

Serves: Instructors

Use intelligent agents to monitor your courses for activities that comply with parameters you establish before or during your courses. Once a user fulfills a condition or meets a requirement, Learning Environment sends them a pre-determined email that you set up. You can establish parameters for a wide range of activities that relate to login and course behavior. Intelligent agents can be beneficial for instructors of both large and small classes. Using intelligent agents to send out course-related emails can reduce your workload, allowing you to focus more attention on conducting successful courses by increasing student engagement and knowledge of course requirements.

Benefits:

- Instructors can send personalized messages to students, enhancing their engagement in the course and encouraging increased participation.
- Ability to send pre-determined, content-specific messages at multiple points in the course.
- Automated messages can save instructors time, allowing them to divert more energy to other areas of course development.
- Students receive feedback, notifications, and reminders in a timely manner.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



Requires your institution to have Learning Environment 10.1

SECTIONS IN THIS RECIPE



Using intelligent agents in your course

Creating an intelligent agent

When are intelligent agents appropriate?



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USING INTELLIGENT AGENTS IN YOUR COURSE

In Learning Environment, you can use intelligent agents to track your students' course performance based on one of three different agent criteria:

- Login activity
- Course activity
- Release conditions

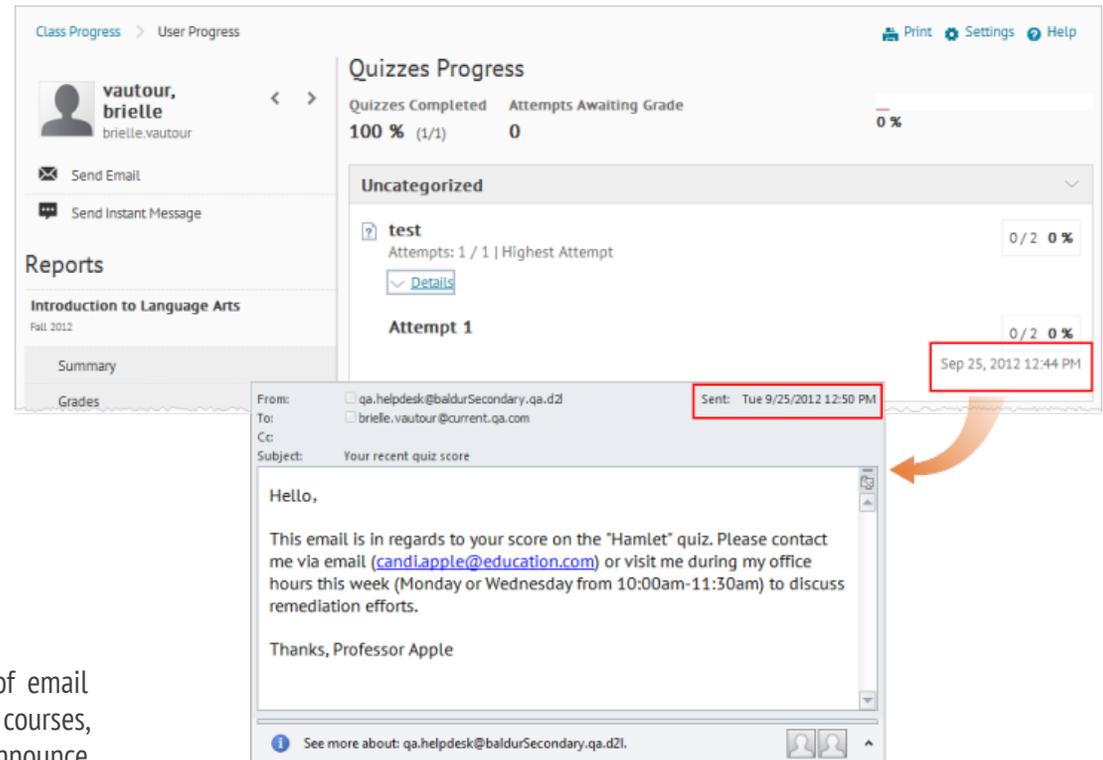
Based on the criteria you select, you can send pre-determined emails to your students with targeted messages. Having your email messages set up in advance saves you time and effort, as you can copy them to multiple courses and personalize them using replace strings. Scheduling your emails to run automatically when students meet certain course criteria can alleviate some of the day-to-day hassle of running courses, allowing you to focus more of your energy on developing your content, interacting with students, and ensuring your students' success.

