

MARCH & APRIL 2022



[Greetings from ODL](#) [In the News](#)
[Canvas FYI](#) [Tools & Technology](#) [Odds & Ends](#)

GREETINGS FROM ODL

As the spring semester draws to a close, it's time for instructors to look toward the administration of course evaluations. Some students tend to postpone or neglect providing feedback on their evaluations. As an instructor, you're instrumental in encouraging your students to supply valued input on their courses. We provide tips in this issue to help you ensure your students make their voices heard.

If your spring finals involve Scantron forms, we're also available to assist with your scanning needs up to and during finals week. Read more below about when and where to drop off your scan jobs.

Engagement between you and your students is essential to the online learning environment. We highlight two tools that can help enhance this relationship. Increase your instructor presence and connect with your students by using the lightboard, which is especially useful for STEM classes. Packback – an inquiry-driven online discussion platform – can assist you in facilitating dialogue with your students.

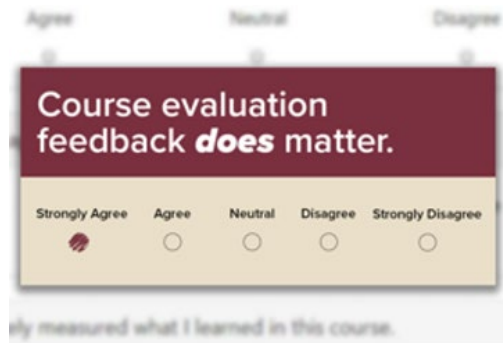
Scanning pages from a text and uploading them as a PDF to Canvas is a common way to provide course content. But did you know that these scanned documents are not accessible to students with disabilities? ODL reviews a tool that can help you make PDF documents available to students of all abilities.

Finally, the transition to New Quizzes continues, and summer is a great time to get ahead of the move by getting acquainted with the new version. As always, our technical support team stands ready to help. Call [850-644-8004](tel:850-644-8004), email canvas@fsu.edu, or [submit a ticket](#) for assistance.

Thank you for inspiring Florida State students with another season of teaching and learning. To discover how we can help with any of your online instruction or technology needs, [visit our website](#).

IN THE NEWS

Engage Students in the Evaluation Process



The spring course evaluation window opens April 8, and students will have two weeks to complete and submit their end-of-semester surveys.

Instructors play an important role in encouraging student participation in course evaluations. Students who choose to opt out of evaluations cite a variety of reasons: Many are concerned about survey anonymity while others believe their feedback doesn't matter. Research shows that response rates are higher when students know that you

value their feedback and will use it to improve courses and instruction.* To help you address common concerns and engage students in the evaluation process, the Office of Distance Learning offers helpful resources:

- **[Talking Points for Instructors](#)**. You can use these talking points to express the importance of feedback to your students and discuss their concerns about completing the survey.
- **[Feedback Matters Video for Students](#)**. In this video, an FSU student, instructor, and administrator discuss the importance of feedback. You can play the video in class or post the link in a Canvas course site announcement.
- **[Response Rate Tracker](#)**. To increase response rates without compromising student anonymity, consider giving the entire class extra credit if the response rate reaches a certain percentage (e.g. 70%). You can use the Watermark Course Evaluations & Surveys Response Rate Tracker to monitor feedback during the evaluation window. Learn more in our [support article](#).

If you have questions about course evaluations, visit the [Faculty Senate Teaching Evaluation Committee](#) webpage or odl.fsu.edu/evaluations. You may also email our Assessment & Testing team at odl-at@campus.fsu.edu or call [850-645-2730](tel:850-645-2730).

*Bennett, L., & Nair, C. S. (2010). A recipe for effective participation rates for web-based surveys. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(4), 357-365.

