



18th Annual City Tech
Poster Session

The Construction of an Online Learning Diagnostic Test

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Abstract

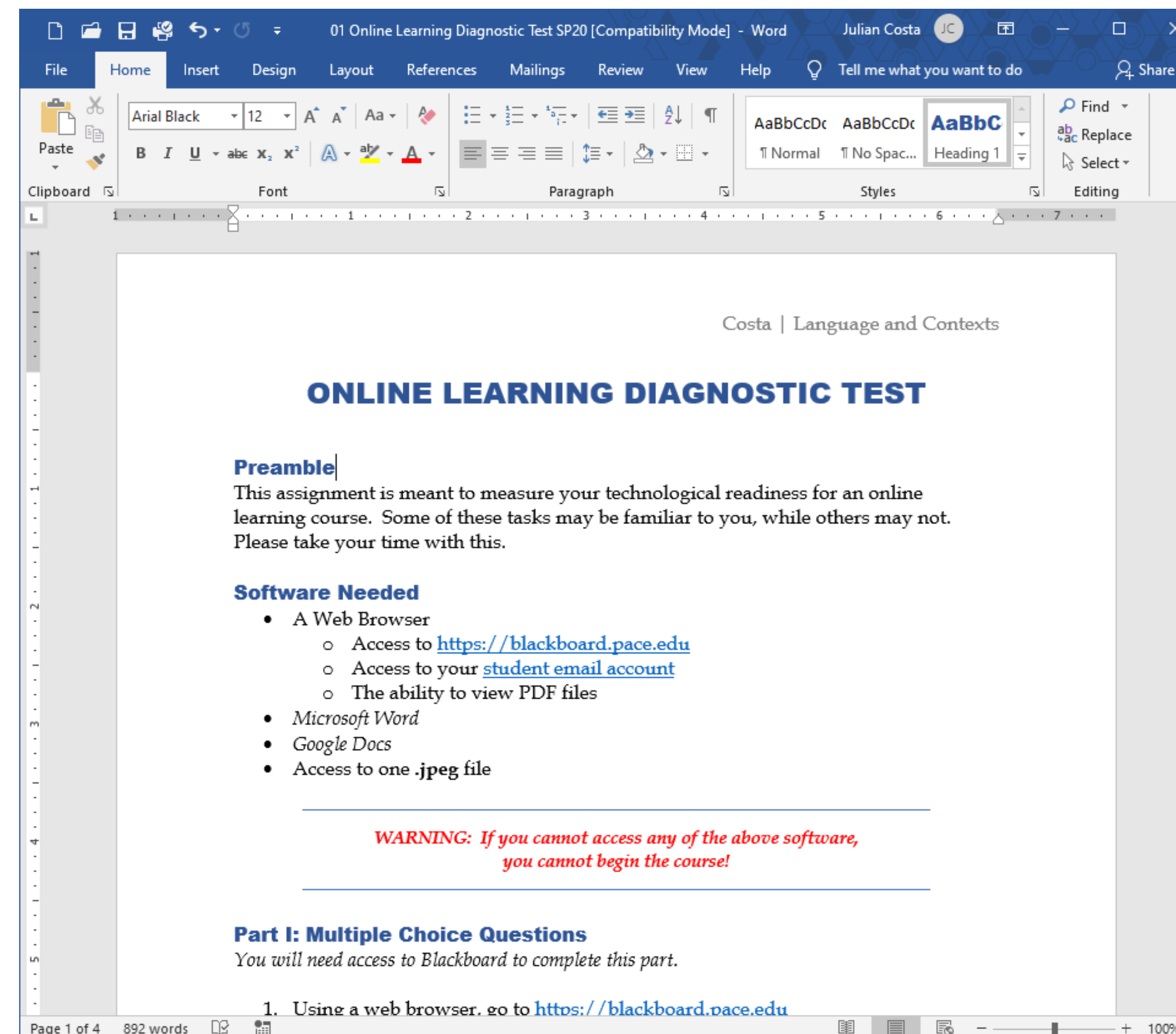
Over the past twenty years, online learning has gained immense popularity at colleges across the globe. As technology has become more sophisticated, the amount of technology being integrated into these courses has increased. In many cases, students are expected to navigate more than one learning management system, use productivity tools, and create multimedia, and it is usually assumed that the students already know how to perform all of these tasks. The reality is that not all students are familiar with online learning tools prior to enrolling in an online course, and therefore, much time and energy is lost at the beginning of the semester to troubleshooting. In an effort to familiarize students with the tools, terminology, and processes needed to navigate their online course, a task-oriented assessment was designed that provided students with an “orientation” to the learning management system, basic document formatting, email, and file management.