You can use intelligent agents to send your students many different types of email messages. Intelligent agents are especially useful if you are running strictly online courses, as they enable you to send out important information that you would normally announce in class. The following are some examples of intelligent agents you can use to make your course run smoother:

- An introductory email at the beginning of the course detailing first steps and important course information, including how to contact the instructor and any teaching assistants with questions and concerns.
- An email acknowledging the receipt of a submission to Dropbox, detailing the marking process, and listing an expected grades release date.

Tip: Using this agent can help prevent an influx of student emails inquiring if you have received their assignments and asking when they will get their marks back.

- An announcement letting students know that grades are posted for an assignment.



The screenshot displays a user progress page for 'vautour, brielle'. The 'Quizzes Progress' section shows '100%' completion for '1/1' quizzes and '0' attempts awaiting grade. A quiz titled 'test' is listed with '0/2 0%' score. An email notification is overlaid on the page, dated 'Tue 9/25/2012 12:50 PM', with the subject 'Your recent quiz score'. The email content reads: 'Hello, This email is in regards to your score on the "Hamlet" quiz. Please contact me via email (candi.apple@education.com) or visit me during my office hours this week (Monday or Wednesday from 10:00am-11:30am) to discuss remediation efforts. Thanks, Professor Apple'.

When an intelligent agent criteria is fulfilled, the user receives an instant email

- An outreach email letting a particular student know you have concerns about their course progress and explaining how to contact you to discuss remediation efforts.
- Reminder emails before quiz and assignment due dates, prompting students that have yet to submit the quiz or complete the assignment.
- A congratulatory email when a student achieves a high grade on a quiz or assignment.
- An email informing students when they fulfill a release condition (for example, of viewing an entire module's content) and what this opens up for them (for example, a bonus quiz).

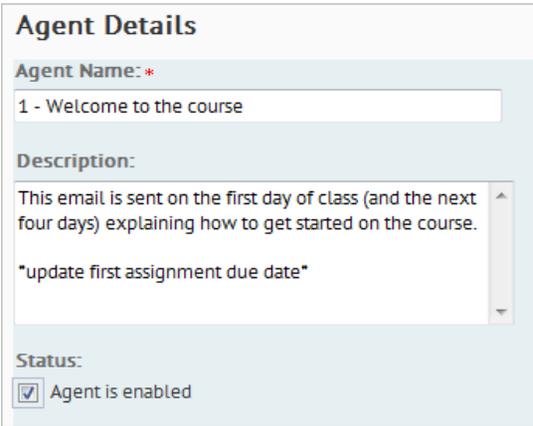
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CREATING AN INTELLIGENT AGENT

There are many things you should consider when setting up intelligent agents for your course in order to get the most benefit from using the tool. Intelligent agents are most useful when you have carefully considered how you are organizing and presenting them in a course. Consider the following tips and tricks:

Use a standard naming convention to keep the order and purpose of each agent clear. For example, name your welcome agent "1 - Welcome" to have this agent display first in your agent list.

Tip: Use the description as a reminder of what you need to adjust in the agent for each offering (for example, any dates, names of TAs, or other information that is liable to change).

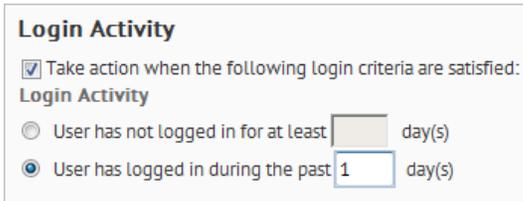


Agent Details

Agent Name: *
1 - Welcome to the course

Description:
This email is sent on the first day of class (and the next four days) explaining how to get started on the course.
update first assignment due date

Status:
 Agent is enabled



Login Activity

Take action when the following login criteria are satisfied:

Login Activity

User has not logged in for at least day(s)

User has logged in during the past day(s)

Determine what criteria is most appropriate for the agent you want to run. For example, if you want to monitor student engagement, login activity might be the appropriate criteria choice, whereas if you want to monitor student participation, the course activity criteria might be a better choice.

