe one’s contribution. First, the student reviewed the Levels listed on the rubric (page 1) and determined which described them best. Then, they referred to the self-assessment questions (page 2) and assigned themselves a numeric grade (percentage) that corresponded to their self-assigned learner level. Even though the instructions clearly stated: “Provide the Numeric score (ex: 88 or 93 **NOT** Level 2 or Level 3),” still some students filled in the text box with a Level rather than a grade percentage. In these cases, the professor had to determine the final grade. A related concern was that the instructions about self-assigning a percentage grade did not appear until page 2 of the rubric: see Appendix A: ILA Self-Assessment Questions (page 2). It is possible that some students did not pay close attention to this last section and second page.

Levels 3, 2, 1 – Questions have been raised about the highest Level being “3” and counting down from there, rather than “1.” Indeed a “3” is a *higher* number and therefore implies *more* of a contribution. Still it has been argued that “1” better describes a *top* level, as in the phrase, “I am the #1 performer in my class.” This, too, will be reconsidered.

Gap Between Levels – A possible unintended consequence of the level of contribution descriptions was whether some students felt pushed toward a Level 2 range of grade. There is quite a large gap in between Level 3’s “Remarkable” performance with student engagement that is “always” present, and Level 1’s identifier of “Insufficient” with a near to complete failure to be present. While this was a potential dilemma, the quantifiable data demonstrated that the majority of students felt comfortable placing themselves somewhere in the Level 3 grade range.

Reconsidering “Remarkable” – One professor expressed dissatisfaction with the highest level of self-assessment being termed: *remarkable*. The professor asked: “Can anyone really describe themselves as remarkable? Wouldn’t a more common word such as *outstanding* or *exceptional* be more appropriate? And, if a student deemed themselves at a remarkable level, wouldn’t they then have to assign themselves a grade of 100%? Since, a “remarkable yet only 90%” would seem somewhat of an oxymoron? Ultimately, it was explained to the professor that a remarkable level simply meant that the student’s presence in, and contribution to, the learning community would be so noticeable that others would be able to “remark about it.” We retained the term, yet we will readdress this and other rubric terminology during revisions.

Self-Assessment Instructions

For the process to run smoothly, clear instructions were crucial, for both students and teachers.

Student Instructions (Appendix B)

Terms need to be clearly defined, not only what they mean, but what they do not. For example, the self-assessment *only* refers to ILAs. These are online activities, not coursework done offline. The most common ILAs are listed in the instructions for the students: “threaded discussions, VoiceThread discussions, Zoom sessions, etc.” (Appendix B, pt. 1). But in addition, the rubric questions include a statement about what is *not* included: “It is important to remember that you are assessing your contribution to the ILAs. You are *not* assessing your work on papers, projects, reading, quizzes or exams” (Appendix A: Rubric, p. 2). In the high majority of cases, students understood and followed these definitions and instructions.

Teacher Instructions (Appendix C)

The most important concept to communicate to professors was the value of timely formative feedback. Self-assessments were conducted periodically so that instructors could give written comments for each student’s improvement. The *Teaching Notes* stated: “This is a chance to guide students and give feedback as to how they can improve the quality of their engagement around the ILAs.” A key next step was *timeliness*, because without it there was no time for students to make adjustments. Professors were asked not to delay feedback: “Please grade the ILA Self-Assessments as soon as possible and no later than one week after submission.”

Professor Engagement – We realized mid-semester that one addition needed to the Teaching Notes is a reminder to be engaged and acquainted with students enough to evaluate their ILAs.

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan was to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data to gain insight into the self-assessment process, discover any patterns, and formulate some hypotheses.

Data Collection

A sampling of student and professor entries was reviewed after each administration of the ILA Self-Assessments. The three courses studied had varying times for collecting self-evaluations during the semester: two courses were scheduled three times but differing weeks (Weeks 3, 10, 15 and Weeks 5, 10, 15), whereas the third course scheduled for two times (Weeks 8 and 15). Due to the timing of this Change Project, the data reported here will not include the final week 15 of self-assessment administration. This data will be collected and added later to the results.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative Evaluation Questions

- What range of grades did students assign themselves and what were averages overall?
- Did the range of grades that students assigned themselves and the averages overall change from one self-assessment period to another?
- To what degree did professors change, veto, or adjust the student’s self-assigned ILA grade percentage or described activity?
- Did the professor-assigned grades change from one self-assessment period to another?
- Was there any correlation between instructor presence and the student or prof grade?