Scanning Services during Finals Week



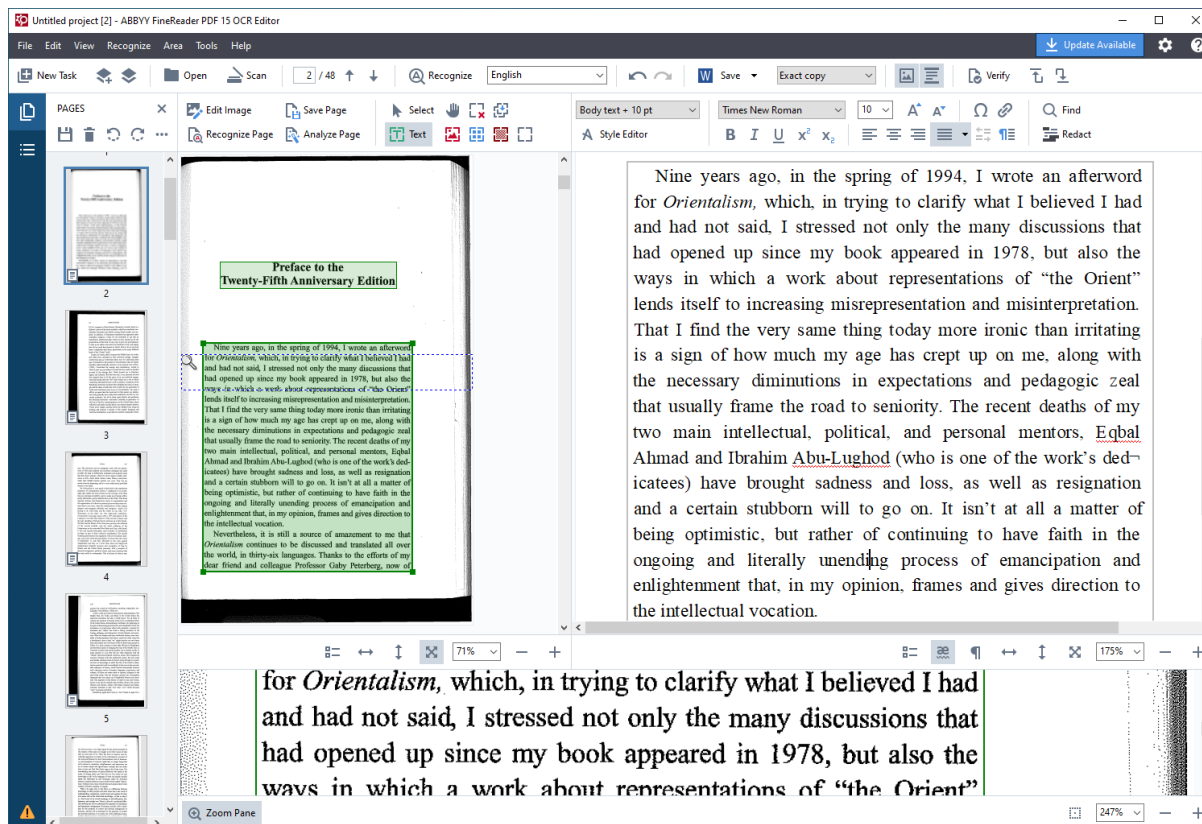
The FSU Testing Center will provide scanning services during the week of finals, April 25-29. Instructors (or their designated runners) can drop their exams at the front desk of our office (UCC-2200) Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm. Extended hours will be available on Friday, April 29, for exams administered after 2pm on this date. Designated parking in front of the Assessment & Testing courtyard will be available for up to 15 minutes and will be indicated with signage.

Testing Center staff expects to process most exams on the day they are dropped off or the next day. We request that instructors are available via phone or email in the event of questions with the

exam key or scanning request. After scanning has been completed, you will receive an email with a link to our online tracking system to view the results and securely download exam data from any computer. If you need to adjust your test keys and reprocess exam reports in the system without having to rescan the exam, please [refer to this article](#). While you are not required to retrieve your scanned forms, you are welcome to do so. Our staff will store the forms for one year before shredding.

For information on the test analyses and reports we offer, please see our [Form Scanning](#) page. If you have any general questions, please contact us at [850-644-3017](tel:850-644-3017) or odl-at-campus.fsu.edu.

Tool Converts Scanned PDFs to Text



Screen capture of ABBYY FineReader performing optical character recognition on a scanned PDF.

Ensuring that course content can be accessed easily by all students, regardless of ability, is important to the learning process. Scanned PDFs are among the most uploaded – yet least accessible – files in Canvas courses. Because a scan is a picture of a document, the text cannot be selected and read by assistive technology such as a screen reader. Additionally, scanned documents can be difficult for students to use because of poor scan quality and incorrectly rotated pages.

