# Paperless Physics Laboratory Course Using the Blackboard Resources



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### 1. Introduction. A hand-written informal lab report in a notebook.

The author was teaching and coordinating physics UG labs in 2002 – 2015 for students of Physics Specialist, Physics Major and Engineering Science programmes.

Requirements to an *informal* report in a lab notebook:

Answers to preparatory questions and a statement of !!! the experiment goals checked by a TA before a session.

OK Complete step-by-step record of all lab activities

!!!

Tables of measurements and calculated quantities

Graphical presentation of experiment results

Data analysis, error calculation, conclusion

# 1. Introduction. A hand-written informal lab report in a notebook.

What was a typical length of a paper lab report allowed to submit several days after a session? – 16 – 20 pages.

How long on average did it take a student to write a good lab report according to surveys among students? – > 10 hours.

How did the students start using modern technologies to help themselves in the report preparation? –

Students started recording the procedure with their laptops; typing and printing out tables, graphs and voluminous parts of the text then attaching the printouts to pages of the notebook; making and printing out error calculations with on-line formula editors.

Students' innovations were welcomed by TAs/Markers.

2. Main goals of a pilot project started in 2013 for the 1st and 2nd year Engineering Science students

#### **Expected impact on students:**

- Reducing students' time for a laboratory report preparation efficiently utilizing their computer literacy and typing skills.
- Incorporating computer generated graphs and diagrams into the text of the report.
- Teaching students specific skills in organization of an electronic document.
- Simplifying submission of the report (from anywhere at any time) by uploading the report to Blackboard (BB).
- Increasing work space by a laboratory setup.
- Combining uploading the report to BB for marking with submitting same report to the Turnitin.com.

2. Main goals of a pilot project started in 2013 for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year Engineering Science students

#### **Expected impact on instructors:**

- Eliminating misreading of unleagible report.
- Creating more universal marking scheme using the BB rubrics, simple and clear for students and Markers.
- Simplifying access to the report (from anywhere).
- Simplifying a TA's/Marker's substitution (the TA's absence, request for remarking, strike, etc.).
- Making the report available for reviewing by a course coordinator at any stage of marking and after.
- Providing a secure, accessible by an instructor and longlasting storage of marked lab reports in electronic repository on Blackboard.
- Reducing paper consumption.

# This is a Green Course!



Your instructor has committed to reducing this course's environmental impact.

sustainability.utoronto.ca #greenerUofT

#### 3. Organization of the course on BB.

- For each experiment, a course coordinator prepares an Assignment on BB with a template of a lab report.
- The course coordinator prepares a Test with preparatory questions in the multiple choice format. The test is taken before the session and the mark is assigned immediately on Blackboard in My Grades (as for any test).
- Students prepare a lab report in PDF or Word.
- Students upload the report to a corresponding Assignment before a deadline.
- A Marker downloads the report, enters comments into the text, uploads the marked report back to BB and ticks applicable details of rubric online.
- · The marker enters the mark to the Grade Center.
- The TAs upload graded reports to the Course Content.

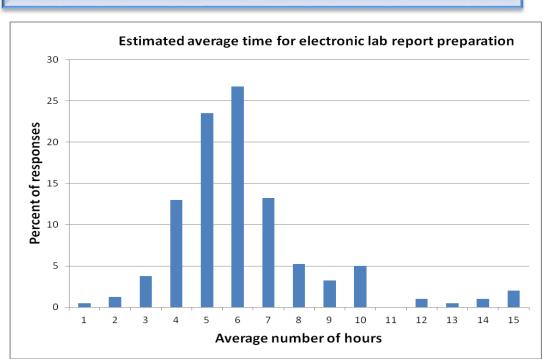
### 4. Some data from surveys and feedback

#### Students (508 surveyed in three courses in 2013, 2014, 2015)

- Compared to other courses that require a hard copy of the lab report, is electronic format of the Physics lab report more convenient?
   YES 97 99% of a class
- 2. Were you satisfied with the TA's feedback in electronic format?