Data Chart

The following chart provides the data available at the time of this report.

Course:	101 X1 SP19		101 X1 SP19		201 X1 SP19		301 X1 SP19		301 X1 SP19	
Weeks:	Weeks 1-3		Weeks 4-8		Weeks 1-8		Weeks 1-5		Weeks 6-10	
Student #:	Student score	Prof score	Student score	Prof score	Student score	Prof score	Student score	Prof score	Student score	Prof score
1	92	100	95	100	95	97	90	85	90	-
2	85	95			92	95	90	92	90	-
3	80	95					95	0	89	-
4	93	100	94	100	88	88	88	88	89	-
5	100	100	100	95	90	95	100	95	94	-
6	85		78	95			85	85	85	-
7	93	100	85	95	88	90	88	88	88	-
8	95	100	100	100	88	87	89	90	89	-
9	90	100	77	95	90	92	100	95	95	-
10	80	90	85	90	94	95	89	89	75	-
11	95	100	95	100	86	86	88	88		-
12	96	100	95	95	91	91	83	87	90	-
13	95	100	85	90	85	86	87	92	89	-
14	98	100	95	95	80	86	85	83	70	-
15	94	100	94	100	80	85	90	90	90	-
16			69	80	92	93	95	93	95	-
17	89	100		100	95	96	89	90	89	-
18	95	100	80	90	92	92	90	90	90	-
19	82	90			93	94	88	92	89	-
20	97	100	91	95	95	93				
21										
22	90	100	94	100						
23	85	100	91	100						
24	95	100		100						
Average:	91.09	98.57	89.06	95.75	89.67	91.17	89.95	89.56	88.11	0.00
Divided by:	/22	/21	/18	/20	/18	/18	/19	/18	/18	
* Professor presence in ILAs on average:	101 X1 SP19: 10%-20%				201 X1 SP19: 50%-60%				301 X1 SP19: 80%-85%	

Quantitative Data Observations

- Across three courses and five self-assessments, 89.58% was the average student self-assigned score. Interestingly, the high end of Level 2 is 89% and the low end of Level 3 is 90%. Does this indicate that students feel they are on the margin of learning levels? Or were they indecisive and did not want to commit? Is the terminology in the levels too different or too similar that it sets students up for indecision? Further research is required.

Student Grade Averages and Prof Adjustments –

- Prof 101, in the 1st round, raised student scores by an average of 8% (as low as 85% raised to as high as 100%). This represents a change/increase to 21 of 21 grades.
- Prof 101, in the 2nd round, raised student scores by an average of 7% (as low as 89% raised to as high as 96%). This represents a change/increase to 18 of 20 grades.
 - **Questions:** Prof 101 was present only 10-20% in ILAs, yet raised 17 of 20 students to 100% in the 1st round and 9 of 22 students to 100% in the 2nd round. The question arises of how Prof 101 determined the 100% grades if they were not engaged with students? Was the grade inflation an overcompensation for the prof's inactivity in the course?
- Prof 201, in the 1st round, raised student scores by an average of 1% (90% to 91%). This represents an increase to 12 of 18 grades, and a lowering of 2 of 18 grades.
- Prof 301, in the 1st round, kept scores as is, from 89.95% to 89.56%, an increase to 6 of 18 grades, a lowering of 5 of 18 grades, and 7 were matched. (2nd round is incomplete.)
- Neither Prof 201 (50-65% in ILAs) nor Prof 301 (80-85% in ILAs) ever awarded a 100%.

Student Grade Adjustments from 1st Self-Assessment to 2nd Self-Assessment –

- Course 101 (Prof 10-20% in ILAs): from the 1st to 2nd round:
 - 9 students (50%) lowered their own grade, indicating a self-declared decrease in ILA activity. (Significant decreases: 85 to 78, 90 to 77, 95 to 80.)
 - Only 6 students (33%) raised their grade, indicating an increase in ILA activity.
 - 3 students (17%) gave themselves the same grade, indicating a steady activity level.
- Course 301 (Prof 80-85% in ILAs): from the 1st to 2nd round:
 - Only 4 students (22%) lowered their grade, a self-declared decrease in ILA activity.
 - Only 4 students (22%) raised their grade, indicating an increase in ILA activity.
 - 10 students (56%) gave themselves the same grade, indicating a steady activity level.
- Does professor involvement influence student involvement over time, from one evaluation time period to another? Does a lack of prof presence correspond to a decrease in student involvement? Does a steady prof presence correspond to a steady student involvement?

