Brightspace Early Adopters – Instructor Report

Overview & Methods

Upon the selection of Brightspace as Brock's new LMS, a campus-wide communication was sent out in an attempt to recruit early adopters for use of the system in the Spring/Summer 2022 term. The inclusion criteria for the Early Adopter Program was: a willingness to be flexible and open to system changes and configurations on the fly, no third-party integration support at the time of the program, and an interest in providing feedback both along the way and upon conclusion of the Early Adopters Program. With the guidance of those criterion we had 40 courses participate as Early Adopters from a variety of disciplines (MPHA, IASC, RECL, GERO, ADST, KINE, EDUC, ADED, VISA, PHIL, CLAS, EDBE, HLSC, AHSC). During the program we had two virtual meetings that brought together course instructors to collect informal feedback on Brightspace and share in some of the wins and challenges of the new system. Additionally, upon conclusion of each early adopter course (the durations greatly vary in the Spring/Summer term) an exit survey was sent out to both instructors and students through Brightspace Announcements and directly through email. The following report covers the results of the instructor exit survey.

Results & Analysis

This survey included 19 respondents between May 31st, 2022 and September 9th, 2022. Approximately 10 of 19 were complete responses, with 7 being most or somewhat complete. Two responses contained little or no information and should be considered incomplete.

1. Tool Utilization in Brightspace

Tools Utilized in Brightspace:	Number of Responses
1. Announcements	16
2. Assignments	15
2. Content	15
2. Grades	15
3. Classlist	10

The least used tool was checklist. The most consistently used tools were: Announcements, Assignments, Content, and Grades. These tools can be considered the core of Brightspace. Moderately used tools included: Classlist, Discussions, and Quizzes. Due to the use rates for Quizzes, Checklists, and Groups, this survey may not grasp what is to be expected from the general user experience. Perhaps as more courses begin using Brightspace, with a wider range of needs and user confidence, we will see an increase in these tools being used.

2-A. Can you tell us about your experience (what worked well and what could be better) with the Content tool?

Content Tool Experience	
What could be better?	What worked well?
- Content migration from Sakai - Making content visible at specific days/times - Ease of inserting a PDF - Organization of resources	Folder creation

Many instructors reported a positive experience with Brightspace's Content tool, enjoying the way folders and subfolders allowed for a new way to organize course content, as one user said, "*The content tool was easy to navigate. I created folders and uploaded all the documents I needed for students. As far as I know, students also found it easy to use.*" Multiple suggestions for improvement often centered around the difficulty of inserting a PDF onto the Content page, which we have now learned is as simple as dragging and dropping the file from your computer to the Content unit.

2-B. Did you use the New Content Experience or the Old Content Experience?

Content Experience	Choice Count
Old	3
New	5
No Idea	7
	15

Based on the feedback from the Early Adopters pilot phase of Brightspace the Content tool was configured so that courses can now only use the New Content Experience, but it is important to note that early adopters who utilized the old content experience did not appear to be pleased with their experience. Their responses to other components of the survey indicate frustration with this experience with one commenting "*I did not find Brightspace to be leaps and bounds better, in some cases, yes and then again no in other areas.*" These experiences and various other support issues helped us conclude that the New Content Experience was the best configuration for Brightspace at Brock.

3. Can you tell us about your experience (what worked well and what could be better) with the Assignments tool?

Assignments Tool Experience	
What could be better?	What worked well?
- Rubric availability between course shells - Assignment description for students - Accessibility: Pages files cannot be read - Accessibility: PowerPoint file with voiceover has to be downloaded to work	- Marking, easy to set up and use - Easy assignment view/access

Many instructors interacted with this tool, and some key comments made it clear that specific training for Assignments would be beneficial in allowing users to see all that Brightspace Assignments can do for courses. Multiple suggestions for improving accessibility were noted, but overall, instructors were pleased with the assignment view and ease of design, as one instructor said, *"The Assignment tool was great. I loved viewing the assignments in Brightspace as opposed to downloading each one individually."*