  YES 82 94% of a class
- 3. How long did it take you to write a final version of electronic report?

Compare to a mode at 10 - 16 hours indicated by students of same courses surveyed before 2013.



#### 4. Some data from surveys and feedback

#### TAs (28 responses; teaching in three courses)

- Why do you like electronic reports?
  - No problems with heavy piles of notebooks that can be graded only at the department 100%.
  - Easy readable and leagible text 100%.
- Why don't you like electronic reports?

Used to give hand-written comments - 50%

 Report in which format - paper or electronic - you marked quicker for same experiment in this lab course?

Paper - 50%; electronic - 7%; same time - 43%

 Both the students and the TAs voted solid for a marking scheme based on the BB rubrics.

#### 4. Some data from surveys and feedback

#### **Technical Lab Assistants:**

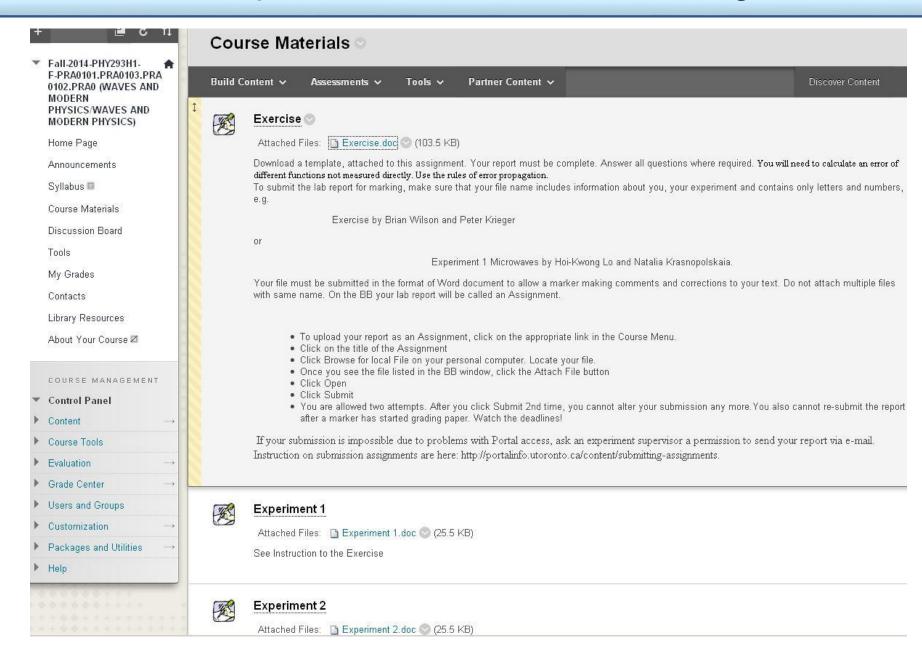
- In addition to reduced paper use, students are less hurried to finish work on time and are actually finishing labs on time.
- I believe that students type faster than recording with a pen. Importing data and images electronically is quicker and more accurate than manually copying and printing.

