

D2L Brightspace Data in Action

Questions Analysts Can Explore to Inform
Course Design and Learning Outcomes



Adoption

Are Brightspace tools being integrated by course creators?

GRADES:

- ✓ Is the gradebook set up?
- ✓ Are graded assessments set up?
- ✓ Are rubrics being used?

Q Even if assessments occur outside the learning environment (for example, in person), it's important that tracking learner achievement occurs within Brightspace using grades. This will ensure that your data strategy can consistently rely upon achievement metrics.

ASSESSMENT:

- ✓ Is there at least one graded assessment in each course?

Q While it is possible to have an effective course that doesn't make use of online assessment tools, if Brightspace assessment tools are not being used, it's important to investigate why.

Is the lack of online assessment a necessity to the subject matter or a strategic decision to support the type of learning? Or is it a lack of understanding about the available tools or their potential uses?

LEARNING MATERIALS:

- ✓ What types of learning objects are being used?
- ✓ Are learning objects present in all courses?
- ✓ Is there a variety of learning objects being used?

Q This information helps you to understand if instructors are creating a learning environment for learners, or if they are using Brightspace as a testing tool or content repository only.

SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATION:

- ✓ Are dates and events being used? Is the calendar available?
- ✓ Are Announcements or Activity Feed being used to communicate updates?
- ✓ Are discussions being used? How many forums exist? How often are they being used? Are there responses to threads?



This information helps you to understand if there are resources available to support learner success. Particularly in a new learning environment, it's important that learners don't feel they are engaging with an online brick wall. There needs to be a human component or at the very least a dynamic component that reassures the learner when they're on track, reminds them or guides them when they're not, and helps to support them if they run into difficulties.

Engagement and achievement can both suffer without the adoption of a communication and support strategy across your organization.

Engagement

Are course creators engaging with tools available to them?

FEEDBACK:

- ✓ Is feedback available for assessments? Are learners given feedback on their assessments? Via what form (using rubrics, feedback on quiz questions, etc.)?
- ✓ Is feedback customized for the learner? That is, do course leaders provide custom feedback beyond rubrics or generic question feedback?



Feedback is a critical contributor to learner success and engagement.

The value of engaging in activities or submitting assessments is not only in the grades received, but in gaining the targeted feedback that allows a learner to gauge and reflect on their performance and make adjustments to improve.

If possible, it's beneficial to use instances where there is no feedback, standardized feedback or custom feedback to set comparative groups and investigate any differences in other engagement or achievement metrics. This could help you to determine the impact of feedback.

GRADES:

- ✓ How soon after deadlines are grades and/or feedback released?
- ✓ Is there a consistent time frame within which learners can expect grades and/or feedback?



Setting learner expectations and establishing instructor reliability can contribute to learner engagement and achievement.

If instructors are perceived as unreliable or disengaged, learners may emulate this behaviour.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT:

- ✓ What learner support and communication tools is the course leader using?
- ✓ Is there a questions forum? If so, how often does the course leader post? How quickly do they respond to questions or messages?
- ✓ Are intelligent agents used for reminders and updates?
- ✓ Are announcements or activity feed being used?



This information can help you to understand how communication between learners and instructors contributes to achievement or engagement.

It could also be valuable to compare the impact that different communication tools appear to have.

Another potential point of interest is the relationship between the frequency and timing of instructor engagement and learner engagement. Understanding this relationship can help you to set standards and expectations for course leaders' communication.

