Recording Online Task Submissions: How Students Manage Deadlines

Colin PHILLIPS

Abstract

A common criticism of remote learning voiced by students in 2020 during COVID-19 was that they were unable to complete assigned tasks on time. This paper attempts to understand the time management abilities of students with two possible applications for the classroom: first, improving feedback from teachers that results in students using their time more efficiently; and second, improving tasks developed by teachers that results in more students completing tasks on time.

Introduction

In 2020, most courses at NUFS were moved online due to measures taken by the university to avoid the spread of COVID-19. All of the courses I taught were moved online and I chose an on-demand method of instruction. Generally, the courses consisted of students completing and submitting assigned tasks each class. There was a variety of tasks, but the most common included unit comprehension, homework, and tests.

Since the courses I taught were on-demand, students had more flexibility

than during normal times regarding when they needed to complete and submit assigned tasks. In normal times, students would complete unit comprehension activities during scheduled class time. Tests were typically carried out during class time as well. Assigned homework tasks submitted on-demand mostly remained the same as during normal times. During an on-demand style of class, I allowed students the entire day to submit their unit comprehension tasks. Homework tasks had to be completed and submitted before the next class (same as in normal times). Students had to submit tests within two days.

I primarily was interested in how students would manage the allotted time to submit the assigned tasks. I assumed that some students would complete and submit their tasks as soon as possible, freeing up their time to pursue other things. Also, I guessed that other students would use as much of the allotted time as possible and submit their tasks at the last minute. I finally assumed that, as during normal times, some students would submit their tasks late or not at all.

This project looked at when submissions of different types of tasks took place. I gathered the exact date and time when students submitted their assigned unit comprehension tasks, homework, and tests. Features in Google Forms allowed me to gather this information. The information was organized in tables in three main ways: the overall frequency of submission types based on the task, the frequency of submission types depending on the semester, and the frequency of submission types based on enrollment year.

I did not draw any conclusions in this project but hope colleagues can make use of this information to help them to design engaging online tasks or to offer effective advice for students as they manage their online tasks.

Which courses were chosen for this project?

I taught seven different courses in 2020, each having a unique arrangement of on-demand required tasks that had to be submitted. Depending on the course, some tasks were weekly homework assignments, while others had major term

papers. There were only two courses that had the same arrangement of tasks. One of the courses was Listening for Core English, which was a listening comprehension course offered to first-year students. The other was Listening for Specific Purposes, a second-year listening comprehension course.

For Listening for Core English (LCE), students could choose to take the basic level or the intermediate level course. I taught two separate intermediate level classes, one on Tuesday mornings, and the other on Friday mornings. Listening for Specific Purposes (LSP) also had two levels which students could choose from, an intermediate level and an advanced level course. I taught one class of the intermediate level on Friday afternoons. I also taught the advanced level course, but the assigned tasks in the two courses were quite different. For this project I only collected information from LSP on submission times for the intermediate level course.

The types of assigned tasks were the same for both LCE and LSP. In addition, the types of assigned tasks were the same in the first and second semesters. The courses in first semester had a letter designation "A", while courses in second semester had a letter designation "B". With LCE and LSP having the same type of assigned tasks in both semesters, I was able to gather task submission information easily and compiled it into tables.

Table 1 below is a summary of the courses included in the project.

Table 1
Courses included in the project

Enrollment	Course name	Course level	Semester	Class
First year	Listening for Core English	Intermediate	A	Tuesday
				Friday
			B	Tuesday
				Friday
Second year	Listening for Specific Purposes	Intermediate	A	Friday
			B	

What information was gathered?

For this project I was interested in when students submitted their assigned tasks. Assigned tasks for both LCE and LSP were created using Google Forms and distributed to and collected from students using Google Classroom. When students submitted assigned tasks, the date and time of the submission was recorded on the form. Although the Google Forms were managed and distributed by Google Classroom, the form was stored in my Google Drive. I could easily view the date and time of each students' submission by opening the Google Form in Google Drive. Google Form information could be exported as a csv file, but I was only interested in the submission date and time, not the actual contents of the forms. In the actual course (not influenced by this project), I checked the contents of the forms and recorded scores accordingly. With submissions recorded, I was able to assess for each assigned task, when exactly they were submitted.

