

CETL Weekly Teaching Tips presents

Progress Report Journals

At the midterm mark, students might get an email from their institution if they aren't doing well in a course. Instructors likely have an idea of who is on the path to succeed and who is likely not going to pass their course. Assigning a Progress Report Journal to students enables more direct and effective reflection and action.



Progress Report

What is your course total?
Does this meet your expectations?
What goals do you have for the course?
Do you have any questions or feedback?

SUBMIT

For details on journal directions, purpose, and outcomes, visit
oakland.edu/teachingtips

Provided by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Oakland University.

Progress Report Journals

Midterm evaluations bring a host of institutional measures to reach out to under-achieving students, such as grade reports. What might make the most difference to students' success in the course is to enable them to assess their own performance in the class, set goals, and provide questions and feedback to the instructor accordingly. I do this through a "Progress Report" online journal assignment. Since I make all grades available on Moodle, our learning management system, students can see their grades but often don't check or acknowledge that these grades are available to them (since many professors will not provide these grades automatically).

Therefore, about a third of the way through the semester, students are required to complete a Progress Report journal in which they:

- Report their overall grade in the course.
- Report their attendance record (since attendance is required in our course).
- Reflect on their performance, whether it meets their expectations.
- Provide goals for the rest of the course (often in the form of a GPA).
- Provide feedback and questions for me on the class in general.

Students take anywhere from 50 to 400 words to complete this journal, based on their needs. While we may consider ourselves open to student feedback, students often interpret this as their first opportunity to reflect on the course and ask questions. Some will provide context for their content knowledge and other school responsibilities, which is often very enlightening for me. Students generally express gratitude at the official opportunity to assess their progress in the course (even more so when they are doing poorly) because it is early enough in the semester to make progress. Even with brief feedback on the instructor's part, they see it the professor reaching out and caring about individual student.

Even in the case of students who are negative and critical, it provides an opportunity for the instructor to show understanding and explain course procedure, more effectively shutting down grumblings and increasing course satisfaction. In some cases, it also provides an opportunity to improve our courses and correct mistakes.

I implement this in a writing intensive course that is capped at 22 students, so courses with more than 50 students may want to offer this as extra credit to control review flow. Even for classes with around 50 students, this activity would not take long for the tremendous benefit it provides to the class dynamic, student success, and your end-of-the-semester evaluations.

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