

Instructional Technology Services Factsheet

Your Resource for Technology-Enhanced Instruction at Texas A&M University



Empowering Innovative Education

Instructional Technology Services (ITS) provides professional development opportunities, administers eLearning resources, and empowers instructors to use best practices in higher education to enhance student learning through the use of technology at Texas A&M University.

- **No-cost training with hands-on instruction**
- **One-on-one assistance at either ITS or instructor offices**
- **Personal consultations in workrooms with equipment for instructors and staff to use**
- **Technical support for the Texas A&M eLearning System (Blackboard Vista) and other instructional software and devices**
- **Customized training for entire departments and course orientations for students**

ITS provides opportunities for faculty members, teaching assistants, and staff to learn how to use instructional technology in their courses, in their research, and in their departments. All of our services are provided at no cost to Texas A&M instructors and staff.

As a component of the Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Information Technology, ITS is responsible for maintaining, administering, and developing university-wide systems and services to support the eLearning infrastructure at Texas A&M. These responsibilities range from supporting the Texas A&M eLearning System (powered by Blackboard Vista) to distributing software resources, such as Turnitin and Respondus.

We conduct a full range of training and support that complements various learning styles and fosters effective course design. Training topics include: eLearning (Blackboard Vista learning management system), blogs, calibrated peer review, online assessments, podcasting/screencasting, plagiarism-detection services, student response systems ("clickers"), technology-enhanced classrooms, 3D virtual worlds, webconferencing, web-based presentations, wikis, and other instructional design and multimedia software and technology concepts.

ITS has a state-of-the-art classroom—complete with 18 workstations, wireless access, and audio/visual devices for videoconferencing—available for hands-on group training sessions. A 10-seat conference room can be reserved for meetings and teleconferences.

Individual workrooms are also available for video editing, audio recording, and image scanning. And to better serve clients on west campus, we have expanded consulting and support services by opening an additional satellite office and training classroom in Room 180A of the Medical Sciences Library.

In addition, we provide information about other types of technology resources available on campus and serve the Texas A&M teaching community as a campus facilitator and advocate of eLearning initiatives. We conduct our annual Instructional Technology Showcase during the fall semester; coordinate our annual Teaching with Technology Conference during the spring semester; host frequent user group meetings; and publish our *Teaching & Technology* newsletter every semester.

We welcome your questions and ideas about how to best integrate instructional technology in your course. We encourage you to make a consultation appointment to ensure that necessary resources, materials, and personnel are available for your assistance when you arrive.



Instructional Technology Services

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Supported Software & Devices

Providing Training and Assistance for Instructional Technology at Texas A&M University

eLearning (Blackboard Vista)

The Texas A&M eLearning System, powered by Blackboard Vista (formerly WebCT Vista), is the university-wide learning management system for uploading syllabi, managing grades, and teaching courses in either a hybrid format or completely online. eLearning is a secure, enterprise-level system and features: grade books, assignments, quizzes and surveys, chat rooms, discussion forums, blogs and journals, email, and content management tools.

Audacity

Audacity is a free, cross-platform audio recorder and sound editor. Use Audacity to record lessons, lectures, review sessions, or guest speakers and distribute them as MP3 podcasts. We also provide information, support, and training for **MediaMatrix** and **iTunes U**, which are online campus resources for distributing educational audio/visual content.

Blogs @ TAMU

Blogs @ TAMU is a WordPress-powered system that provides no-cost blogs (short for "weblogs") to Texas A&M students, faculty, and staff. Blogs are online journals for posting regularly updated reflective writing and various types of multimedia. Blogs also feature commenting options and basic tools for authoring a small website.

Calibrated Peer Review

Calibrated Peer Review (CPR) is an online peer review system in which students submit writing assignments, learn to review their peers' submissions, and then view their own peer-critiqued assignment results based on a rubric the instructor provides. The CPR system "calibrates" student grades as students iteratively turn in refined versions. CPR is an innovative process for students to critique their own work and determine if their writing is ready to submit.

Camtasia & Snagit

Camtasia records onscreen actions and enables you to add audio annotations and various types of visual callouts. You can save the resulting screencast (video) in various formats and sizes for online delivery to students. **Snagit** takes screenshots of anything you see on your computer screen—your entire desktop, windows, regions, and even long, scrolling pages. You can edit, label, and export the screen captures to use in other applications.

Centra Webconferencing System

Centra allows you to share presentations, websites, and applications; present quizzes and surveys; and use breakout rooms in a real-time webconferencing system. Use Centra to present to small or large classes and interact with students with voice over IP, video, and text. Also record and archive your presentations for later viewing.

Impatica for PowerPoint

Impatica converts PowerPoint files into a compressed format that is optimized for online viewing. You can retain original PowerPoint text, graphics, transitions, and narrations in your exported slideshows, all while protecting your intellectual content. Impatica files are typically 95% smaller than native PowerPoint files and can be easily uploaded to a website or to eLearning.

Respondus, StudyMate & LockDown Browser

Respondus enables you to create and manage exams that you can print on paper or publish directly to eLearning. You can either create exams offline or import existing exams from word processor files. **StudyMate** lets you create ten Flash-based activities and games using three simple templates. Activities can be uploaded to a website or published directly to eLearning. **LockDown Browser** significantly reduces the potential for students to find outside answers on the Internet or via instant messaging while taking a computer-based assessment. The browser is integrated with eLearning via a PowerLink; you can require that students use LockDown Browser when you create assessments in eLearning by simply selecting a checkbox in the Assessments tool.

Second Life Virtual World

Second Life, a three-dimensional (3D) virtual world, is an emerging online teaching environment. Second Life runs on a free client in which users interact with each other using avatars, or on-screen characters. Chat and multimedia features are also available to facilitate participation in individual and group activities. You can explore and build unique, "in world" virtual properties and points-of-interest that are only limited to your imagination.

SMART Boards, Sympodiums & AirLiner Wireless Tablets

SMART Boards, Sympodiums, and AirLiner Wireless Tablets are instructional devices installed in numerous technology-enhanced classrooms throughout campus. You can create presentations before class begins, virtually "write" on and enhance your presentations during class, and even record class sessions. We can demonstrate to you how to operate a customized touchscreen computer and control the classroom projector, DVD/VCR player, and wall-mounted video and document cameras to create dynamic and engaging presentations.

Student Response Systems ("Clickers")

eInstruction Classroom Performance Systems, or "clickers," are instructional devices that can assist you in engaging students in classroom topics and help you determine if they understand the subject matter you are teaching. eInstruction is the standardized vendor for Texas A&M and integrates with eLearning to record assessment results to a Grade Book.

Turnitin Plagiarism-Detection Service

Turnitin is an online database system designed to help instructors detect plagiarism in written assignments through word matching. Students can submit papers directly from eLearning via a PowerLink, or you have the option of using the Turnitin.com web-based service.

Wikis @ TAMU

Wikis @ TAMU is a Confluence-powered, multi-user website system in which registered users can contextually add content or edit existing items. Wikis introduce a collaborative and social method for developing up-to-date information and online file repositories. Wikis @ TAMU connects with eLearning via a PowerLink.