When considering options to make PDF documents accessible, the Office of Distance Learning recommends the program ABBYY FineReader. The program uses optical character recognition (OCR) to convert scanned PDFs into searchable and editable text. You can confirm document tags, which allow screen readers to interpret the text. The resulting OCR document can be used effectively by students, especially those with disabilities.

ABBYY FineReader provides several benefits in remediating PDF documents:

- Makes correcting OCR errors easy by highlighting potential issues
- Provides a powerful text editor
- Splits scans of multiple pages into individual pages automatically
- Removes unwanted background images and dark areas due to scanning
- Adjusts skewed pages and crops unnecessary white space
- Saves the results to a variety of formats, including PDF, Word, and PowerPoint

“Every semester, faculty and staff upload thousands of scanned PDFs to Canvas,” said ODL Instructional Development Faculty Dr. John L. Crow. “In Fall 2021, over 27,000 scanned PDFs were uploaded to Canvas. These documents become barriers to students who use them, especially students with visible and invisible disabilities. ABBYY FineReader was designed to make OCR accurate and easy and to produce documents that can be used by all students.”

ABBYY FineReader is available in SpearMart via CDW-G for around \$150. For more information about the tool, visit the [ABBYY FineReader](#) website.

Other Options

Before scanning course content, you can check with the FSU Libraries to see if they offer an online version of your textbook or resource. FSU faculty also have access to Adobe Acrobat Pro as part of the Adobe Creative Cloud suite. Although less robust than ABBYY FineReader, Acrobat Pro does provide scan-to-text conversion.

New Quizzes Transition Continues

Florida State University continues the transition from Classic Quizzes to New Quizzes. The current timeline allows the university to use Classic Quizzes through June 2024. Because New Quizzes is enabled for all Canvas course and development sites, the Office of Distance Learning encourages instructors to become familiar with the tool. Now is a good time to experiment with the features and prepare for potential use in the summer or fall semesters.

Resources & Support

Be on the lookout for New Quizzes webinars over the summer to learn more about the tool and the transition. Additional resources include our support articles:

- [Introducing New Quizzes](#)
- [Get to Know New Quizzes](#)
- [New Quizzes Transition Timeline](#)

Instructors can subscribe to updates or share their experiences by participating in Instructure’s [Quizzes Transition user group](#). For assistance with New Quizzes, please reach out to ODL technical support at [850-644-8004](tel:850-644-8004) or canvas@fsu.edu or [submit a ticket](#).

Discounted IT Certification Exams

The FSU Testing Center is partnering with [Certiport](#) to administer Microsoft, Adobe, and other IT certification exams at a discounted rate to participating departments. Instructors can consider incorporating these in-person, proctored exams into their course curriculum:

- [Microsoft Office Specialist](#) – This certification demonstrates mastery of Microsoft Office products and is ideal for office and IT professionals.
- [Adobe Certified Professional](#) – This certification demonstrates mastery of Adobe Creative Cloud software and essential knowledge for digital media careers.
- [Information Technology Specialist](#) – This certification targets IT candidates and includes topics like software development, networking and security, and coding.

The Testing Center supports [additional types of certifications](#), including Unity AR/VR content creation, digital literacy, project management, and business communication. For more information about any of these exams, email us at testing@fsu.edu or call [850-644-3017](tel:850-644-3017).

CANVAS FYI

Item Bank Filtering among New Features

Improved item bank filtering in New Quizzes is among the latest features listed in the March Canvas release notes. In New Quizzes item banks, the *All Banks* and *Banks Shared to Course* filters replace the *All My Banks* and *All My Course Banks* filters. This update clarifies the display of each item bank filter in New Quizzes. The *All Banks* filter shows item banks created by a user and item banks shared with the user. The *Banks Shared to Course* filter shows items banks that have been shared with the course. View this [short video](#) to learn more about the feature.

An update to the Equation Editor in the Rich Content Editor, which targeted an improved user experience across Canvas courses, has been delayed.

The monthly notes provide a list of features that will be included in an upcoming Canvas release. You can access the complete March release notes on the [Canvas Community](#) page. To be notified of updates, subscribe to the [Canvas release notes](#).

TOOLS & TECHNOLOGY

Packback Insights from FSU Faculty



Improving students' critical thinking and questioning skills is the goal of Packback, an inquiry-driven online discussion platform. Packback helps instructors facilitate discussions by scaling individual student feedback, automatically moderating discussion posts, and managing grading for any class size. The tool

allows instructors to spend more time engaging with students and less time supervising discussions.

