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DEU Digest reader feedback

The Instructional Design team at the Distance Education Unit would like to invite you to share your feedback and comments on our weekly DEU Digest. This short survey should only take a minute or so, but will help us curate more relevant content and deliver it in ways that work for you in the future. Thank-you to all who have reached out already with kind words and helpful suggestions. We appreciate the communication immensely.

[Complete the short DEU Digest Reader Feedback Survey](#)

Canvas Student App

Accessing course content on the go, or at least breaking away from the desk and laptop computers, the Canvas app provides another way for students to access their course content and activities. Students at institutions with Canvas LMS make frequent use of the app, and although it does not match or exceed the use of desktop access to courses, it is important to consider this access point. The top three features students report as important in the app are **grades**, **assignments**, and **announcements**.

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Canvas Teacher App

Accessing courses on the go is not only important for students, but also for instructors. The Canvas teacher app enables instructors to check the inbox, create and publish announcements, respond to discussions, etc. One of the more powerful features the app enables is grading and providing feedback, **SpeedGrader** is available in the app and instructors can even work offline using this feature.

Note: Every assignment loaded using the DocViewer is saved to your mobile device as part of the storage space the app is taking up. The app does not automatically clear this when you are finished grading, or finished a course. This means that the Canvas app can take up quite a bit of storage space on your device if left unchecked. The only way to clear this space is to uninstall and reinstall Canvas.

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Scanning and submitting assignments with a phone

There are a variety of ways students can use their phone to scan documents for submission for assignments. In fact, as long as the instructor has set *File Upload* as an *Online Submission Type*, students can scan their assignment right within the Student Canvas App (yes, **even multi-page assignments**). This makes it quick and convenient for students to submit work such as illustrations, graphs, maps, calculations, musical notation, and more. [Read More](#)

Formatting text and responsive design in Canvas

In recent conversations with DEU staff, a few instructors have expressed some frustration with formatting their **Pages** and other content in Canvas in order to have fonts, text sizes, colours, and layouts appear the way they envision. While the [Rich Content Editor](#) in Canvas (a [WYSIWYG](#) editor) does allow for you to control some of the text formatting, you will find that the formatting options are somewhat limited. This is for a good reason — by controlling the formatting options, Canvas is able to better

ensure **responsive web design** of your course materials (meaning that Canvas can adjust for the optimal presentation based upon the size of the user's device). This also ensures the best presentation for the **mobile version of your course** via the **Canvas Student App**.

While fine-tuning of some formatting is possible by toggling from the Rich Content Editor to the [HTML Editor](#), we typically only recommend this route for instructors with at least a bit of experience in front-end web development and working with HTML. It's also worth mentioning that certain HTML elements will not work in Canvas and will be automatically stripped away, for security reasons.

The following are a few **"rules-of-thumb"** that we recommend when it comes to formatting your course materials:

1. **Keep it simple**, and let Canvas take the guesswork out of formatting. If you are willing to limit yourself to the predetermined fonts, default text sizes, etc. that are built into Canvas, it will remove much of the uncertainty around formatting for all of the various devices your students will be using, and ensure a clean, tried-and-true web and mobile presentation.
 2. For **accessibility purposes**, you should make use of the Headings tags (H2, H3, etc.) and also be mindful of colour use and how you are labelling tables. The Community Colleges of Spokane does a good job of outlining the [basics of accessibility when you are formatting headers, text colour, and tables](#) in Canvas.
 3. Check what your course looks like in the mobile presentation by taking a peek at your course using the **Canvas Teacher App** or the **Canvas Student App** (which will log you in as a test student). This will give you a quick idea of what is working well, and why simple formatting is preferable for device responsiveness.
 4. If you absolutely need some things to appear in a particular format/layout that the Canvas Rich Text Editor cannot achieve, **consider using a PDF format** for those portions of your course materials. You can even [embed the PDF into the Page you are editing with an inline preview](#). While generally less interactive (e.g., embedded videos will not work), a PDF is still the most stable way to share course materials with regards to formatting and layout.
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DEU support and contact information

The Instructional Design Team at the Distance Education Unit can help you design online activities, assessments and other online appropriate elements to your remote teaching or fully online offerings. Visit <https://sites.usask.ca/edtech/> for more helpful tips and tutorials as well as information on our support services and contact information.

Our **Instructional Design Team** is always happy to chat with you about learning technologies and strategies for using them effectively in your online or blended classroom. Our staff can help you with questions about,

- Full Online Course Development Projects
- Hybrid, multi-access and blended learning strategies
- Open Textbook and OER developments
- ePortfolios
- Engaging Online Assessments and Learning Activities
- Copyright Clearances, Acquisitions and OER Licensing
- Ensuring Accessibility standards are being addressed
- Ed Tech Support before and during delivery
- Course Quality Reviews and Recommendations
- Media resource development
- Resource curation and dissemination
- Non-Credit Learning Design

And much more. Just drop us a line to start a conversation deu.support@usask.ca

If you wish to be added to the DEUD mailing list, please send your **NSID** to deu.support@usask.ca

Visit [DEU Digest Archives](#) to download PDF versions of past digest issues.

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We acknowledge that the University of Saskatchewan's main campus is situated on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.