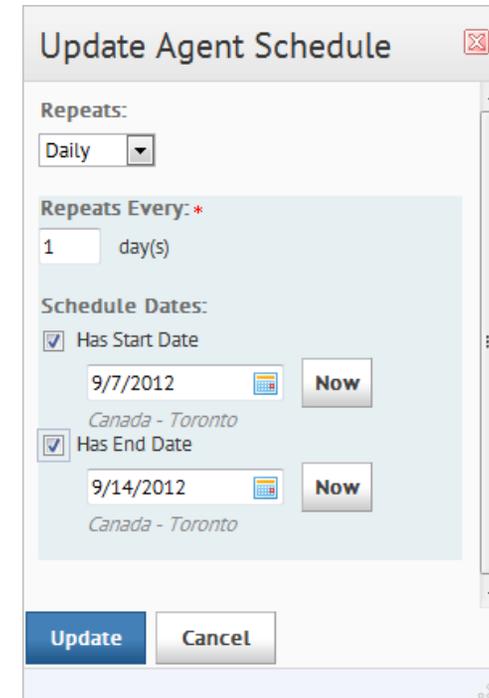
Action Repetition:

- Take action only the first time the agent's criteria are satisfied for a user
- Take action every time the agent is evaluated and the agent's criteria are satisfied for a user

Which action repetition should I use?

Decide how often your agent needs to repeat - once? Or more than once?

Tip: It may be beneficial to repeat certain agents. For example, if it's the end of the semester, but many of your students have yet to complete their course evaluation surveys, you might send them a reminder email every time they log into the system during the last week of the course.



Update Agent Schedule

Repeats:
Daily

Repeats Every: *
1 day(s)

Schedule Dates:

Has Start Date
9/7/2012 Now
Canada - Toronto

Has End Date
9/14/2012 Now
Canada - Toronto

Update **Cancel**

Set a schedule for your agent, including any repetition patterns or necessary start and end dates.

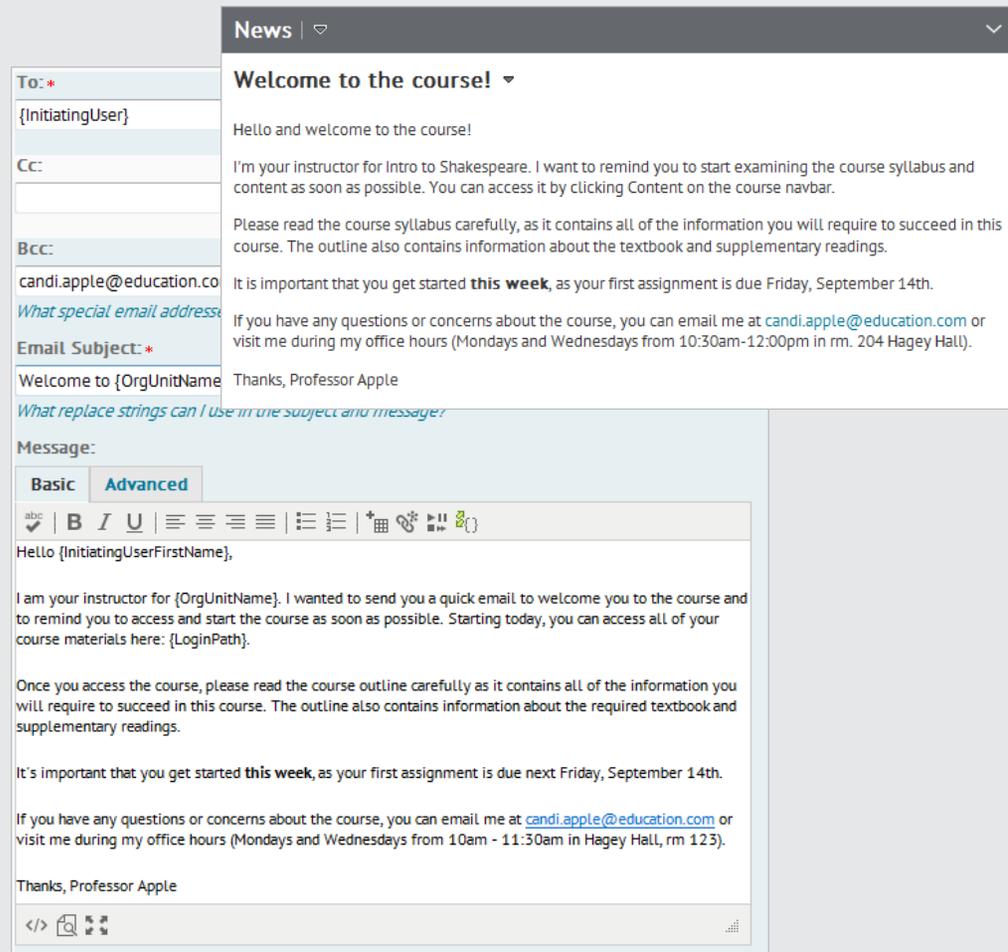
Continuing the example of the course evaluation survey, you would want to schedule the agent to end on the last class day of the course, so that any student who logs in during the examination period does not receive any unnecessary emails.