Figure 1
Screenshot from a Google Form showing date and time of submission
   Submitted 5/12/20, 10:23 AM

What tasks were students required to submit?

There were three types of assigned tasks in LCE and LSP that were used for this project: unit comprehension, homework, and tests. Worksheets for these tasks were created in Google Forms and distributed to students through Google Classroom. The Google Form submissions were saved in my Google Drive.

Unit comprehension activities were designed to provide a way for students to navigate through the listening activities in the textbook in an on-demand lesson. For LCE, students had to go through designated listening tasks using Google Forms that I had created from the textbook. When students had completed all the tasks, the form would be submitted through Google Classroom. The same format of assigned unit comprehension tasks was done for LSP.

The assigned homework worksheet each week for LCE were listening comprehension activities designed to prepare students for the upcoming lesson. Students had to listen to an audio track and complete corresponding comprehension questions in a Google Form. The audio tracks were distributed to the students in Google Classroom. The assigned homework tasks for LSP were also preparation activities, but rather than listening to audio tracks and completing comprehension checks, vocabulary building activities were used. Students had to check their understanding of a list of vocabulary and complete some comprehension tasks. Assigned homework for LSP was also completed and submitted using Google Forms.

Assigned tests for both courses were conducted in a similar manner to unit comprehension activities. During normal times, a midterm test and an end-of-term test that covered many units and listening tasks was assigned for students to complete and submit on paper during class time. In 2020, using an on-demand approach, smaller and more frequent tests were given that focused on fewer units and a reduced number of listening tasks. Students had to listen to audio tracks and complete the comprehension questions in Google Forms to be submitted through Google Classroom.

What were the task submission definitions?

For grading purposes in LCE and LSP, and which was outlined in the syllabus students received on week 1, the assigned tasks (unit comprehension, homework, and tests) had to be completed on time for them to be considered for points. No late submissions were accepted. Normally I was lenient with students regarding the definition of "on time". For example, if the deadline was set for midnight on a certain day, I would still consider submissions that were a few minutes or even an hour or two after midnight. My rationale was that if students were still awake and staying up late working on assignments, I would give them credit for their effort.

For this project on the other hand, I used the submission date and time recorded by Google Forms strictly. Based on the information provided, I recorded each submission into three broad categories: "On time", "Late", and "No submission". If tasks were submitted on or before the designated deadline, it was recorded as "On time". If tasks were submitted after the deadline, they were recorded as "Late". Finally, if there were no records of a submission at any time, tasks were categorized as "No submission".

I further divided "On time" into three smaller sub-categories: "Prompt", "On time", and "Last minute". Submissions recorded as "Prompt" had a slightly different meaning depending on what type of task it related to. Submissions recorded as "Prompt" for unit comprehension activities meant that they were submitted during the scheduled class time. Students were all online and accessing materials on-demand for all lessons. Students were instructed to submit the unit comprehension activities by the end of the day (23:59). Even though students had the entire day to complete and submit the unit comprehension forms, I was interested in seeing how many would still submit the tasks during class time. A homework assignment was recorded as "Prompt" when students submitted the Google Form on the same day as class. If the submission time was recorded on or before 23:59 on the day the homework was assigned, it was recorded as "Prompt". Assigned test worksheets were recorded as "Prompt" when students submitted their Google Form on or before 23:59 the same day that it was assigned.

In addition to "Prompt", some submitted tasks were recorded as "Last minute". This category had to be defined more subjectively, but I was interested in gathering information about submissions made just before the deadline. Submissions recorded as "Last minute" for unit comprehension activities meant that they had to be made at 21:00 or after, and no later than 23:59 on the day of the deadline. Homework tasks were recorded as "Last minute" if they were submitted the day before or the day of the deadline. Homework had to

be submitted before class, so any submissions with a time stamp on the day of class and before the actual start of scheduled class were also recorded. For test submissions to be recorded as "Last minute", they had to be made on the day of the deadline. Anything with a time stamp with the date of the deadline was recorded as "Last minute".