4. Can you tell us about your experience (what worked well and what could be better) with the Grades tool?

Grades Tool Experience	
What could be better?	What worked well?
- Automatic entry to Brock DB system - Better training - Student grade display	- Sakai similarity, easy to use - Easy to navigate, use, input, modify - Feedback - Grade breakdown

Overall, instructors had a positive experience with the new grades tool, with one instructor noting, *"The Grades tool was great. I liked the freedom to decide how it would be displayed to the students."* One instructor reported significant difficulties that they attributed to the changes between the Sakai Gradebook and Brightspace's Grades. Manual entry to the Brock DB system was another noted complaint, this is a feature that wasn't available for early adopters but will be moving forward. Instructors noted how the ability to save drafts of manually inputted grades would be of use, another feature that we now know how to utilize in Brightspace. Lastly, some confusion for students was reported when using weighted groups. As one instructor noted, *"There was some confusion for the students. They had quizzes worth a total of 25% (each worth 5%) and if they got perfect on one, they would be anxious and worried as to why on their end, they only had a 5%."* We now better understand the various Grades setups and how they appear to both the instructor and student. On a positive note, one instructor liked, *"how I could leave detailed comments for students. Also, I like how it gives the breakdown and total percentage of students' progress."*

5. Can you tell us about your experience (what worked well and what could be better) with the Quizzes tool?

Quizzes Tool Experience	
What could be better?	What worked well?
- Automated release of grades - Transfer from Sakai - Linking quizzes to grades - Publishing feedback - Less notifications	- Link to grades is easy - Easy to use, set up, create - Grading options, either by student, submission, or by question

The instructors that did use the Quizzes tool had mixed reviews. Instructors seemed to enjoy the ease of setting up Quizzes, however there was difficulty noted with the grades associated with quizzes –

either in their release to students, or in linking them to the gradebook. However, while reception was mixed, surprising and positive features came up. As one instructor wrote, *"The Quizzes tool was great! I love the option of grading quizzes by student submission or by question. By grading all of one question submitted, I was able to catch several instances of academic misconduct."*

6. Can you tell us about your experience (what worked well and what could be better) with the Class Progress tool?

There was not much engagement with this question, perhaps due to a lack of engagement with the tool itself. Those who used this tool found it useful in performing its function to monitor progress and gauge course content engagement. As one instructor wrote regarding the tool, *"Great way to monitor student progress."*

7. Can you comment on your experience navigating Brightspace (readability, wayfinding, orientation, understanding, number of clicks).

Experience Navigating Brightspace	
What could be better?	What worked well?
• Quizzes/assignments wasn't very intuitive • Terms/language (Sakai vs BS) used differently • Too many clicks • Too much scrolling • Email function unhelpful/disorienting • Confusing Navbar, too many options, not customizable	• Set up worked well • More intuitive to navigate

Most commented on the intuitive design of the LMS and the overall user experience/transition being enjoyable or at least straight forward. As well, the availability of various tools and modes to present materials/feedback and grading was appreciated. However, there were many suggestions for making Brightspace easier to navigate, from improving the intuitiveness of Quizzes and Assignments, to reducing the amount of scrolling and clicking required to navigate the LMS. Other concerns already have potential solutions. For example, providing users access to the crosswalk terms glossary can reduce user confusion with conflicting Sakai and Brightspace terms. As well, the Navbar, which has been noted as confusing, and not customizable, now allows for instructor customization. These adjustments, among others, can help further develop the user experience, *"Overall, my experience using Brightspace was rather positive. It took some getting used to given that it was a new system, but I think that overall, it is fairly user friendly."*

8. Something that I liked about Brightspace was:

Instructors had many positive things to say about Brightspace. Many complimented how Brightspace was user friendly, with many online instructional resources and intuitive functions. Many others made sure to note how Brightspace's clean look, Class Progress view, and grading structure were great for users. As one instructor noted, "*Really everything was good. I found it easy to navigate.*"

9. Something I found confusing about Brightspace was:

Many instructors agreed with the following sentence, "*Nothing really* [confusing about Brightspace]*, you eventually get through the work*." There were specific areas of suggestions concerning Brightspace personalization, and Quizzes and Assignments from multiple instructors. These suggestions ranged from more display modifications available to course instructors to improving visibility options for both Quizzes and Assignments. More vague areas of improvement were included, such as mentions of the email function, Grades tool, and "*much more confusing than Sakai*" surveys.