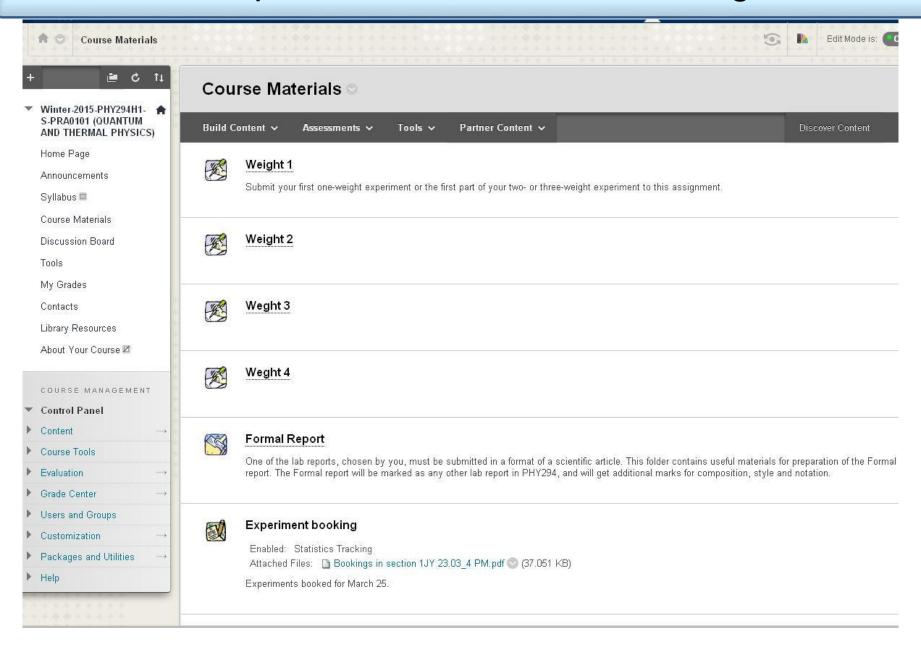
#### **Course Coordinator (me)**

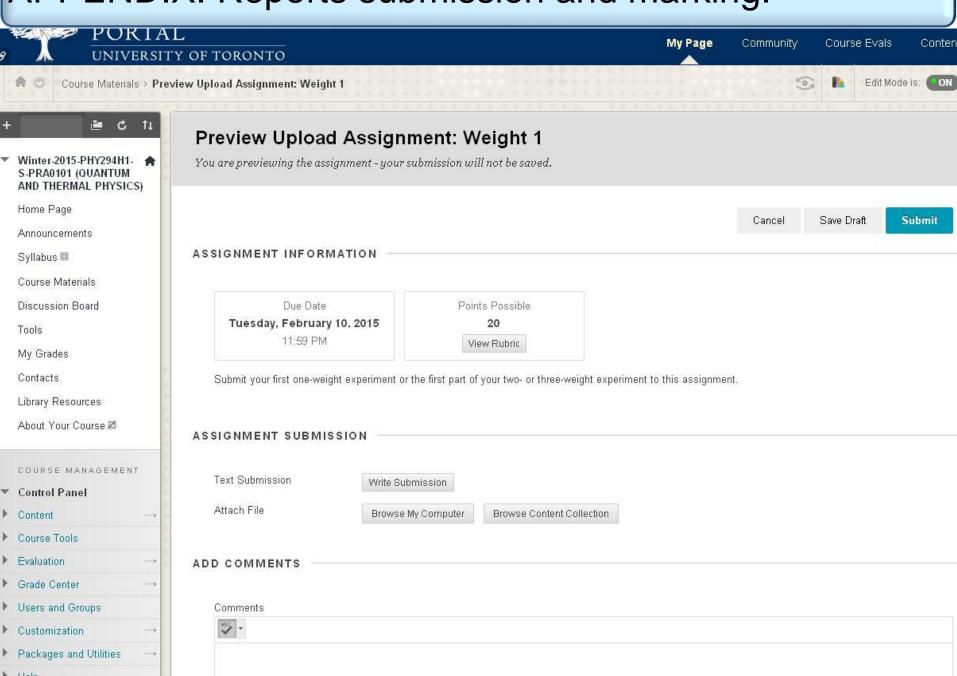
- Easy access to all submitted and graded reports.
- Simple organization of reports' storage for years.
- Cases of copying/plagiarism were eliminated by simultaneous submission of the reports to BB and turnitin.com.