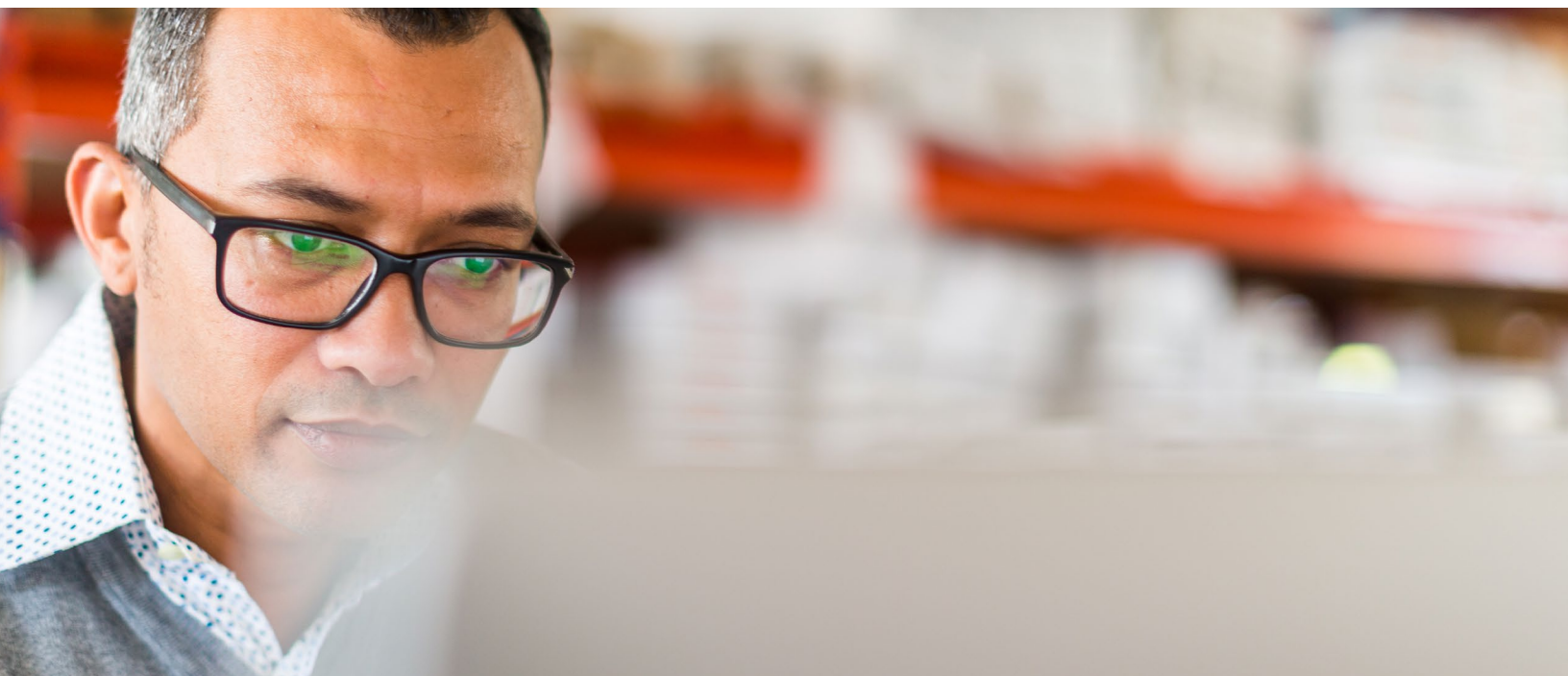
Are learners engaging with tools available to them?

LOGINS:

- ✓ Time between first login and last login?
- ✓ Frequency of login? Number of logins and days accessed the course?



These questions help determine whether learners are engaging with the course consistently over time or in short, intense bursts. For example, if most logins occur right before assessments, it may indicate last-minute cramming rather than steady engagement. While some learners may succeed with this approach, it often correlates with lower achievement and missed opportunities for deeper learning. Recognizing these patterns allows you to guide course design or learner expectations in ways that promote more effective, sustained interaction with course materials.



LEARNING MATERIALS:

- ✓ What learning materials are being accessed?
- ✓ How long on average are learners spending on each piece of learning material?
- ✓ Number of visits for each learning material?
- ✓ What kind of learning materials are being accessed?
- ✓ Last accessed dates for learning materials compared to assessment dates



Understanding what learners are paying attention to can help you better understand learner achievement. If learners are consistently underperforming on an assessment that relies on a PDF filled with complex tables, multiple cells, algorithms and detailed explanations, and you notice that most are skipping the PDF or spending very little time on it, that could be the reason for the low performance. With that insight, you can make decisions to improve learner success. For example, a PDF might not be the best format for that content. A more interactive or visual presentation might engage learners more effectively and lead to better outcomes.

This kind of information is also helpful for long-term course design. If you track how different types of materials are used and compare them, you can start to see which formats your learners prefer and which ones they tend to avoid.

LEARNER PROFILE:

- ✓ Who is accessing learning materials?
- ✓ Can you differentiate your users by meaningful groups, for example, by department or specialization?



This information may be helpful in identifying motivations or distractions that could influence engagement and, as a result, achievement.

Being able to differentiate workload, areas of interest or even access to Brightspace can help you understand why some groups may be more or less successful than others. For example, if a sales team and a customer support team are completing the same learning program but show different outcomes, it might be because sales staff spend more time in meetings or out of the office, while support staff are more consistently at their desks. A discovery like this could lead you to redesign the course into a more mobile, micro-learning experience that better fits the needs of learners who are often on the move.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- ✓ How many learners are completing assignments before the deadline?
- ✓ When are learners missing deadlines?



Missed deadlines usually happen for one of two reasons: too much work or too little engagement. If learners are logging in regularly and reviewing materials but still missing deadlines, the workload might be too heavy or complex. If they are missing multiple activities like discussions or practice tasks, it could point to broader disengagement.

It is also important to ask what the consequences of missed deadlines are and whether they are clearly communicated. If there is no impact on access or grades, learners may not feel motivated to complete the work on time.