10-A. Were your expectations met with the Brightspace platform?
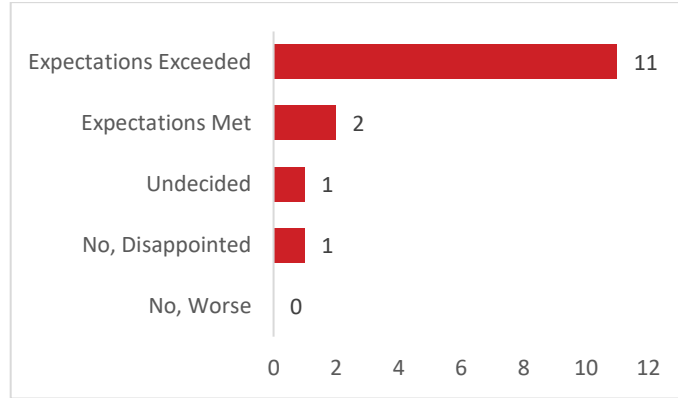
Rating	Count	Percentage
Expectations Exceeded	2	13.33
Expectations Met	11	73.33
Undecided	1	6.67
No, Disappointed	1	6.67
No, Worse	0	0.00

Majority of instructors (87%) had their expectations met in a positive way or exceeded. Only one instructor was a bit disappointed.

10-B. Explain how your expectations were or were not met.

Brightspace Expectations	
Met	Not Met
• Great support • Easy to navigate • Easy to integrate materials • Less clicking • Easy to design • Easy quiz/assignment set up	• Viewing student who did not submit assignment/quizzes/discussion was difficult • Couldn't open PDF assignments • File/resource management interface • Cumbersome Surveys feature

Many instructors' expectations regarding Brightspace were met, with many using the word, 'easy' to describe their experiences. Some were disappointed with specific aspects, such as filtering for students

who had not completed tasks, or how resource files were now organized. However, as one instructor candidly wrote, *"Brightspace is superior to Sakai in every way."*

11. Overall, I have found Brightspace easy to use.
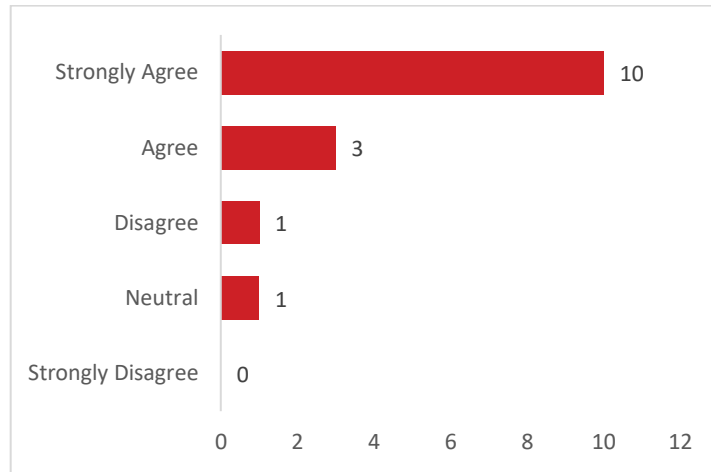
Rating	Count	Percentage
Strongly Agree	3	20.00
Agree	10	66.67
Neutral	1	6.67
Disagree	1	6.67
Strongly Disagree	0	0.00

The majority of respondents responded positively to ease of use, with 87% of instructors agreeing that Brightspace was easy to use. No instructors strongly disagreed with the sentiment, and only one disagreed.

