F A Q

“Oncourse Ate My Homework!” - Oncourse Strategies and Clues to Student Submissions

1 PROBLEMS WITH ONCOURSE

1.1 My students are reporting problems with Oncourse submissions. What do I do?

• Use your IU Guest Account login to check your site. This is the most reliable way to experience your site from the student’s perspective. To create a guest account, follow these brief instructions from the IU Knowledge Base.
• Call TLTC if you suspect system-wide problems. 855-7829 for our Wells Library center, or 855-3580 for our Ballantine center.
• You can also check IT Notices online if you suspect system-wide problems: http://itnotices.iu.edu/

1.2 Does Oncourse ever make mistakes about submissions?

• This has happened, notably in 2007 due to a software bug. That problem was resolved at the time and has not recurrid. Moreover, a new version of the Assignments tool, Assignments 2, directly addressed submission problems. This tool is available now, and will be the default tool in the summer of 2011.

1.3 What can students do to assure their attachments were submitted?

• Students must complete every step of the Oncourse Assignments submission process:
  1. As necessary, add content to the text editor;
  2. Carefully add attachments;
  3. Click the Submit button, and click again to confirm the submission and complete the process.
• Students should retain their email confirmations.

2 WHAT ONCOURSE TELLS YOU ABOUT SUBMISSIONS

2.1 Is there a way to automatically track student activity in a site?

• Yes. Instructors may add the Site Stats tool through Site Setup.
• The Site Stats tool gives instructors easy but limited access to some of the content of the Oncourse session logs. The Site Stats tool updates at 3AM every day.
• Enable Email notifications (to you, the instructor) on submission (use Digest mode so you receive a single message per day.)

3 OTHER TRACKABLE INFORMATION

3.1 What other information is available about a file that a student has submitted?

• In Word, on a PC, right click on the document for Properties.
• On a Mac, Apple + I = Get Info.

4 USER ERROR

4.1 How much does user error (as opposed to personal or academic misconduct) account for non-submissions?

• It is easy to submit an assignment without attaching a document. Oncourse does not flag this as an error.
• In Assignments, students can fill in all the text fields as well as attach their documents, yet fail to scroll all the way down and click the ‘Submit’ button. They may think they have submitted their assignments, but they will not receive the confirmation.
4.2 What tips should I give students to avoid unintended problems?

- Emphasize to students to look for and retain the submission confirmation. Students should look in the confirmation for the list of attached files.
- In your syllabus, as well as in class, alert students to the need to press ALL submission screen buttons.
- In the syllabus, as well as in class, alert students that it is possible to submit an assignment yet fail to include the attachment.

5 ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

5.1 When do problems with Assignment tool submissions become reportable academic misconduct?

- If the faculty member determines that the behavior is misconduct, then it is reportable. The procedure requires that the faculty member first have a face-to-face meeting with the student to let the student respond to the allegation. Examples of behaviors that normally are considered to be misconduct include the following:
  1. The student has provided false information about having submitted an assignment;
  2. The assignment violates course rules in some other way, such as two assignments submitted that are identical, when instructions were to complete the assignment independently;
  3. The student’s work contains plagiarized material.

5.2 Why should I report this type of academic misconduct - especially if I think it is minor?

- University officials, including faculty and associate instructors, are required, by action of the faculty council and the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct, to report cases of academic misconduct. There are several reasons for this policy.
  1. First, it is the student’s right to contest the finding of responsibility for misconduct and any penalty that has been assigned, such as a lowered grade in the course or forced withdrawal with a grade of F. If the incident has not been reported, the student has no process through which to appeal.
  2. Second, some students are accomplished at committing academic misconduct and can create very convincing scenarios which they express in a very sincere manner. This case might not warrant action beyond any grade penalty assigned by the faculty member, but it may be one in a continuum of academic or personal misconduct incidents in which the student has been involved and that warrant action that only the Dean of Students has authority to assign; i.e., disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.
  3. Finally, it is very reinforcing for a student who has “gotten away with” academic misconduct to develop a habit of continued dishonest conduct. An academic institution that does not treat academic misconduct seriously, in effect, is promoting academic misconduct by letting it go unaddressed. Even if it truly is the student’s first violation of policy, if there is no central record-keeping system for such incidents, the student can repeat the violation or commit further violations without it being discovered by anyone, thereby undermining the integrity of the university and contributing to an academic climate for all students that is conducive to getting credit for coursework that has not been earned in an honest manner.

5.3 Why not just give the student a lower grade?

- In addition to the reasons for why you should report, if you lower a student’s grade based on your suspicions of academic misconduct without reporting misconduct, the student could win a grade appeal because the student has been denied due process of appeal.
- Also, students quickly learn from each other about the culture of a course – whether it is one in which cheating is rampant or one in which the rules must be followed or there will be consequences. If the worst that will happen to a student who falsifies information about having submitted an assignment is a lowered grade, there is little risk in trying to cut corners and lie to the faculty member.
- When the Dean of Students receives a report, if it appears to be a minor violation and the first violation for the student, the likely outcome will simply be that the record is maintained by the Dean of Students
with no additional penalty. This is what happens with most reports, so there is no need to worry about ruining the student’s future by reporting the violation. If more action is warranted, then it is because of the student’s poor decision making, not that of the faculty member.

5.4 What is the reporting process?
- Procedures: http://www.iu.edu/~code/bloomington/discipline/academic/index.shtml
- Report online: https://www.indiana.edu/~dsa/cjp/academic-misconduct-form.php
- If you want to consult before filing a report, call the Office of Student Ethics and Anti-Harassment Programs at 855-4463 or send an e-mail message to ethics@indiana.edu

5.5 Do people really forge screen shots and/or official email messages?
- A person familiar with software such as Photoshop can quickly edit a screen shot (“screen grab” or “print screen”) to contain favorable information. Do not accept a screen shot as proof of a submission.
- It is also possible to edit a forwarded email message. To mitigate the likelihood of this, ask students to forward any email messages with full headers turned on. The IU Knowledge Base provides instructions for turning on full headers.

6 BEST PRACTICES
- Include information in your syllabus about the fastness of your deadline, student responsibility, the possibilities for technical problems which may cause delays, and submitting well before deadline.
- Make the deadline some time other than 11:59PM. 4AM was suggested to allow for technology problems and/or to avoid load and/or regular update time.
- Advise students to use supported browsers. Firefox or Internet Explorer for PC, Firefox for Mac.
- Only one browser window or tab should be open to Oncourse at a time (two windows or tabs of same browser cause session data confusion).
- Consider giving a ‘Practice Assignment’ to get students used to the process of using the Assignments tool for submission.
- Consider setting up some assignment as ‘Text only’ or ‘Attachments Only’ to minimize student confusion and user error.

7 GETTING HELP
7.1 How can I figure out alleged Oncourse submission problems?
- This kind of troubleshooting can be time-consuming - GET HELP
- If you suspect system-wide problems, call TLTC at 855-7829 for our Wells Library center, or 855-3580 for our Ballantine center, or email TLTC at tltc@indiana.edu. If you run into a problem after hours you can call the UITS Support Center at 855-6789.
- Contact IUB Office of Student Ethics and Anti-Harassment Programs at 855-4463 or send an e-mail message to ethics@indiana.edu

7.2 How to I see the streamed presentation?
The Oncourse Ate My Homework! presentation is streamed for online viewing.