**Transcript for Next-Gen LMS: Enhancing Tools for Ungrading, Self-Regulation and Social Learning Dynamics**
**2023 ETUG Fall Workshop: The Evolving EdTech User (November 10, 2023)**
**Presenter: Erika Ram**

MODERATOR:
The Next-Gen LMS: Enhancing Tools for Ungrading, Self-Regulation, and Social Learning Dynamics. Our presenter for this session is Erika Ram. Erika is a specialized faculty member at the British Columbia Institute of Technology or BCIT. Chairs the BCIT Education Council, where Erika is a part of the Educational Technology and Learning Design subcommittee. Erika, if you're all ready, I'll let you take it away.

ERIKA RAM:
Awesome. Thank you so much. Let me get my things set up on my side. Awesome. To start, can I get a thumbs up or a yes if you can hear me and see my slides? Okay. Perfect. Thank you. Welcome everyone. I'm really excited to talk to you a little bit about some of the work that I've been doing over the past couple of years. I would like to start by saying though, please forgive me, I am still battling a cold for the last two weeks. The thing that's going around everywhere, so I may have to temporarily turn off my microphone or camera to sneeze or cough. So apologies for that. Yes. So my name is Erika Ram. I am a faculty member within the British Columbia Institute of Technology. Typically, I teach under the Computing Department. I'm also considered one of the e-learning and EdTech champions, helping other faculty members get set up with e-learning, transfer courses online, figure out what educational technologies might work for them. Bridging that gap between our learning and teaching centre and the educational technology services and faculty within my department. As Paul mentioned, I also chair our Educational Technology and Learning Design committee.

Today I'm hoping to first talk a little bit about what ungrading, self-regulation, social regulation looks like in a classroom. And just make sure that everybody has an understanding of the concepts. Share a little bit about my experience with trying to integrate these into a traditional classroom and learning management system model. Then propose a little bit of how we might redesign our traditional learning management systems, their assignment tools or their quiz tools to help better facilitate ongoing student learning.

To begin with, though, I wanted to do a bit of a warm-up activity to think about why do we grade? And I've got a little whiteboard set up here. For those of you who are joining us via a computer, you should be able to just tap within the whiteboard and add some ideas. Let me launch that... Connection error. So instead of the whiteboard, maybe let's use the chat instead. Putting a few ideas about why we grade. I'm seeing some ideas come in. "Accreditation and professional competencies, reporting requirements, giving students a sense of how they're progressing in alignment with course outcomes or learning outcomes. Measuring competencies, measuring understanding, incentivizing students to complete the tasks. Making funding applications possible." Yeah, exactly. These are all the things that I think about when I

think about why we grade. I think about assessment of learning. Number one. I mean, we're here to help teach students and hopefully that they're taking away and learning something from what we're teaching them. An assessment of learning and giving them feedback. Grades allow for things like a comparative analysis between students, between classes, between schools. Especially when we're considering things like transfer credits and moving from one school to the next. It helps with motivation and making sure that they are motivated to complete the tasks or complete the assignments that you want. Helps with college admissions. Eligibility for things like scholarships or co-op seats, especially when we have limited resources that we can extend to students. Maybe even in some cases, job applications. I don't see that very much anymore, but it certainly does still happen. I'm hoping to address the areas around assessment of learning, feedback, and motivation through some strategies that don't necessarily require us to use our standard grades or marking systems. In her book, for those of you who are familiar, you might have heard of her before and maybe not. Susan Blum has a book called *Ungrading*. She notes that "humans in their healthiest states are typically active, inquisitive, curious, and playful creatures." We typically display a readiness to learn and explore. This natural motivation is a critical element of cognitive, social, and physical development. But at some point over time, we've shifted from this learning and exploration to a hyper focus on categorizing, learning, marking, and grading to a point where it's become deeply embedded within our educational systems. But since 2016, we've actually seen some changes happening in B.C., particularly around the K to 12 curriculum and the B.C. Government's efforts to modernize it, moving from the traditional grading scale into a proficiency scale. But this isn't always mirrored in post-secondary.

