

Web Evaluation I

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This document provides you with additional information to help you with your first evaluation task. The document is divided into 3 sections: 1) Background information on Global Change (GC) course, 2) Information on CIT eDoc, an electronic portfolio system for Curriculum and Instructional Technology program, and 3) Evaluation task for Danish students.

Background information on GC course

The Global Change course at Iowa State University, Ames Iowa USA, is a senior-level undergraduate course in Environmental Science that seeks to provide students, particularly those from environmental science, agriculture, and engineering, with a global perspective on environmental problems. The course emphasizes the science elements of global environmental change but also engages students in discussion on the societal, ethical, and political implications of these changes.

The GC class of about 50 on-campus students who, by university tradition, meet 3 times per week (1100 to 1150 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) for 15 weeks beginning in mid January. For a variety of reasons (schedule conflicts, study abroad, etc.), a small number of these students take the course completely without face-to-face contact. One learning unit topic is covered during each class meeting. On the basis of student recommendations after the 1999 course, class meetings have been reduced from 3 per week to approximately 1 per week after the initial 2 weeks of the semester. Class meetings emphasize synthesizing discussion and current developments.

The web-based activities designed for students in the MIL m1k4 course will focus on the on-campus students.

Use of quizzes in GC to facilitate learning

A pedagogical feature widely used in the US tradition, although generally considered to have little if any learning value by Danish tradition, is the quiz. Students in GC are asked to read the learning unit and take a quiz consisting of 3 multiple choice questions before coming to the class meeting and before engaging in the online dialog. The quiz questions are designed to require the students to do more than simply search for a fact. Ideally, the question will require the student to make an interpretation of material presented, perform

a calculation that reveals a new concept beyond the information provided, compare information in the present unit with material from past units, etc. In short, the questions require the student to engage in critical thinking skills in order to arrive at the correct answer. Of course, it is not always easy to design good questions that engage all students in such critical thinking processes. The quiz also provides valuable incentive for students to read material before coming to class or engaging in web-based dialog.

Collaborative learning activities in GC

In the 2001 offering of the course, students were divided into groups (arbitrarily by the instructor) of 4 to 5 students each. Each group was assigned an online group portfolio in which they could engage in private discussion. For each learning unit, one group was assigned (by the instructor) to summarize, from the students' perspective, the important points of the topic as gleaned from online reading material, online discussion among all members of the class, and discussion on this topic in the face-to-face class meetings. Each group was expected to meet (either face-to-face or online) and construct a summary document that would subsequently be posted on the web for that particular unit. They could divide the responsibility for completing this task in any way they chose.

This activity was judged by the students to be a disaster! Most groups had one or more students who failed to participate, leaving one or two students to do all the work. Those groups that had full participation produced documents that more-or-less copied large segments verbatim from the online reading or dialog with almost no evidence of the use of critical thinking skills. Evidently, this activity was poorly designed and led to little or no collaboration and little or no learning. What went wrong?!

Information on CIT eDoc

CIT eDoc aims to help Ph.D. students in the Curriculum and Instructional Technology (CIT) program in the College of Education at ISU create annual portfolios during their doctoral program. The CIT eDoc has multiple functions:

- It is foremost a learning tool. It helps students select, compile, and evaluate evidence of their academic performance based on established program criteria. It also allows for collaborative learning through integrated discussion and research tools.
- It helps build vibrant communities of scholars and professionals. The “democratic” nature of the portfolio allows students, faculty members, and outside colleagues to collaborate equitably and respectfully to enhance each other's professional growth.
- Students can release their portfolio to select members of the ISU and non-ISU community. They can thus repurpose their eDocs for different audiences and purposes.

- It is a way to showcase and market one's work, .
- It is an effective and authentic way to assess student learning.
- It also serves as an effective tool for faculty to advise and guide students through their doctoral program

CIT eDoc is part of a larger project known as The eDoc Project. The eDoc Project involves the development of a campus-wide, web-based electronic portfolio system called “eDoc”. It allows students (undergraduate and graduate) to collect and present evidence demonstrating academic and professional competencies to faculty advisors, departments, and potential employers. It also allows students to interact and collaborate with their peers in a professional and scholarly manner.