Dr. David R. King, Higdon Professor of Management in the FSU College of Business, shares his experience of working with Packback and how the tool helps with student feedback, student engagement, and plagiarism checking:

“Packback provides better learning and assessment than multiple-choice exams, as student writing and participation on Packback improves over a semester. This derives from three underlying advantages of Packback:

First, it provides instant feedback to students on their post with an AI that covers the composition (grammar) and organization (length, headings) of posts, enabling instructors to focus on assessing content.

Second, the interface is .html (vs. text), so it supports richer content (graphics, videos) that facilitates engagement. Information on students’ scores from the AI are also used in a leaderboard, so students can easily see how their engagement compares to others. By reviewing other posts students form better answers to questions.

Finally, the Packback AI checks for plagiarism across and outside its platform. It moderates any post where plagiarism is detected and it sends a student an email, so they can correct their post and improve their writing independent of the instructor.”



Packback is available through a student-pay model. For specifics, email help@packback.co or visit the [Packback](https://packback.co) website. If you’re interested in using the tool, contact stephanie.soscia@packback.co.

Platform Streamlines Paper-based Grading

After an encouraging trial run of Gradescope with the FSU Department of Mathematics, the Office of Distance Learning and the College of Arts & Sciences are considering how the online grading platform can benefit additional groups on campus.



Gradescope helps to streamline the grading process for hybrid courses that use paper-based assessments and assignments. The software supports open-response questions such as text answers, drawings, charts, and formulas. As an instructor, you can upload a PDF of your exam

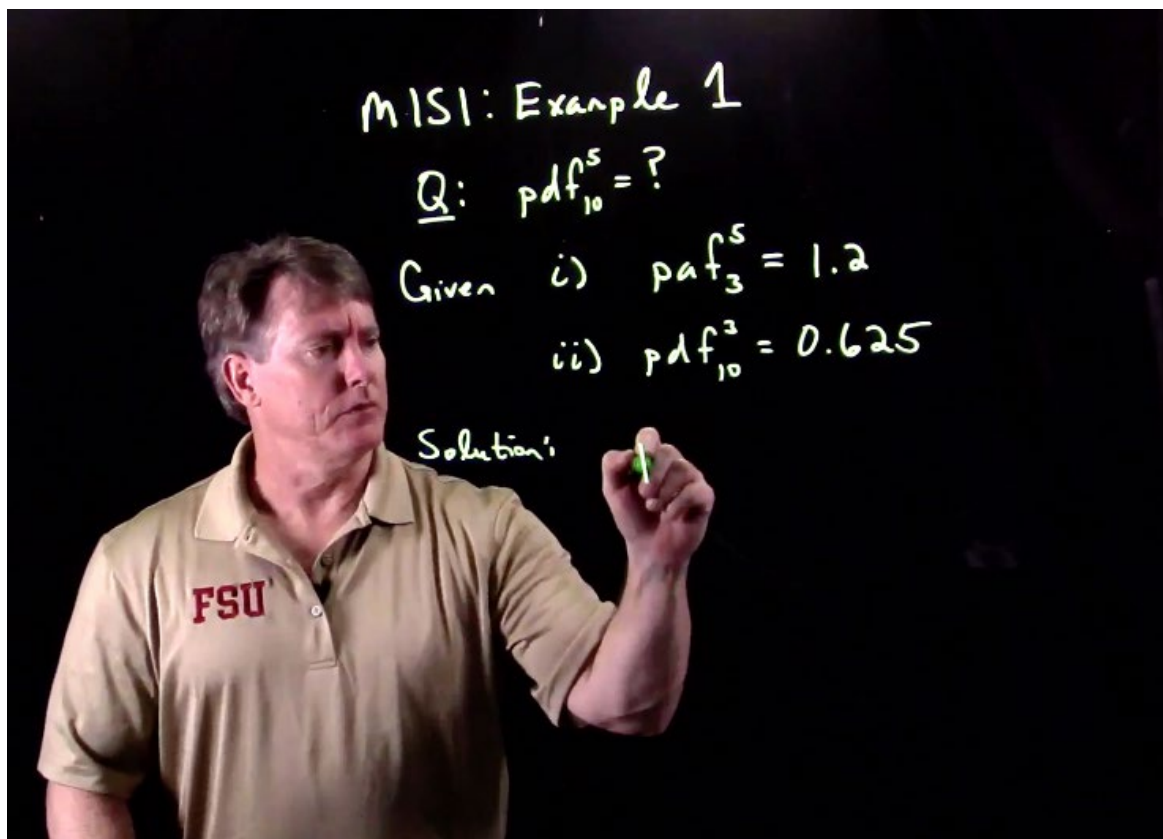
into Gradescope and map the questions and answers to the system. You can also set up a grading rubric to expedite grading and student feedback.