"On time" was another sub-category within the larger category with the same name. To be recorded as "On time", submissions had to be made after "Prompt" and before "Last minute". For unit comprehensions to be recorded as "On time", students needed to have submissions made after the end of class and by 20:59 on the day of class. For homework tasks to be recorded as "On time", submissions had to be made between the day after class and two days before the deadline (the start of the next class).

Submissions were recorded as "Late" if they were submitted after the deadline, even if it was by just one minute. The strict interpretation of deadlines was only observed for this project, and in the course, the students' marginally late submissions were likely accepted. For all three tasks, unit comprehension, homework, and tests, it was easy to record which submissions were made after the deadline as the date and time was recorded by Google Forms.

Finally, submissions were categorized as "No submission" when no date or time was recoded at all. In Google Forms, student IDs would not appear in the list of submissions if they had not submitted anything and therefore were recorded as "No submission" for that task. In the course, I likely would follow-up with students who had not submitted tasks, especially tests, and likely would eventually get a submission. Table 2 below is a summary of task submission definitions.

Table 2

Submission definitions

Submission type	Task type		
	Unit comprehension	Homework	Test
Prompt	during class	day of class	day of class
On time	after class – 20:59 day of class	day after class – two days before deadline	day after class – day before deadline
Last minute	21:00 – 23:59 day of class	day before deadline – deadline	day of deadline
Late	after deadline	after deadline	after deadline
No submission	no submission recorded	no submission recorded	no submission recorded

The example in Table 3 below is used to illustrate deadlines for each type of task. The class Listening for Core English (Intermediate)-B Tuesday first period (09:10–10:40) on Tuesday, October 12 in 2020, is used for this example.

Table 3

Example of deadlines

Task type	Deadline
Unit comprehension	by the end of the day October 12
Homework	before class on October 19
Test	by the end of the day October 14

In the next example in Table 4 below, each task was recorded based on the submission date and time. The class Listening for Core English (Intermediate)-B Tuesday first period (09:10–10:40) on Tuesday, October 12 in 2020, is used again for this example. The actual submission date and time are different, Table 4 is used for illustrative purposes only.

Table 4

Example submission record

Submission date and time	Task type		
	Unit comprehension	Homework	Test
10/12/20, 10:15 AM	prompt	prompt	prompt
10/12/20, 2:35 PM	on time	prompt	prompt
10/12/20, 11:18 PM	last minute	prompt	prompt
10/13/20, 2:34 AM	late	on time	on time
10/14/20, 3:26 PM	late	on time	last minute
10/15/20, 12:32 AM	late	on time	late
10/18/20, 10:05 AM	late	last minute	late
10/19/20, 9:45 AM	late	late	late

What task submission information was recorded?

This project recorded task submission in four ways: Submissions by submission type, Submissions by task type, Submissions by semester, and Submissions by enrollment year.

1. Submissions by submission type

Submission information was collected from all submission in LCE and LSP across two semesters for all three task types. There was a total of 2924 submissions. Table 5 below shows submissions based on submission type.

Table 5

Submissions by submission type

Prompt	On time	Last minute	Late	No submission
41%	26%	20%	3%	10%

The type of submission that was most common was recorded as "Prompt" at 41%. The second most common type of submission was recorded as "On time" at

26%. The third most common type of submission was recorded as "Last minute" at 20%. The next most common type of submission was recorded as "No submission" at 10%. The type of submission with the least number of submissions was recorded as "Late" at 3%.

2. Submissions by task type

The submissions for each task type, unit comprehension, homework, and tests were recorded and summarized in Table 6 below. Information for both LCE and LSP was included. There was a total of 1209 submissions for unit comprehension, 1224 for homework, and 491 for tests.