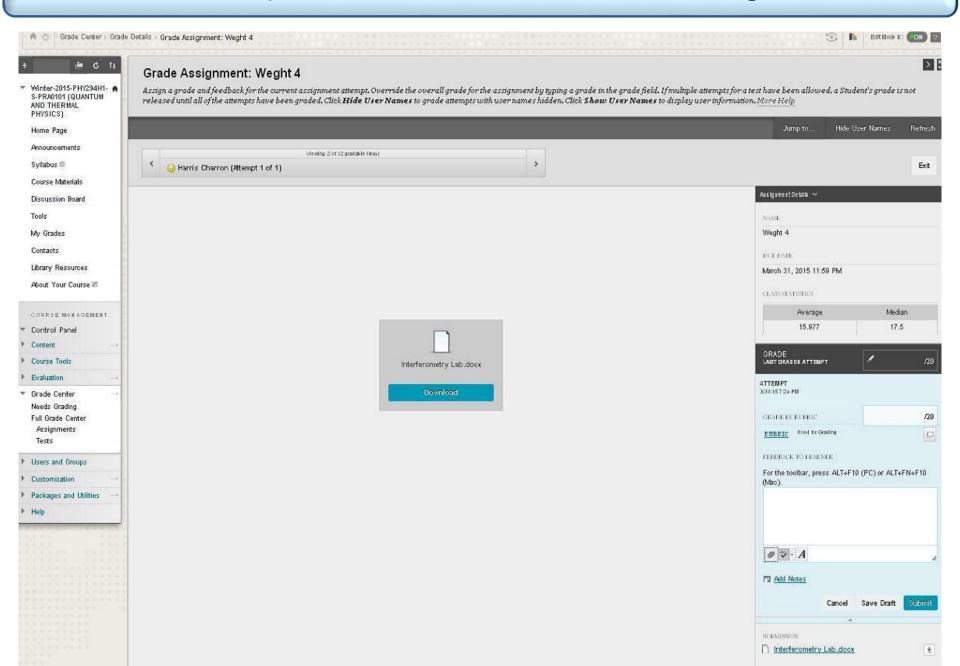
# 5. Sources of information on electronic laboratory notebook (ELN) in Physics labs

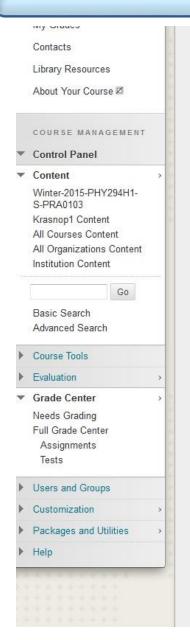
- University of Pennsylvania. Department of Physics and Astronomy UG Physics Labs Spring 2013 <a href="https://www.physics.upenn.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-physics-labs">https://www.physics.upenn.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-physics-labs</a>
- Cornell University Pilot project <u>http://events.cornell.edu/event/electronic\_lab\_notebook\_demonstration</u>
- University of California at Berkeley: Physics 111 (Advanced Physics Lab) <a href="http://www.advancedlab.org/mediawiki/index.php/Advanced\_Syllabus">http://www.advancedlab.org/mediawiki/index.php/Advanced\_Syllabus</a>
- Lots of sites with promotions of commercially available software under the title "ELN".





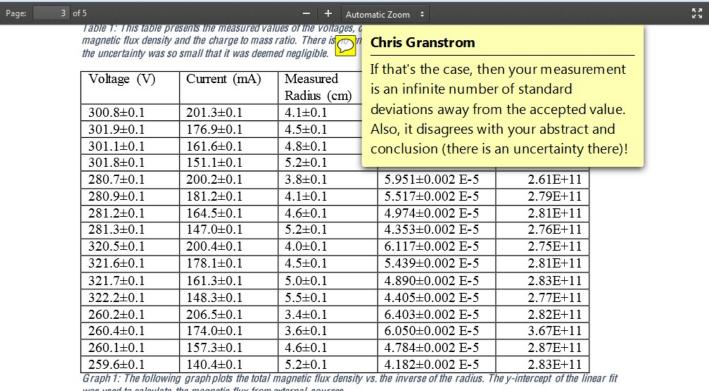




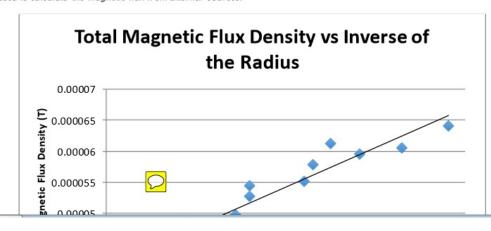








was used to calculate the magnetic flux from external sources.