12. In a few words, what do you think is the most important thing other instructors need to know about Brightspace?

Important Things Instructors Need to Know About Brightspace	
Remember….	- Enable assignment visibility - Google questions - Use internet guides - Be open minded - Explore the features - Terms from Sakai don't mean the same thing in Brightspace - Ask CPI to get working on what you need
Reduce workload by…	- Making multiple sections in a single course shell (using restrictions) - Start from scratch and just cut and paste the things you like from Sakai over to your site
Feature considerations…	- Time release features are really strong - Copy (duplication) feature is great

	• Easy, user friendly, not so different from Sakai

Most instructors commented on the user-friendly nature of Brightspace while also acknowledging that it does not parallel Sakai but exceeds it in a number of areas. Some discussed taking the time to explore and start building your course from scratch is easier than attempting to continuously draw parallels from a course in Sakai. Lastly, many point to the wide availability of online help resources including the support received from CPI during their courses. Overall instructors emphasized the friendly UI experience, building in time to explore, and the acceptance of a departure from Sakai, as one user wrote, *"Take your time getting to know the system. It is not as complicated as Sakai, and will eventually incorporate all the capabilities of the older platform, just ask CPI to get working on what you need!"*

About the Early Adopters Pilot

1. Did you use any of the Brightspace help articles or other online documentation?
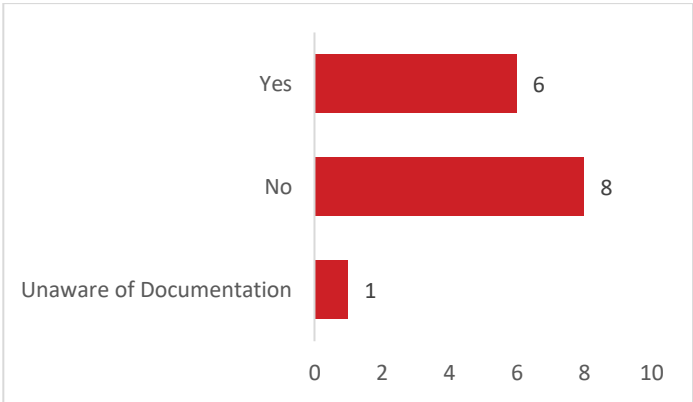
Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	6	40.00
No	8	53.33
Unaware of Documentation	1	6.67

Most instructors (53%) did not seek online documentation or Brightspace help documents, with one instructor completely unaware that there was online resource help to be found. 40% of instructors did use Brightspace help articles or other online documentation. One instructor wrote, "*There are many online resources for Brightspace that can help you during site development. Use them. It will save you time and frustration*."

2. If yes, did you find Brightspace's documentation helpful?
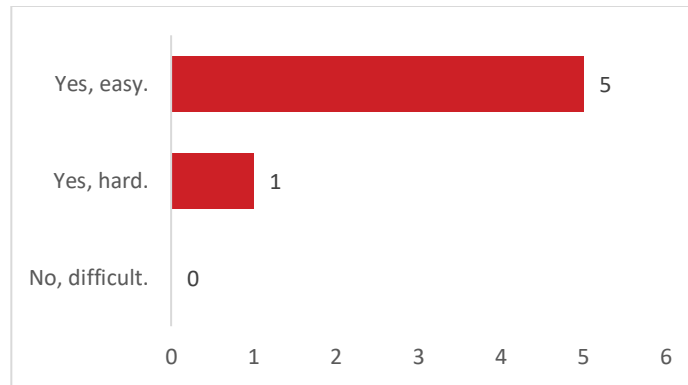
Rating	Count	Percentage
Yes, easy.	5	83.33
Yes, hard.	1	16.67
No, difficult.	0	0.00

Of the instructors who did use online help, all found Brightspace's documentation helpful, with most citing that the documentation was easy to find and easy to follow. Few found the documentation hard to find, and none found the documentation difficult to follow. Many echoed the following wish for, *"targeted video help series on how to do x in Brightspace."* Since the completion of this survey CPI has created a Brightspace at Brock site that utilizes a combination of D2L's resources and Brock-specific resources on the new LMS.