QUIZZES:

- ✓ How many learners are completing quizzes by the deadline?
- ✓ How long on average do learners spend in each quiz?
- ✓ How many attempts are learners making?



This information helps you understand whether learners have access to the support they need to succeed. In a digital environment, it's important that learners don't feel like they're interacting with a static system. There should be a human or responsive element that offers encouragement when they're on track, guidance when they're not and support when they need help. Without a clear communication and support strategy, both engagement and achievement can be affected.

DISCUSSIONS:

- ✓ What is the average number of posts per learner?
- ✓ Are learners replying to one another or simply posting original?
- ✓ How long are threads active (measuring time between first post and last reply)?



Understanding how learners are using discussions can help you gain insight into how they are prioritizing this kind of learning experience, the depth of their learning, and their connection to the teaching approach. Discussions can be reflective, peer-based or instructor-led and may be graded or ungraded.

If learners are not engaging or are not doing so in a timely way, it is worth looking at how discussions are structured. Consider the weighting, consistency of expectations and how actively the course creator participates. These elements all influence how learners engage.

Achievement

Are learners being successful?

COMPLETION METRICS:

- ✓ How do you define completion of a course or program?
- ✓ Is it based on a final grade?
- ✓ Is an award earned?
- ✓ Completion of assignments and content visited?



Having a consistent system cue for completion in your data helps ensure that you can set a reliable threshold for comparison. For example, releasing a badge or certificate can serve as a clear indicator.

Answering this question helps define your completion metric, which supports other achievement-related analysis.



OUTCOMES:

- ✓ How many outcomes have learners achieved?
- ✓ What level of mastery for outcomes?
- ✓ How many attempts to achieve mastery?



Depending on how you define completion, outcomes data can help connect multiple learning activities to a single achievement and provide insight into learner progress.

COMPLETION RATES:

- ✓ How many learners have completed the course versus those who have not?



This data point is useful for creating comparative groups to identify patterns that support success or lead to failure. It's often helpful to filter out learners who never logged in, as their lack of activity may be influenced by factors outside the course.

COMPARATIVE GROUPS:

- ✓ How many learners by major, program, department or role have completed the course?



Significant differences between groups can reveal differences in motivation. For example, a factory employee may be more motivated to complete WHMIS training than a salesperson who doesn't see the course as relevant. Similarly, a science major may not be as invested in a required arts course as an arts major would be. These insights can help you design for different motivations or requirements.

TIMELINES:

- ✓ How many learners completed by the deadline?
- ✓ How long did it take to complete the course?



This data is useful for comparing cohorts or tracking trends over time. It can help you account for seasonal or external factors like holidays, organizational events or global disruptions.



DROP-OFF POINTS:

- ✓ How many learners dropped the course?
- ✓ Is there consistency in the point at which learners abandon the course?
- ✓ Are there patterns in the point of abandonment that align to particular assignments or activities?



These questions can reveal a lot about your course. If learners tend to drop off after a certain point, it could mean the workload is heavier than expected or the course content doesn't match their expectations. Consider whether the timing of drop-off aligns with specific assignments or activities.

Make sure your expectations are proportionate to the course length. For example, if a full-semester course sees drop-off after a few weeks, that might suggest a misalignment. If a four-week course sees drop-off in week three, the workload may be too high.

BARRIERS TO COMPLETION:

- ✓ Have you created a roadblock?



Sometimes release conditions or availability settings can unintentionally prevent learners from progressing. If you notice a bottleneck, it's worth checking for hidden blockers.

PACING:

- ✓ How long on average does it take learners to complete the course?



This can help you identify learners who are falling behind or struggling. It can also be used to set alerts or offer support before learners disengage completely.

ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE:

- ✓ How successful are learners on each graded item within the course?
- ✓ Are some items not challenging enough?
- ✓ Does the performance of some items not reflect the overall performance in the course?
- ✓ What are learner achievement rates from one instructor to another?
- ✓ What are learner achievement rates from one cohort or group to another?
- ✓ What are learner achievement rates from one assessment to another?
- ✓ How many attempts does it take to complete assessments?



Looking at achievement across instructors, cohorts, or assessments can help you identify inconsistencies. It can also highlight instructors who are excelling and could mentor others. Consistent grading schemes across assessments are also important, even if they're not tied to a specific grade item.

COURSE ATTEMPTS:

- ✓ What is the rate of pass, fail or withdrawal from a course?
- ✓ How many attempts are learners taking to complete a course?



This kind of data can help you understand the balance between motivation and course expectations. A high number of attempts may indicate strong motivation, especially if the course is required or carries prestige. But it could also suggest that expectations are too high, the workload is too heavy or timelines are too tight.

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