

Catalyst Courseware and Workspace Needs Assessment: Summary of Main Findings

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

We conducted nine focus groups and nine individual interviews, which included faculty from all three UW campuses and students from UW Seattle. The breakdown by population:

Population	# of Participants
Faculty (Courseware Users)	11
Faculty (Catalyst Users)	11
Students	18
Researchers/Staff	7
Total	47

COURSE NEEDS

Organization

Through our conversations with faculty courseware users and Catalyst users, we identified the following core needs for an online workspace for teaching. This list is not exhaustive, but highlights consistent and high-level needs expressed by faculty members.

- “One-stop shopping:” They want to see all course-related tools and resources together in one space. They also want one place to access all of the course spaces that they use.
- They want to quickly and easily set up a course space.
- They want an intuitive and easy to maintain organizational system for files, links, and other resources within a course space.
- They want to control access to materials within a course space: making some information public, restricting some content to members of the course, and hiding some content for display at a future date.
- They want to aggregate information on graded assignments (both automatically calculated and manually entered items) and allow students to view their grades online.
- They want to reuse, share, transfer, and archive a course space.

Students expressed similar needs. They want access to all course content in one place, an intuitive organizational system for course materials, and online access to grades. They also want to use one account, such as their UW NetID, to access all course spaces.

Collaboration and Communication

All users expressed a need for an online space in which they could easily communicate and collaborate with others. Specifically, their needs are to:

- Discuss
- Share files and links
- Create a document together
- Review and comment

Overall, we found that faculty, students, staff, and researchers expressed the same core communication and collaboration needs, with the course-specific need for grading as the only exception. *Faculty and students reported that they wanted to be able to use an online workspace for both course and non-course related activities.*

DISCUSSION

In addition to identifying high-level needs for course spaces, we also improved our understanding of faculty and students' current use of courseware (specifically, Moodle and Blackboard) and Catalyst Tools. Below are a few of the things we learned about current use.

- Faculty members used Blackboard primarily as a mechanism for sharing course documents with students. Some also used Blackboard to set up spaces within the course for students to work in small groups (such spaces offered file sharing and a discussion board). Most found the assignment turn-in area and the calendar non-intuitive; few reported using these features.
- Faculty members used Moodle for two main purposes: to share course documents and to set up automatically-graded quizzes and homework. Some faculty members used Moodle exclusively for the latter task and relied on a course Web site to provide additional course information and resources to their students.
- Faculty found both Blackboard and Moodle easy to use and perceived them to be easy for their students to use.
- Nearly all faculty Blackboard and Moodle users reported simultaneous use of one or more of the following Catalyst tools: WebQ, UMail, QuickPoll, Discussion Boards, E-submit, and Portfolio.
- Catalyst users typically created course Web sites with links to individual Catalyst tools. They displayed some course information on the Web site and provided additional information via links to files. Faculty using multiple Catalyst tools found setting up a course to be time consuming.
- Students found both courseware and Catalyst tools to be easy to use once they were within a course space or tool. They reported difficulty with initial access to Blackboard and Moodle, since they could not use their UW NetID to log in to either system.
- Students found it difficult to remember course URLs that did not appear in MyUW.
- Students found Blackboard, Moodle, and course Web sites to be useful when they were updated frequently. They did not like searching through inactive sections or outdated information to find active content.