Professor Presence vs. Student Engagement – Is there a correspondence between prof presence and student self-assessment and professor assessment percentages?

- Overall, the higher the average % of professor engagement in ILAs, the lower the average % of prof-assigned grade. However, we cannot accurately make assumptions here, since there are other potential factors e.g. the professor's personal grading policy.
- Prof 101 had the least amount of activity in the ILAs (10-20%), yet the highest number of grade adjustments (e.g. 21 of 21 students in 1st round) and the highest level of adjustments (e.g. 16 of 21 students receiving 100% in the 1st round). This seems to be an instance of a correlation between instructor presence (or lack thereof) and the prof-assigned grades.
- The opposite was true for Prof 301 (80-85% in ILAs). In the 2nd round, at first review it would seem that the student average went down. However, for a more accurate comparison, it may be best to remove the two unusually low student self-assigned grades of 70% and 75%. If done, the 2nd round average goes up to 90.06%. The difference between 89.95% and 90.06% becomes negligible; or, it indicates that student activity levels stayed steady from Weeks 1-5 to Weeks 6-10, assumedly along with the prof's activity.
- Prof 201 (50-60% in ILAs) rarely changed the student scores. One could surmise that possibility that this was because the prof was not present enough to adequately experience student engagement and so could not make verifiably significant adjustments.

Qualitative Data

The Qualitative data consists of excerpts from various student and teacher written comments.

- See **Appendix D: Student Self-Assessment Excerpts**
- See **Appendix E: Professor Feedback Excerpts**

Qualitative Evaluation Questions

- How did students describe their ILA activity and contribution? (See Appendix D)
- Did students utilize the *Contribution to the Online Learning Community* rubric?
- What kinds of formative feedback did the instructors provide? (See Appendix E)
- Did instructors utilize the *Contribution to the Online Learning Community* rubric?
- Did students and instructors successful utilize the Moodle LMS module?

Qualitative Data Observations

- Interestingly, although much consideration was placed upon the selection of the word "contribution" for the rubric, rarely did students use a version of the term in their self-descriptions. For example, in the 2nd round of the self-assessment, less than 20% in one course and less than 40% in another course used a form of the word "contribution."
- Overall, professors provided 1-2 sentences of feedback.
- In most cases, professors did not use a form of the rubric term: "contribution" (x3), but were more likely to use "participation." (x18)

- Ironically, although students are directed not to limit their ILA comments to merely agreement or disagreement, in most cases this is the only type of feedback the professors provided in the self-assessment, as in: “Overall, I agree with your self-assessment.”
- 20-25% could be described as *formative*, or constructive comments toward improvement. However, based upon the number of times professors agreed with a student’s self-assessment, it would seem some professors did not think there was improvement needed, and therefore, no formative feedback to give.
- Prof 301, who was most active in the course, provided the most formative feedback in the 1st round but then failed to complete the professor assessment in the 2nd round altogether.
- Administratively for the professors, their part in the assessments was much less onerous than giving weekly participation points. Even so, this did not necessarily equate to more time spent on providing formative feedback, since it was often minimal.
- Moodle LMS module: It is worthy of note that there were *no* requests for assistance with using the reporting platform, so it is assumed the instructions were clear and effective.

Concluding Comments

The introduction of ILA Self-Assessments to the online classroom has been a formative exercise and gleaned valuable insights into student self-reflection, self-perception, and investment into their online learning community. This was equally true with knowledge gained about professor engagement and what is being provided in terms of timely and formative feedback to students.

As is the case in many research and trial endeavors, the end brings more questions than the beginning. This is how improvements happen, the first step is asking the right questions, and the next is asking new ones. Were the ILA Self-Assessments a success? Possibly this is the wrong question. Are they a better alternative to ILA grading with participation points? Most likely so.

