

Scenarios for Discussion: The Transparent Gradebook

Scenario 1 – To Err is Human; To Avoid the Err, Divine

Virginia “Pepper” Potts was completing a course with very few graded items beyond periodic assessments through Quiz Generator (QG). At the start of the term, the faculty had communicated she did not use the gradebook in CoursePlus but assured students a quick turnaround time in grading and returning any assignments. It did not take long for Pepper and her classmates to know the faculty held true on this promise. The quizzes were set up to both automatically display and email students their earned percentages once scoring was complete. Pepper received perfect scores on all of these assessments. Her midterm and final assignments were returned within a week via email; both of these were also scored very high. By Pepper’s calculations, she should be earning a solid A for the term. Yet when Pepper logged into SIS to see her final course average, she was surprised to see her earned grade was only a “C”. Pepper immediately reached out to the faculty, recounting the assignment grades she had earned as rationale for expecting an “A”. The faculty, who upon investigating the discrepancies, quickly realized she had been transferring the periodic QG assessment grades from CoursePlus into her Excel spreadsheet incorrectly after two students had withdrawn from the class. While CoursePlus had removed those students from the “Responses and Grades” list, the faculty had neglected to hide their rows in her spreadsheet. So when she was systematically copying and pasting the Final Score column from the QG export into her personalized Excel gradebook’s file, she was pasting only 24 scores into a spreadsheet listing 26 students.

SCENARIO 1 LESSONS:

Scenario 2 – The Missing Communication

Fiona Shrek has read the Course Syllabus, which included the breakdown of an overview of the methods of assessment: Participation 10%, Written Assignments 40%, Group Presentation 20%, and Final Project 30%. As the Course withdrawal deadline approaches, she has submitted four of the eight weekly written assignments through the course Drop Box with a fifth one due in a few days. The group presentation and final project aren’t due until after the withdrawal date so her course average thus far is solely based on these written assignments. To date, she has received only mediocre grades with no feedback for the first three assignments and is concerned that she will fare no better on the others. A simple new announcement is posted on the course site that reads, “The grades for last week’s assignment have been posted. Overall, the class is doing well. If there is a concern about your work, you will be contacted by the faculty or TA.” Fiona has not been contacted, but has decided to reach out to the TA directly to see if there is advice to bring up those mediocre grades. The TA responds that he

will contact the faculty with her question. A few days later, not hearing anything further, Fiona decides to withdraw from the course. By the time the faculty responds, Fiona is no longer on her roster.

SCENARIO 2 LESSONS:

Scenario 3 – The Announcement Sent Too Soon

Luke Cage has just completed a group presentation where a rubric helped set forth the expectations of quality. In addition to the group’s rubric scoring, faculty has indicated that the final grade for the presentation will take into account a peer assessment. Luke feels the group’s presentation was good and thinks there will be no problem with his peers’ assessment of his contribution, but is anxious none-the-less to see his grade. Over the weekend, an announcement is posted and email is sent by one of the TAs to the course that grades have been posted in the course Gradebook. Luke quickly logs into CoursePlus and goes to his gradebook but it only displays the assignment name and item weight but not his score. He contacts CTL Help to find out why he can’t see his grade. CTL Help, not knowing if the teaching team purposefully didn’t display Luke’s grade, recommends that Luke contact the course faculty. Upon hearing from Luke directly and several other students on the general topics Discussion Forum, the faculty goes to the gradebook only to realize the “visibility” icon for displaying grades is set to hidden for many of the students. The faculty decides to first contact the TAs, who each graded different groups, to make sure there is no reason why he shouldn’t display all the grades.

SCENARIO 3 LESSONS:

Scenario 4 – The Ill-timed Transparency

Clark Kal-El Kent, Fiona Shrek and Luke Cage are working together on a group project when Fiona gets an email notifying her a new grade and feedback has been posted to CoursePlus for the midterm assignment in their shared Course. Kal-El and Luke don’t receive a similar email but decide to log into CoursePlus to see if their grades have been posted, too. Kal-El immediately messages a few other classmates to see if they’ve received their grades yet. Some of them have already emailed CTL Help who has responded that not all grades have been posted yet and any further questions should be directed toward the teaching team. As Kal-El is messaging their peers, Fiona inadvertently shares her frustration in being marked down for not properly citing the sources she used in the essay part of the assignment. As it turns out, Luke hasn’t told Kal-El and Fiona that he was granted an extension for the

essay part of the midterm and hasn't yet submitted it. When Luke finalizes his essay later that day, he remembers to double-check his citations.

SCENARIO 4 LESSONS:

Scenario 5 – It's all in the Design

After hearing his Instructional Designer's suggestion and taking into account his TA's appreciation of the CoursePlus gradebook in the courses in which she has completed, Dr. Charles Xavier agrees to give it a try. As each assignment and assessment is graded, he navigates to the Gradebook setup and creates another graded item in the course. He's opted to set up the Gradebook with an overall grade based on Points, so each of the individual items is automatically also based on points.

Quite pleased with how easy the Gradebook is to use and seemingly diverting a good number of routine requests from impatient students about their progress, Dr. Xavier thinks the term is going quite well in terms of grading. The students, too, are pleased to see the easy-to-access historical record of their grades. By the end of the term, the faculty and TA have created and given feedback for every graded item inside the CoursePlus gradebook. As it turns out, Dr. Xavier's satisfaction quickly turns to discomfort when he receives queries after students receive their final course averages. Several students seemed confused and dismayed over the difference between the gradebook's Current Overall Grade calculation, which was based on points, and their true overall grade, based on percentage weights as specified in the "Methods of Assessment" section of the Course Syllabus. Dr. Xavier responds to the queries with a polite nod to the expectations set out at the start of the course, echoed by the Syllabus.

SCENARIO 5 LESSONS:
