

## Using Automated Agents to Facilitate Instructions in a Large Online Course

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**Abstract :** In an online course with a large enrollment, the potential exists for the instructor to become overburdened with having to respond to students' emails, which consequently decreases the instructor's efficiency in teaching the course. Repetition of instructions is an effective way of reducing confusion among students, which in turn increases their efficiencies, as well. World of Turf is the largest online course at Michigan State University, which employs Brightspace as its management system (LMS) software. Recently, the LMS upgraded its capabilities to utilize agents, which are auto generated email notifications to students based on certain criteria. Agents are additional tools that can enhance course design. They can be run on-demand or according to a schedule. Agents can be timed to effectively remind students of approaching deadlines. The content of these generated emails can also include reinforced instructions. With a large online course, even a small percentage of students that either do not read or do not comprehend the course syllabus or do not notice instructions on course pages can result in numerous emails to the instructor, often near the deadlines for assignments. Utilizing agents to decrease the number of emails from students has enabled the instructor to efficiently instruct more than one thousand students per semester without any graduate student teaching assistants.

**Keywords :** agents, Brightspace, large enrollment, learning management system, repetition of instructions

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