The eDoc is integrated with myIowaState, which provides access to virtual ISU. MyIowaState is developed with uPortal open source technology that helps individual users create their own personal view of their university on the web. With myIowaState you can create your own customized view of ISU. It functions like other portals such as Yahoo, Netscape, etc., where you can “add” channels of information such as News, Horoscope, Sports, etc. to your portal.


Design of CIT eDoc

The CIT eDoc is designed to combine student assessment and a dynamic learning environment informed by social theory of learning. Its design includes criteria established in the CIT program to assess and guide Ph.D. students' work annually. You can get further information on the structure of CIT eDoc when you enter it under “Program Criteria” button.

Log into CIT eDoc

We have set up a demo version of CIT eDoc for you. Please follow the instructions below to log in and to start exploring CIT eDoc.

1. To log in, please go to <http://pws2.ait.iastate.edu:8080/uPortal/render.userLayoutRootNode.uP>. This takes you to the demo version of the myIowaState. Please read the information on the demo version. You may, if you wish, review tutorials on the uPortal at this location.
2. Log in using the instructions posted under “Login Instructions.” You can log in as a student or a faculty.
3. Click on Personal tab above the page. You will see the eDoc channel identifiable by the icon [].

4. Click on Create Portfolio []. Enter a name for your portfolio, select CIT Theme for Portfolio type, and click on Create.
5. Enter your CIT eDoc by clicking on the name of your portfolio and begin to explore.

Please remember, the CIT eDoc portfolio system is under construction. Many functions have still to be implemented. For example, the Comment function is not working properly. However, you are requested to provide feedback on its conceptual framework.

Evaluation tasks for the Danish students

It would be very nice, if we all during our collaboration could become a bit acquainted with each other (and put some faces on each other) on both side of the Atlantic. Therefore, Elsebeth and I will ask you, as an initial action when you "inhabit" your portfolio, to insert a photo and some biographical information on yourself in the portfolio feature, which is designed for this purpose. You will find a hot link with your name in the upper left corner of your portfolio
<http://www.meteor.iastate.edu/jportfolio/aalborg/index.jsp>. Press the link, and you will have access to insert your biographical information and photo - as well as continuously update it.

You are asked to play the role of an on-campus Global Change student and evaluate the usefulness of some of the web-based features of this course. More specifically, you are asked to complete the following tasks:

Web Evaluation I, part 1:

1. Access the Global Change Homepage and the list of learning units to see how the course is divided into three 5-week Blocks.
2. Access the Overview Learning Unit (1-1) to observe the general structure for each learning unit.
3. Access the unit on Evolution of the Atmosphere (Unit 1-2) and read the assigned material given under Summary Information. Take the quiz associated with this learning unit.
4. Access the discussion pages in your portfolio and post (as a reply to the thread "Web Evaluation I - Part 1" your views and opinions of the usefulness of on-line quizzes for enhancing learning.

5. Read the comments posted by other Danish students and post one comment or more on opinions and suggestions of another student.

Web Evaluation I, part 2:

Access your small group space in the portfolio and carry out the following task collaboratively in that space:

1. Consider the failed group activity of the Global Change course (i.e. "the collaborative learning activity"), as described above. Consider the design of the activity (as described) and discuss between you (in your small group space) the potential causes in terms of its pedagogical and technological design aspects. As inspiration for your small group work and discussion, access the eDoc portfolio prototype, and consider the design features of both the GC portfolio and the eDoc portfolio.
2. Produce in your small group specifications (and their rationale) for a group activity for the GC course (one A4 page), which you anticipate will enhance collaboration and knowledge building, and add quality to the learning process of the GC students. Your discussions may e.g. touch upon:
 - Pedagogy
 - Student identity
 - Student and teacher roles
 - Democracy
 - Authority
 - Ownership
 - Motivation
 - Inter-culturalism
 - Etc.
3. Present your design and its rationale as a plenum posting (denoting, in the title, the number of your group) in the Web Evaluation I, part 2 thread in our m1k4 shared dialogue space in the GC portfolio.
4. NOTE: The number of the group you belong to will be listed in the message of the day (MOTD) in the portfolio. You will see this message first thing when you log into your portfolio.

Aalborg University and Iowa State University