Structure

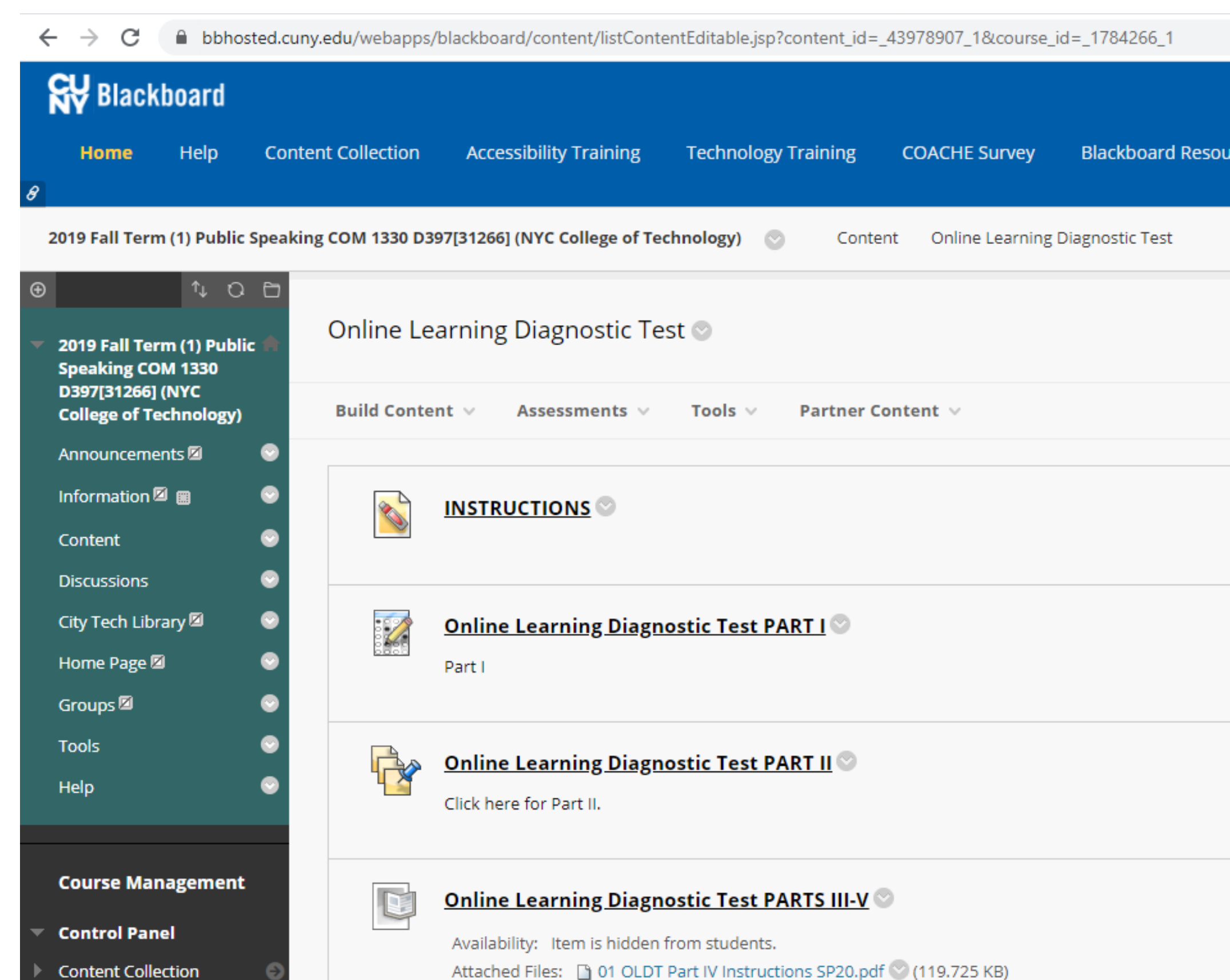
The Online Learning Diagnostic Test was set up as follows:

- 1 **The Syllabus Quiz: Delivered through the LMS**
- 2 **The Discussion Forum**
- 3 **Downloading Files**
- 4 **Word Processing: Document Formatting Tutorial**
- 5 **Uploading Files**
- 6 **Use of Email**

Delivery



Instructions were provided in a Microsoft Word document that made use of headings to allow for visual hierarchy and maximal accessibility. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) encourages such formatting to permit those using screen readers and text-to-speech applications to be able to fully and properly receive the information.



Lessons Learned

Upon administering this assessment in two of my courses, I learned a few things myself. Some of the lessons I’ve learned are:

Some students will try to “excuse” themselves from the project

I did get one or two messages from students telling me to “rest assured” that they know how to perform these tasks.

File Management skills cannot be assumed

On one occasion, I had to assist a student in the process of uploading a .DOCX file to Blackboard. Further, many students do not know the difference between a .DOCX, .PDF, or .JPEG file types.

Screenshots are the modus operandi

Students feel that a screenshot can suffice as a universally-acceptable method of submitting information. While it does provide verification of information, screenshots are photos—not documents.

Discussion

The construction and assessment of the instrument presented here probably seems like a colossal task. It actually isn’t as bad as you think.

Many instructors already require various “getting to know you” activities as part of an online course—such as students introducing themselves on the discussion forum; sending an introductory email; and a syllabus quiz.

By working some “technical training” into the mix, and perhaps allotting some points to the experience, it will motivate students to embrace the online learning format as well as develop practical computing skills that will benefit them in your course and beyond.

We cannot expect students to possess technological skills unless we are willing to teach these skills to them!