#### Experiment:

For (i) the battery and (ii) the DC power supply set to around 6.5V do the following:

A) Choosing 4 different values of R<sub>I</sub> from the box provided, take measurements of the terminal voltage V and the current I. Include an estimate of the uncertainty in these measurements. Organize all data in a table. Provide your notes.

DC Power Source Results (Circuit 2)						
V <sub>meter</sub> (V)	I <sub>meter</sub> (mA)	Resistance (Ω)	Resistor Error, ±5% (Ω)			
6.35	9.24	680	± 32.5			
6.38	7.95	820	± 41.0			
6.46	0.770	8200	± 410			
6.47	0.190	33000	± 1650			

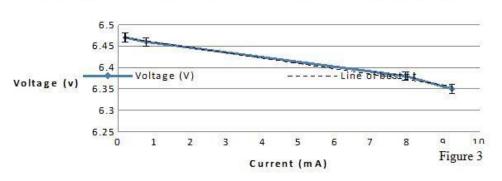
Comment [12]: Complete data for tables but didn't include V and I uncertainties

B) Using Excel (or any other grap: the power source, R. Estimate tl

Complete data for tables but didn't include V and I uncertainties

#### Experimental Data and Error Analysis:

#### I - V Relationship of the DC Power Supply (Cct. 2)

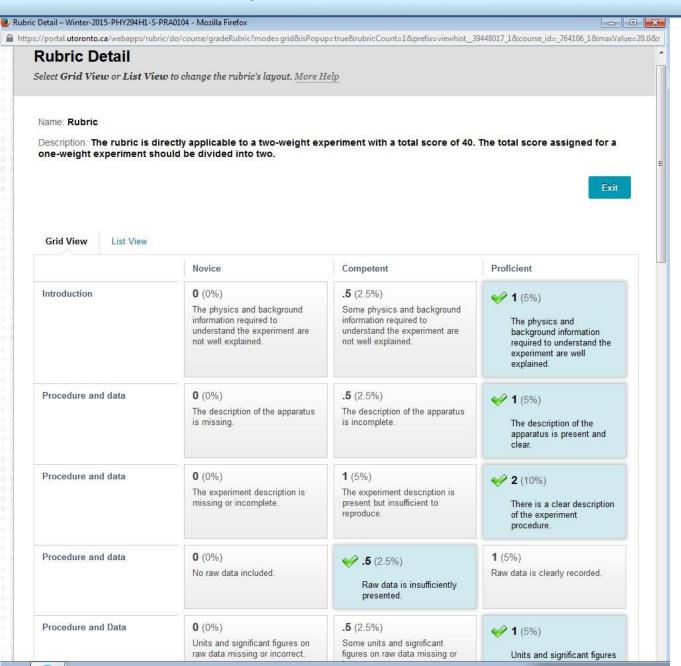


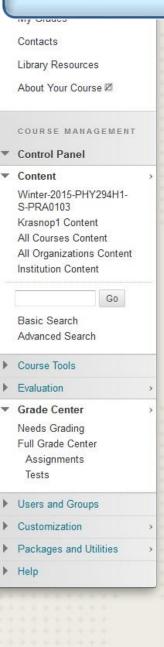
don't connect data points that aren't intrinsically connected (i.e. there are no intermediate points, so why pretend data exists there).