For unit comprehension, the most common type of submission was recorded as "On time" at 38%. The second most common type of submission was recorded as "Prompt" 33%. The third most common type of submission was recorded as "Last minute" at 18%. The next most common type of submission was recorded as "No submission" at 9%. The least common type of submission was recorded as "Late" at 2%.

Table 6
Submissions by task type

	Unit comprehension	Homework	Test
Prompt	33%	44%	55%
On time	38%	19%	14%
Last minute	18%	24%	14%
Late	2%	3%	7%
No submission	9%	10%	10%

From Table 6 above, homework task submissions were also recorded. The submission type that was most common for assigned homework tasks was recorded as "Prompt" at 44%. The second most common type of submission was

recorded as "Last minute" at 24%. The third most common type of submission was recorded as "On time" at 19%. The next most common type of submission was recorded as "No submission" at 10%. The submission that was least common was recorded as "Late" at 3%.

Continuing from Table 6 above, tests were also submitted and recorded. The type of submission that was most common for tests was recorded as "Prompt" at 55%. The second most common type of submission was recorded as "On time" and "Last minute", each at 14%. The next most common type of submission was recorded as "No submission" at 10%. The least common type of submission among students for tests was recorded as "Late" at 7%.

3. Submissions by semester

Information for submissions from LCE and LSP in first and second semester across all task types was also recorded and summarized in Table 7 below. There were 1535 submissions in semester 1 and 1389 submissions in semester 2.

Table 7
Submissions by semester

	Prompt	**On time**	**Last minute**	**Late**	**No submission**
Semester 1 (A)	48%	27%	17%	3%	5%
Semester 2 (B)	34%	26%	23%	3%	14%

In semester 1, the most common type of submission was recorded as "Prompt" at 48%. The greatest number of submissions was also recorded as "prompt" in semester 2, at 34%. The second most common type of submission in semester 1 and 2 was recorded as "On time" at 27% and 26% respectively. The third most common type of submission in semester 1 and 2 was recorded as "Last minute" at 17% and 23% respectively. The next most common type of submission in semester 1 and 2 was recorded as "No submission" at 5% and 14%

respectively. The least common type of submission made in semester 1 and 2 was recorded as "Late" at 3% each. It is interesting to note that the number of recorded submissions for semester 1 and 2 remains in the same order. There is however, a large increase in number of submissions recorded as "No submission" going from semester 1 at 5%, to semester 2 at 14%.

4. Submissions by enrollment year

Information on submissions based on enrollment year was organized in Table 8 below. Generally, LCE was a course open to first year students, and LSP was a course open to second year students. There was the occasional upper year student in LCE. There were a total of 1989 submissions for LCE and a total of 1020 submissions for LSP.

Table 8
Submissions by enrollment year

	Prompt	On time	Last minute	Late	No submission
First year (LCE)	42%	27%	19%	4%	8%
Second year (LSP)	38%	25%	22%	3%	12%

The most common type of submission made by first year students was recorded as "Prompt" at 42%. Similarly, "Prompt" was the type of submission most often recorded by second year students at 38%. The second most common type of submission made by first year and second year students was recorded as "On time" with 27% and 25% of submissions respectively. The third most common type of submission made by first year and second year students was "Last minute" at 19% and 22% respectively. The next most common type of submission made by first and second year students was recorded as "No submission" at 8% and 12% respectively. Finally, the least common type of submission made by both first and second year students was recorded as "Late" at 4% and

3% respectively.

Summary

This report gave an overview of the project I undertook in 2020 while conducting on-demand listening comprehension courses. I gathered online task submission information for Listening for Core English and Listening for Specific Purposes. The tasks students submitted were worksheets created with Google Forms and managed by Google Classrooms. The task types that students submitted included united comprehension, homework, and tests. This project extended across both first and second semester. After students made their task submission, the exact date and time of the submission was recorded on the Google Form. I gathered all submission information from all classes and tasks and categorized them according to the submission date and time relative to the task deadline. The five submission types were "Prompt", "On time", "Last minute", "Late", and "No submission". For this report, I presented four groupings of information: Submission types, Task types, Semester, and Enrollment year.