3. Is there any kind of training you wish you had received before becoming an Early Adopter of Brightspace?

Many instructors were okay with no training session held before becoming Early Adopters, with the consensus summed up by this statement, *"No, I felt supported with hands on learning opportunities."* Overall, many adopters felt there were plenty of training opportunities and support as they went on their Brightspace journey. Some users did suggest including one-to-one sessions for Early Adopters, and creating a short overview describing the conceptual organization of Brightspace, to familiarize new users, such as Brightspace's video seen here. Others suggested providing tutorials, and videos that would be easily and readily available at the beginning of use. CPI is now offering training sessions that can be booked here or directly on the ExperienceBU page.

4. Is there anything we could have done to support you better as an Early Adopter of Brightspace? Please describe.

Most instructors were pleased with the level of support by CPI, with specific team members even thanked in the comments. There were, however, suggestions to make use of Teams as a place to connect Early Adoptors and allow for discussion that would center around posting ideas, links to resources, solutions to problems, and generating an overall feeling of community support. The support suggestion also came in the form of regularly scheduled check-ins with CPI personnel, as, *"CPI - as usual - was great! Always a pleasure to work with you."*

5. When there are updates or changes made to Brock's LMS, Brightspace, how would you prefer to be informed of these?
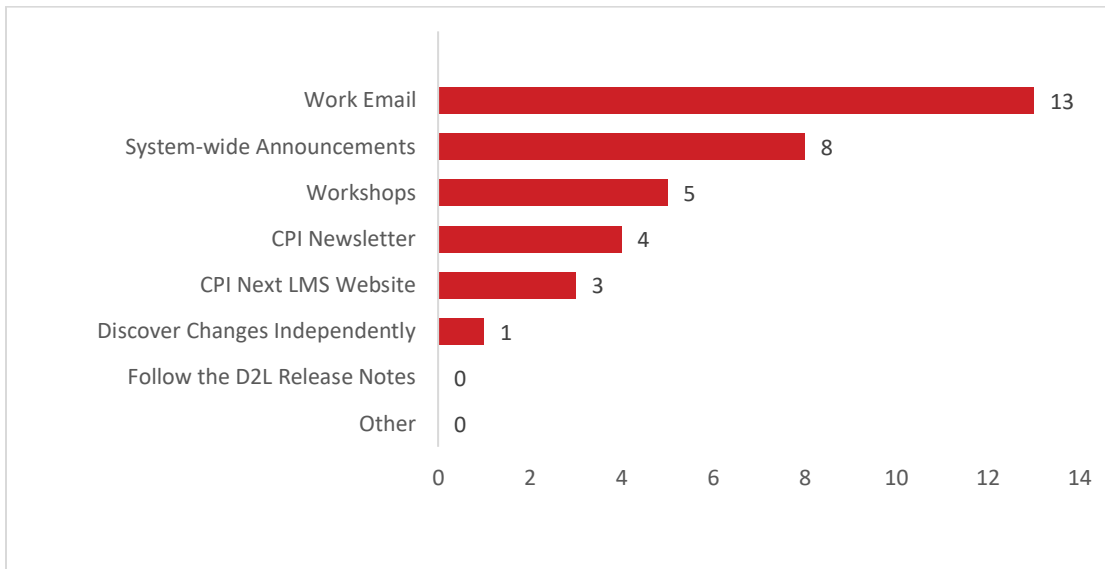
Rating	Count	Percentage
Work Email	13	38.24
System-wide Announcement on Brightspace	8	23.53
Workshops	5	14.71
CPI Newsletter	4	11.76
CPI Next LMS Website	3	8.82
Discover Changes Independently	1	2.94
Follow the D2L Community Release Notes	0	0.00
Other	0	0.00

Most respondents prefer to be informed via email or through system wide announcements on Brightspace. Some believe that corresponding workshops might be helpful. This could be useful when there are larger feature changes or significant changes to the UI. A multimodal approach to informing instructors about updates would be most effective ensuring the widest audience is reached as most prefer being actively informed.