Comment [13]: Good plot. But in the future,

Table 2

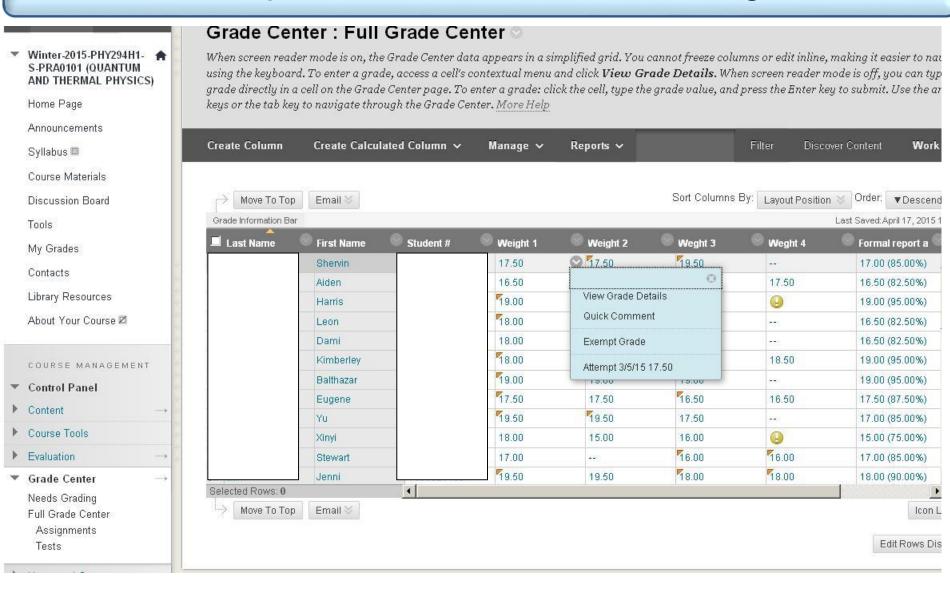
6.5V Battery Results (Circuit 2)

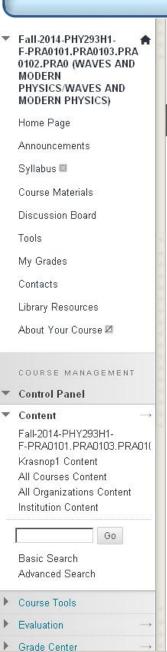








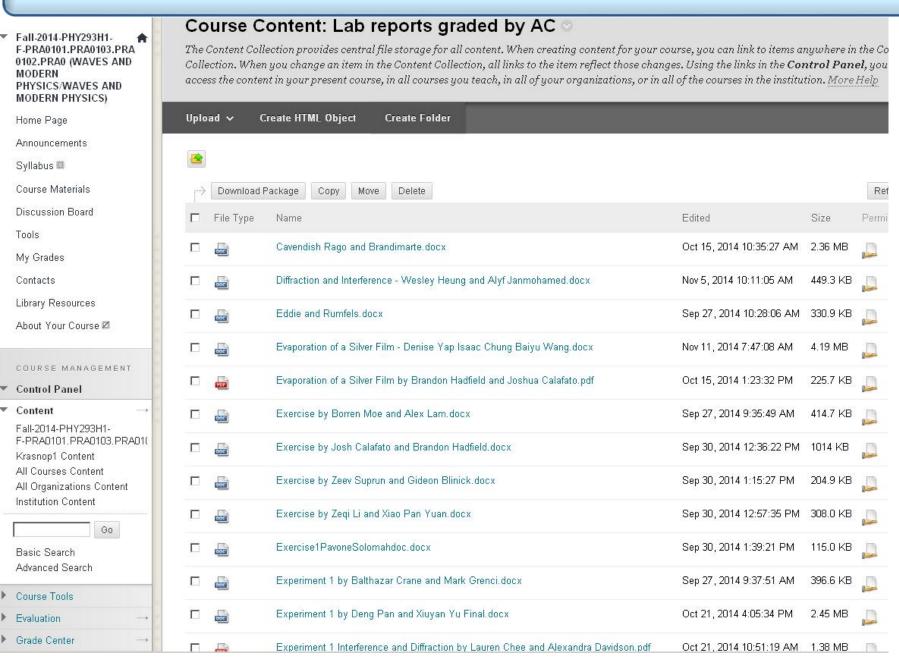




#### Course Content: Fall-2014-PHY293H1-F-PRA0101.PRA0103.PRA0102.PRA0

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#### Questions?

Thank you!