The purpose of this report was not to draw conclusions myself, but to provide online task submission information to colleagues. It is my hope that as teachers develop online tasks for students, information from this report can be incorporated into the plans. Perhaps the online task submission habits of students in listening comprehension courses can help teachers make tasks that are better suited to their students. Additionally, knowing roughly how many students in each class will submit online tasks promptly, or at the last minute, or not at all, can be useful. Information in this report can help teachers frame advice and guidance offered to students as they mature and develop into active learners.

Appendix 1

Submission information for all task types

	Unit comprehension		Listening Homework		Test		Total	
	/1209	%	/1224	%	/491	%	/2924	%
Prompt	393	32.51	536	43.79	269	54.79	1198	40.97
On time	463	38.3	238	19.44	69	14.05	770	26.33
Last minute	214	17.7	294	24.02	71	14.46	579	19.8
Late	30	2.48	35	2.86	34	6.92	99	3.39
No submission	109	9.02	121	9.89	48	9.78	278	9.51

Appendix 2

Submission information for semester one

	Unit comprehension		Listening-A Homework		Test		Total	
	/630	%	/630	%	/275	%	/1535	%
Prompt	241	38.25	311	49.37	179	65.09	731	47.62
On time	255	40.48	120	19.05	36	13.09	411	26.78
Last minute	88	13.97	146	23.17	28	10.18	262	17.07
Late	12	1.9	19	3.02	20	7.27	51	3.32
No submission	34	5.4	34	5.4	12	4.36	80	5.21

	Unit comprehension		LCE-A Total Homework		Test		Total	
	/390	%	/390	%	/195	%	/975	%
Prompt	141	36.15	221	56.67	127	65.13	489	50.15
On time	159	40.77	77	19.74	35	17.95	271	27.79
Last minute	71	18.21	80	20.51	15	7.69	166	17.03
Late	11	2.82	5	1.28	15	7.69	31	3.18
No submission	8	2.05	7	1.8	3	1.54	18	1.85

	Unit comprehension		LSP (Int)-A Fri3 Homework		Test		Total	
	/240	%	/240	%	/80	%	/560	%
Prompt	100	41.67	90	37.5	52	65	242	43.21
On time	96	40	43	17.92	1	1.25	140	25
Last minute	17	7.08	66	27.5	13	16.25	96	17.14
Late	1	0.42	14	5.83	5	6.25	20	3.57
No submission	26	10.83	27	11.25	9	11.25	62	11.07

Appendix 3

Submission information for semester two

Listening-B

	Unit comprehension		Homework		Test		Total	
	/579	%	/594	%	/216	%	/1389	%
Prompt	152	26.25	225	37.88	90	41.67	467	33.62
On time	208	35.92	118	19.87	33	15.28	359	25.85
Last minute	126	21.76	148	24.92	43	19.91	317	22.82
Late	18	3.11	16	2.69	14	6.48	48	3.46
No submission	75	12.95	87	14.65	36	16.67	198	14.25

LCE-B Total

	Unit comprehension		Homework		Test		Total	
	/429	%	/429	%	/156	%	1014	%
Prompt	100	23.31	187	43.59	67	42.95	354	34.91
On time	153	35.66	93	21.68	24	15.38	270	26.63
Last minute	101	23.54	80	18.65	25	16.03	206	20.31
Late	15	3.5	11	2.56	13	8.33	39	3.85
No submission	60	13.99	58	13.52	27	17.31	145	14.3

LSP (Int)-B Fri3

	Unit comprehension		Homework		Test		Total	
	/150	%	/165	%	/60	%	/375	%
Prompt	52	34.67	38	23.03	23	38.33	113	30.13
On time	55	36.67	25	15.15	9	15	89	23.73
Last minute	25	16.67	68	41.21	18	30	111	29.6
Late	3	2	5	3.03	1	1.67	9	2.4
No submission	15	10	29	17.58	9	15	53	14.13