Canada and Government of Canada, and a number of other national and international agencies have identified and validated nine of what they see as essential skills for students to succeed in our rapidly changing workplaces. I believe the ability to learn through self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation, rather than using grades as a motivator, are foundational to being able to develop and apply some of these skills.

They can help empower individuals to manage their emotions, behaviours and motivations. And are crucial for navigating the complex and dynamics of our modern environments. Beyond success in just our schools or our current courses, they can help enhance adaptability, continuous learning, and ultimately economic survival in a rapidly changing work world.

First, I'd like to just maybe go over a little bit about what these concepts mean. I've drawn quite a bit from a paper by Zimmerman called "Becoming a Self-Regulated Learner." In my attached resources, which I put in the chat and I think are also going to be posted to the website, you can find the full information for these papers and resources. Self-regulation is the control of oneself, your thoughts, your actions, in the context of learning. It's the conscious planning, monitoring, evaluation, and ultimately control of one's learning to maximize it.

Complementary to that is self-motivation. We often think of two different types of self-motivation. Intrinsic motivation, when we are motivated to do something because we want to

do it, because we're interested in it, we have a desire for growth. And then extrinsic motivation characterized in our systems often the desire to please or satisfy what our teachers are asking of us. The desire to get a good grade. The desire to get a scholarship or into a program. Sometimes these two can be tied together and they are a little bit black and white. But useful to think about when we think about grading and that motivation piece of it.

It's been observed that self-regulation and self-motivation of students increases with experience. When we have new students or novices, they typically have some common characteristics. Then as they gain experience, they start to display more high levels of self-motivation and self-regulation. On the left are some characteristics typical of students new to learning a subject. Things like not necessarily putting in high quality forethought, maybe doing things last minute, procrastinating. Not necessarily thinking about the tools or the tasks that they might need to do to achieve a particular outcome. They might be self- regulating reactively. I got a mark on my test. now I'm going to start to study differently, or that didn't work on my assignment, I got some feedback. Now I'm going to change my strategies rather than thinking about it ahead of time. At the beginning of my classes I see a lot of these novice characteristics, and I'm sure you do too. But as they get more experience, as they start to think more critically about metacognition, they start to plan differently. They start to self-evaluate their performance and frame their performance in relation to the strategies or methods that they used, rather than just their ability.

When it comes to self-regulation, there's typically thought to be three different phases. That first piece is that forethought phase, the phase that we often see missing from our novice students. Goal setting, strategic planning, self-motivation, the belief that they have self-efficacy, that they are able to achieve what they want learning goal orientation. Next is that performance phase, the actual starting to do the task, observing how they're working within that task as they go. Then finally, a self- reflection phase, being able to self-evaluate, consider what worked for them, what didn't work for them, and what they would do moving forward. These can actually be embedded into some of our assessments and activities. The way we do them.

Maybe to get a sense of what these three phases look like cognitively for students, here are some examples of questions they could ask themselves that could be integrated into an activity or assignment. For that forethought phase, thinking about what is my goal? How will I know I've reached it? Am I motivated to perform this task? Do I have the time and resources? That performance phase as they're actually doing a task. Do I know what I'm doing? Does my approach make sense? How well are my strategies working on those? Self-reflection. How well did I achieve the goal? How well did I avoid using sources that maybe interfere or things that did help me stay on task? I often have students in the self-reflection phase talk a lot about video games and social media. And all the things on their computers and phones that distract them from the task at hand. Also, thinking about tied to motivation, what are the most important things I learned? What did I enjoy learning? What did I have trouble with? When we

incorporate these into our learning and assessment activities and assignments, students start to move into a more metacognitive phase.

It's important to note that although self-regulation sounds like maybe it's a solo endeavor, like learning, there's a number of social and environmental influences. It doesn't necessarily just need to be the student on their own thinking about these things or working through them.

In the *Handbook of Self- Regulation of Learning and Performance* by Schunk and Green, they highlight three different types of regulation that we see in our classrooms. That self-regulation, where it's really about the individual learner like I've been talking about so far. But we also see something called "socially shared regulation," where groups take on metacognitive control of a task. This comes up when you think about group work, or where students work together on something. They hold each other accountable. They also compare across each other. If one student is on task and another student is not or the majority of them are on task, that one outlier is likely to join the group. We also have co-regulation where these tasks are supported by somebody or something externally. Often that is an instructor. We give our students due dates. We give our students calendars and things to try and keep them on track and on task. We also in our learning management systems have systems where students receive reminders, alerts, all sorts of things about upcoming due dates. Again, to try and keep them on task and keep them regulated.