Introducing ILA Self-Assessments places a high value on Interactive Learning Activities. Their objective in supporting active learning in the online classroom was evident, and the process and implementation was fairly seamless. So, the potential of the ILA Self-Assessment as a teaching and learning tool remains high, even if the execution was inconsistent. They still serve the purpose of encouraging ILA engagement by both students and instructors, and holding both accountable for doing so. The expectation is that the intervention of the ILA Self-Assessment results in all members of the online learning community putting extra effort into the quality and quantity of their contribution. This remains the goal going forward.

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Appendix A

ILA Self-Assessment Rubric

**Contribution to the Online Learning Community Rubric (page 1)
and
ILA Self-Assessment Questions (page 2)**

Level 3 Learner – Remarkable Contribution

- Learner *regularly* moves discussions beyond opinions and toward deeper critical thinking, taking the learning community beyond minimum requirements and into stimulating thoughts and ideas.
- Learner contributes positively to build a learning culture characterized respect, honesty, and care for one another.
- Learner *regularly* engages peers, managing their time so that they can consistently invest in the learning community by participating on time.
- Learner *consistently* draws upon their unique context, experiences, and background to enrich the learning community, and seeks to understand the differing perspectives of others.
- In collaborative tasks (when an element in the course), the learner is *never* a bystander, but *always* takes an active role in the team and its work.
- In ILAs, the learner invests at least, and sometimes more than the required amount of time investment specified for each ILA.

Level 2 Learner - Sufficient Contribution

- Learner *often* moves discussions beyond opinions and toward deeper critical thinking, taking the learning community beyond minimum requirements and into stimulating thoughts and ideas.
- Learner contributes positively to build a learning culture characterized respect, honesty, and care for one another.
- Learner *often* engages peers, managing their time so that they can consistently invest in the learning community by participating on time.
- Learner *usually* draws upon their unique context, experiences, and background to enrich the learning community, and seeks to understand the differing perspectives of others.
- In collaborative tasks, the learner is not a bystander, but usually or eventually takes an active role in the team and its work.
- In ILAs, the learner invests at least the required amount of time investment specified for each ILA.

Level 1 Learner – Insufficient Contribution

- Learner *rarely* moves discussions beyond opinions and toward deeper critical thinking. Their contribution may meet minimum requirements, but do not stimulate others toward deeper learning.
- Learner stifles discourse in the classroom through a lack of care for the way their words impact others.
- Learner *fails to, or is inconsistent to,* engage their peers in the online classroom. Poor or insufficient time management results in late posts or failure to contribute to activities.
- Learner *sometimes or rarely* draws upon their unique context, experiences, and background to enrich the learning community. Learner does not invest the appropriate time and attention to understand the differing perspectives of others.
- In collaborative tasks, the learner is a bystander, but and relies on others to pull their weight in the team.
- In ILAs, the learner often does not invest the required amount of time investment specified for the course ILAs.

ILA Self-Assessment Questions

Before answering, review the *Contribution to the Online Learning Community Rubric* (page one of this document) and determine which Level of Learner best describes your contribution during this timeframe in the course. It is important to remember that you are assessing your *contribution to the ILAs*. You are not assessing your work on papers, projects, reading, quizzes or exams.

1. Write out a short (4-5 sentence) evaluation of your own engagement and contribution to the online learning community. Include: a) areas of strength and b) an area or areas for improvement
2. Provide the Numeric score (ex: 88 or 93 **NOT** Level 2 or Level 3) you believe best represents your involvement (see rubric for criteria). Use the following score ranges to determine the score that best reflects your contribution.

90-100 - Excellent/Remarkable: **Level 3**
70-89 - Sufficient: **Level 2**
69 or less - Insufficient: **Level 1**

Sometimes a student may exhibit traits from both Level 3 and Level 2. In this case, choose a value that you believe best represents your efforts.

ILA Self-Assessment Rubric TEXT VERSION

Contribution to the Online Learning Community Rubric (page 1)
and
ILA Self-Assessment Questions (page 2)

Level 3 Learner – Remarkable Contribution

- Learner *regularly* moves discussions beyond opinions and toward deeper critical thinking, taking the learning community beyond minimum requirements and into stimulating thoughts and ideas.
- Learner contributes positively to build a learning culture characterized respect, honesty, and care for one another.
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- In ILAs, the learner invests at least, and sometimes more than the required amount of time investment specified for each ILA.