Appendix 4

Submission information for LCE

LCE Total

	Unit comprehension		Homework		Test		Total	
	/819	%	/819	%	/351	%	/1989	%
Prompt	241	29.43	408	49.82	194	55.27	843	42.38
On time	312	38.1	170	20.76	59	16.81	541	27.2
Last minute	172	21	160	19.53	40	11.39	372	18.7
Late	26	3.17	16	1.95	28	7.98	70	3.52
No submission	68	8.3	65	7.94	30	8.55	163	8.2

Appendix 5
Submission information for LSP

| | LSP (Int) Fri3 | | | | | | | |
| | Unit comprehension | | Homework | | Test | | Total | |
	/390	%	/405	%	/140	%	/935	%
Prompt	152	38.97	128	31.6	75	53.57	355	37.97
On time	151	38.72	68	16.79	10	7.14	229	24.49
Last minute	42	10.77	134	33.09	31	22.14	207	22.14
Late	4	1.03	19	4.69	6	4.29	29	3.1
No submission	41	10.51	56	13.83	18	12.86	115	12.3

Appendix 6
Submission information by LCE class

| | LCE Tue1 | | | | | | | |
| | Unit comprehension | | Homework | | Test | | Total | |
	/399	%	/399	%	/171	%	/969	%
Prompt	119	29.82	196	49.12	95	55.56	410	42.31
On time	130	32.58	74	18.55	27	15.79	231	23.84
Last minute	101	25.31	82	20.55	19	11.11	202	20.85
Late	10	2.51	11	2.76	15	8.77	36	3.72
No submission	39	9.77	36	9.02	15	8.77	90	9.28

| | LCE-A Tue1 | | | | | | | |
| | Unit comprehension | | Homework | | Test | | Total | |
	/190	%	/190	%	/95	%	/475	%
Prompt	73	38.42	115	60.53	63	66.31	251	52.84
On time	70	36.84	26	13.68	18	18.95	114	24
Last minute	41	21.58	43	22.63	6	6.32	90	18.95
Late	3	1.58	2	1.05	5	5.26	10	2.11
No submission	3	1.58	4	2.11	3	3.16	10	2.11

| | LCE-B Tue1 | | | | | | | |
| | Unit comprehension | | Homework | | Test | | Total | |
	/209	%	/209	%	/76	%	/494	%
Prompt	46	22.01	81	38.76	32	42.11	159	32.19
On time	60	28.71	48	22.97	9	11.84	117	23.68
Last minute	60	28.71	39	18.66	13	17.11	112	22.67
Late	7	3.35	9	4.31	10	13.16	26	5.26
No submission	36	17.22	32	15.31	12	15.79	80	16.19

| | LCE Fri2 | | | | | | | |
| | Unit comprehension | | Homework | | Test | | Total | |
	/420	%	/420	%	/180	%	/1020	%
Prompt	122	29.05	212	50.48	99	55	433	42.45
On time	182	43.33	96	22.86	32	17.78	310	30.39
Last minute	71	16.9	78	18.57	21	11.67	170	16.67
Late	16	3.81	5	1.19	13	7.22	34	3.33
No submission	29	6.9	29	6.9	15	8.33	73	7.16

	LCE-A Fri2							
	Unit comprehension		Homework		Test		Total	
	/200	%	/200	%	/100	%	/500	%
Prompt	68	34	106	53	64	64	238	47.6
On time	89	44.5	51	25.5	17	17	157	31.4
Last minute	30	15	37	18.5	9	9	76	15.2
Late	8	4	3	1.5	10	10	21	4.2
No submission	5	2.5	3	1.5	0	0	8	1.6

	LCE-B Fri2							
	Unit comprehension		Homework		Test		Total	
	/220	%	/220	%	/80	%	/520	%
Prompt	54	24.55	106	48.18	35	43.75	195	37.5
On time	93	42.27	45	20.45	15	18.75	153	29.42
Last minute	41	18.64	41	18.64	12	15	94	18.08
Late	8	3.64	2	0.91	3	3.75	13	2.5
No submission	24	10.91	26	11.82	15	18.75	65	12.5