After the exam, you or your grader scan your students’ copies and upload the scanned PDF into Gradescope to grade entirely online. Students can also upload their scanned work. To save you time, Gradescope auto-grades multiple-choice questions and groups like answers using machine learning. Once the exams have been graded, you can upload the scores into Canvas. Point values and individual answers can be regraded afterward.

“Gradescope has been a great benefit to many of us in math, especially for large classes,” said Dr. Alec Kercheval, professor in the FSU Department of Mathematics. “It allows us to efficiently read and grade student solutions and apply consistent rubrics that can be modified on the fly. It also makes it easy to give detailed feedback efficiently. For our very large classes, it allows us to elevate our expectations because we can create more useful test questions beyond multiple choice.”

If you are interested in using Gradescope, contact Assistant Director of Program Support Scott Bickley at sbickley@fsu.edu. For more information about the application, visit the [Gradescope](https://gradescope.com) webpage.

Lightboard Illuminates Instructor Presence



Dr. Stephen Paris, teaching professor in the FSU Department of Mathematics, uses the lightboard to display course content.

The lightboard gives instructors the ability to draw diagrams, equations, or formulas while teaching. Like a see-through whiteboard, the lightboard enables you to teach and show concepts, enhancing instructor presence and promoting greater engagement in the online classroom. The tool is especially useful in engineering and mathematics courses. To coordinate use of the lightboard, contact Media Production Manager D.D. Garbarino at dgarbarino@fsu.edu. You can learn more about the tool in our [support article](#).

Spring Training for Annotation Tool



[Hypothesis](#) is a social annotation tool available for use in Canvas. With Hypothesis, your students can annotate online course readings and webpages, encouraging them to connect and engage with the content and their peers. The tool is intended to help with student engagement, reading comprehension, and the development of critical thinking skills.

To provide you with strategies to implement annotation in your courses, Hypothesis offers 30-minute online workshops in April:

- **Show-and-tell participatory workshop (April 12).** Leverage the features of Hypothesis more fully. Instructors can share examples of effective annotation assignments.

- **Using multimedia and tags in annotations (April 19).** Learn how to add multimedia and tags in annotations to increase engagement.
- **Creative ways to use social annotation in your courses (April 26).** Review a variety of discussion protocols and active-learning strategies.

You can [register for these sessions](#) on the Hypothesis workshops page. For recordings of previous workshops, visit the [Hypothesis YouTube channel](#). For more information on the tool, visit our [support article](#).

ODDS & ENDS

Conferences & Events

- [OLC Innovate: Education Reimagined](#), April 11-14, 2022, Dallas, TX. Onsite conference presented by Online Learning Consortium and MERLOT.
- [UPCEA Annual Conference](#), April 11-14, 2022, Orlando, FL. In-person event presented by the University and Professional Continuing Education Association.
- [Global Accessibility Awareness Day](#), May 19, 2022. The purpose of this day is to focus on digital access and inclusion.
- [ISTE Live 22](#), June 26-29, 2022, New Orleans, LA. In-person and virtual options presented by the International Society for Technology in Education. Early registration is now open.
- [U.S. Distance Learning Association National Conference](#), July 18-21, 2022, Nashville, TN. Registration is now open. Virtual access is also available.

Office of Distance Learning
University Center C-3500, 296 Champions Way, Tallahassee, FL 32306
General: 850.644.4635 | Newsletter Email: khawkins@campus.fsu.edu
Tech Support: 850.644.8004 | canvas@fsu.edu
[ODL website](#) | [Student website](#) | [Canvas Support Center](#)
[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)

Copyright © 2022 FSU Office of Distance Learning. All rights reserved.