Level 2 Learner - Sufficient Contribution

- Learner *often* moves discussions beyond opinions and toward deeper critical thinking, taking the learning community beyond minimum requirements and into stimulating thoughts and ideas.
- Learner contributes positively to build a learning culture characterized respect, honesty, and care for one another.
- Learner *often* engages peers, managing their time so that they can consistently invest in the learning community by participating on time.
- Learner *usually* draws upon their unique context, experiences, and background to enrich the learning community, and seeks to understand the differing perspectives of others.
- In collaborative tasks, the learner is not a bystander, but usually or eventually takes an active role in the team and its work.
- In ILAs, the learner invests at least the required amount of time investment specified for each ILA.

Level 1 Learner – Insufficient Contribution

- Learner *rarely* moves discussions beyond opinions and toward deeper critical thinking. Their contribution may meet minimum requirements, but do not stimulate others toward deeper learning.
- Learner stifles discourse in the classroom through a lack of care for the way their words impact others.
- Learner *fails to, or is inconsistent to,* engage their peers in the online classroom. Poor or insufficient time management results in late posts or failure to contribute to activities.

- Learner *sometimes or rarely* draws upon their unique context, experiences, and background to enrich the learning community. Learner does not invest the appropriate time and attention to understand the differing perspectives of others.
- In collaborative tasks, the learner is a bystander, but and relies on others to pull their weight in the team.
- In ILAs, the learner often does not invest the required amount of time investment specified for the course ILAs.

ILA Self-Assessment Questions

Before answering, review the *Contribution to the Online Learning Community Rubric* (page one of this document) and determine which Level of Learner best describes your contribution during this timeframe in the course. It is important to remember that you are assessing your *contribution to the ILAs*. You are not assessing your work on papers, projects, reading, quizzes or exams.

1. Write out a short (4-5 sentence) evaluation of your own engagement and contribution to the online learning community. Include: **a)** areas of strength and **b)** an area or areas for improvement

2. Provide the Numeric score (ex: 88 or 93 **NOT** Level 2 or Level 3) you believe best represents your involvement (see rubric for criteria). Use the following score ranges to determine the score that best reflects your contribution.

90-100 - Excellent/Remarkable: **Level 3**

70-89 - Sufficient: **Level 2**

69 or less - Insufficient: **Level 1**

Sometimes a student may exhibit traits from both Level 3 and Level 2. In this case, choose a value that you believe best represents your efforts.

Appendix B

Student Instructions

SUBMIT: ILA Self-Assessment #2 - Weeks 6 - 10 (Due SATURDAY. 11:55PM MT)

This Assessment Has Two Parts:

1 - The first part is your self-assessment of your level of engagement and contribution to the Online Classroom. This includes all of the ILAs (Interactive Learning Activities such as threaded discussions, VoiceThread discussions, Zoom sessions, etc.). In this self-assessment, you will evaluate your contribution during **weeks 6 through 10** of the course. You will use the [Contribution to the Online Learning Community Rubric](#) to determine your level of contribution and the corresponding grade you believe you have earned. Please download the document to use during your self-assessment. Page two of this document includes the questions you will answer in your assessment.

2 - The second component is your professor's assessment of your contribution using the same rubric. The professor will review your contributions to the ILAs and your self-assessment. Then your professor will determine and post your final score. They will also provide feedback for improvement (if needed). You will receive a notification when that is posted and your feedback will be available both in this assignment module and in the course gradebook for your review.

Technical Instructions

1. Download and Review the [Contribution to the Online Learning Community Rubric](#)
2. Click on the ADD SUBMISSION button.
3. Answer the 2 questions provided on page two of the Rubric document by typing your answers directly in the text box of this assignment module
4. Click on SAVE CHANGES to finish.

Appendix C

Sample Professor Instructions

TEACHING NOTES - Week 8

ILA Self-Assessment and Professor Assessment (DUE Sat. 11:55PM PM):

This week, your students will be completing a self-assessment of their level of engagement and contribution to the Online Classroom. This includes all of the ILAs (Interactive Learning Activities such as threaded discussions, VoiceThread discussions, Zoom sessions, etc.). **This ILA Self-Assessment includes WEEKS 1 - 8 (including the Week 1 *Introduce Yourself* and the Week 8 Threaded Discussion).**

See sample on Faculty Moodle Tutorials site: [ILA Self-Assessment assignment page](#)

Students and professors will use the [Contribution to the Online Learning Community Rubric](#) to determine the level of contribution and the corresponding grade earned. Page two of this document includes the questions to answer in the assessment.