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CREATING AN INTELLIGENT AGENT CONTINUED...

Consider using replace strings when formulating your email. This will make your email more personal to individual students and will eliminate the need to edit certain aspects of the message when using it in more than one course. For example, use the replace string {OrgUnitName} instead of the actual course name in the email.



The screenshot shows two parts of a software interface. The top part is a 'News' posting window with the title 'Welcome to the course!' and the following text: 'Hello and welcome to the course! I'm your instructor for Intro to Shakespeare. I want to remind you to start examining the course syllabus and content as soon as possible. You can access it by clicking Content on the course navbar. Please read the course syllabus carefully, as it contains all of the information you will require to succeed in this course. The outline also contains information about the textbook and supplementary readings. It is important that you get started **this week**, as your first assignment is due Friday, September 14th. If you have any questions or concerns about the course, you can email me at candi.apple@education.com or visit me during my office hours (Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:30am-12:00pm in rm. 204 Hagey Hall). Thanks, Professor Apple'. The bottom part is an email draft window with a subject line 'Welcome to {OrgUnitName}' and a body that reads: 'Hello {InitiatingUserFirstName}, I am your instructor for {OrgUnitName}. I wanted to send you a quick email to welcome you to the course and to remind you to access and start the course as soon as possible. Starting today, you can access all of your course materials here: {LoginPath}. Once you access the course, please read the course outline carefully as it contains all of the information you will require to succeed in this course. The outline also contains information about the required textbook and supplementary readings. It's important that you get started **this week**, as your first assignment is due next Friday, September 14th. If you have any questions or concerns about the course, you can email me at candi.apple@education.com or visit me during my office hours (Mondays and Wednesdays from 10am - 11:30am in Hagey Hall, rm 123). Thanks, Professor Apple'.

An introductory agent versus an introductory news posting

WHEN ARE INTELLIGENT AGENTS APPROPRIATE?

While intelligent agents can be a convenient time-saver for instructors, it is important to use them appropriately, and not to over-use them. You don't want to burden students with excessive emails, as this may cause them to devalue your communications. Students may ignore important messages from you under the assumption that you are merely spamming them, especially if you are in the habit of emailing them frequently.

Consider the following when trying to decide if an intelligent agent is appropriate:

- Can you get the information to students another way? For example, can you post a notice using the News tool, make an announcement in a class lecture, or add a message to the course discussion board?
- Does the information in the email need to be kept private? You would definitely want to privately message users about failed assignments; however, you might want to publicly acknowledge other users for excellent attendance or participation by posting a discussion message or news item.
- Does the email you want to send add any value to the course itself, or to the user's experience of the course? While it's a good idea to maintain an open dialog with your students, you do not want to over-communicate, as this can make students apathetic about reading multiple or repetitive messages.
- Have you sent a similar email already over the duration of the course? If so, you should consider using a different method to deliver the message this time.