The ILA Self-Assessment is built within a Moodle Assignment module as a text-only option (no file uploads allowed). Students type directly in the text box provided. Once students have completed their evaluation, you will give written feedback and assign the final numerical grade of the quality of their ILA engagement (either agreeing with or changing their self-assigned grade). This grade will contribute to whatever is the percentage given to ILA participation for the course. (You can enter a grade on a 100 point scale and leave written feedback in the "Feedback comments" text box just as you would grade any Moodle Assignment.)

This is a chance to guide students and give feedback as to how they can improve the quality of their engagement around the ILAs. You can use the student comments as a starting point for evaluation and can also revisit ILAs from previous weeks and the gradebook grades for ILAs to give context for the grade you will give.

Please grade the ILA Self-Assessments as soon as possible and no later than one week after submission.

Appendix D

Sample Self-Assessment Excerpts

Important Note: Release forms were not obtained for this change project. Therefore, all student comments have been re-worded, rephrased, and/or rearranged as necessary to protect privacy. Also, these are excerpts only, and not full text submissions.

- “I work hard to demonstrate that I have heard others and I respect their viewpoints.”
- “I plan to improve my preparation for the ILAs by finishing the reading and viewing the lectures because I believe that will help me with how I engage with the class.”
- “I admit to losing my enthusiasm and my ILA involvement is more checking off boxes.”
- “I have grasped the course content and can apply it to life.” (no reference to ILAs)
- “My aim is to stimulate discussion. I am transparent and authentic.”
- “I make a significant contribution to the ILAs and ask thoughtful follow-up questions.”
- “I have had to stretch myself beyond my comfort zone because sometimes I’m unsure of whether my opinions will be accepted.”
- “My strength is my focus on encouraging others to express their unique perspectives.”
- “My performance has been “remarkable” (level 3) but my technological problems in participating in the online discussions reduces it down to “sufficient” (level 2).”

Students who self-assigned a grade of 100% –

- “I interact with respect but sometimes have to confront others when they are clearly in the wrong... I put effort into my responses though I don’t think others will view or read them.”
- “I am consistent in my ILA contributions and I contribute with depth.”
- “I feel I am at the “remarkable” level and 100%. I meet all ILA requirements. My communication is clear and I am adequately prepared.”
- “I have completed all ILAs and assignments. I have invested and engaged fully.”

Students with low self-assigned scores of 69-78% –

- “I meet or exceed the ILA requirements. I thoughtfully engage and challenge group members. But sometimes my ILA posts are not on time.”
- “I have contributed well to the learning community and interacted constructively in the discussions. However, my ILA participation has been inconsistent.”
- “My ILA posts are late so I receive no responses since my group members have already moved on to the next week’s discussion.”
- “I missed half of the ILA weeks but the ones I participated in I did well.”

Appendix E

Professor Feedback Excerpts

Important Note: Release forms were not obtained for this change project. Therefore, all instructor comments have been re-worded, rephrased, and/or rearranged as necessary to protect privacy. Also, these are excerpts only, and not full text submissions.

- “Consider that those who disagree with you might have thoughtful reasons for their viewpoints. This shift in your thinking will go a long way for you.”
- “Since you note you still have areas of improvement, you may want to reconsider your self-assigned score of 100%.”
- “Thank you for your thoughtful and candid participation.” (x9)
- “I am confident you will address [the issues] that you have identified.” (x7)
- “I look forward to your deeper level of engagement.”
- “Great work – keep it going.” (x8)
- “We are all still learning and learning from each other.”
- No comment (x6) but with increase in grades (69 to 80, 77 to 95, 85 to 95).
- “Submit your self-assessment and I will grade it without late penalty.” (x5-no responses)
- “Generally, I agree with your self-evaluation so keep it up in the ILAs.” (x15)
- “Prepare a bullet-note script before you record to gather your thoughts and be more concise.”
- “I appreciate the investment you are putting in your group members.”
- “I appreciate your self-awareness and self-reflection and I anticipate you will improve.”
- “Your posts need to be have a bit more substance with interaction with the course content.”
- “Don’t forget to include some encouragement to your group members and move the conversation forward with follow-up questions.”
- “Include some differences of opinion as well, expressed with kindness.”