While we have lots of strategies to be able to do this, I started to, over the past couple of years, try and implement some of these things within my classroom, and I was feeling like the conventional grading system wasn't necessarily working for me for a number of reasons. First, sometimes there's an inconsistency in the meaning of grades. Especially when you're working in a course where you have multiple faculty members. Maybe we all slightly have a different way of grading. Or different, even with using the same rubric. Amplify this across different courses, across different programs, institutes, countries, the grades themselves lose meaning. A student who is ranked at the bottom of one class may have very well learned just as much as the student ranked at the top of another. The desire for feedback and communication was another big thing. As I wanted to give students more feedback, have them focus on growth and learning, I was finding that students were still hyper focused on the mark they were getting. Sometimes would just not pay attention to the feedback or the process of learning. So publishing, doing something like an assignment where I spent a ton of time going through and giving detailed feedback. If a student sees they receive 18 out of 20, they're like, okay, that's good enough for me, that's what I wanted without necessarily going into that feedback and thinking about, well, how could I still improve? How could I learn and grow from that? Also, I think there are a whole bunch of unintended consequences when it comes to assigning a grade. Coming back to that motivation and that self-motivation piece, It can diminish intrinsic motivation, relying just on that extrinsic motivation of the grade instead. It can promote a fixed mindset and stifle some of the creativity that can happen when we're not afraid to fail or we're not afraid to try something new. It can foster an unhealthy competition amongst peers, especially in times where there are scarce resources, increase anxiety and stress, and just generally promote inequality. When I

4

started to incorporate exercises in metacognition, self-regulation or self- motivation into my classes, I quickly noticed that assigning numbers or grades was detracting from my end goal.

Then the last thing that I want to highlight is academic dishonesty, especially in a time of AI, is a hot topic that people have been talking about a lot. When grades become the ultimate goal in an educational setting, some students feel the pressure to resort to dishonest means to achieve those grades. That might include cheating on exams, plagiarizing work, paired with easy access to AI written content. Of course, I don't think that's true for all students. Not at all. But because it has been a big topic, catching students cheating online has become a big business with seeing things like Turnitin and AI recognizers. It's important to think about, well, how can we increase that intrinsic motivation, decrease stress and anxiety to enable them to do well and focus on their learning journey.

Through this, I was drawn to ungrading. Ungrading is an educational approach that emphasizes learning, understanding, and personal growth over numerical grades. At its core, it's about understanding each student as an individual learner rather than a number or a letter on a piece of paper. And it really does promote a culture of self-assessment, self-regulation, self-reflection, and intrinsic motivation that I was hoping to achieve. The book by Susan Blum on ungrading is filled with strategies that you can implement. To be honest, they weren't all for me. And I don't think that they work for all courses or styles of institutes. But there were a few things that did really resonate with me. In particular, ideas around community building, with a focus on learning and support, paired with recognizing student progress. This fit really well with metacognition, self-regulation, and self-motivation for me.

In the first year after I started to try and do this, my approach was twofold. First, I wanted to create a community of learning and support within my classroom. Right from the get go in all of my courses, I introduced the concept of metacognition on the first day. They do things like take a study skills inventory and develop a learning and development plan for their course as a whole.

In the resources that I've, I've included some examples of what that looks like in my course. Right at the get go, I have a module about metacognition. And we talk about it in the class. They do a little study skills inventory. Again, we talk about what were the results, what do some of their peers do versus others, what works for different people? Then they do that learning development plan, where they come up with thinking about what they're hoping to achieve out of the class. That might be a grade, that might be a learning outcome. It varies for students, but getting them starting to think about what steps will they take. How will they schedule their time? What works for them? What doesn't work for them? And then this comes up throughout the course and they have to reflect on, okay, where did I start the course, what did I think I was going to do? And what have I adjusted since?

The next piece was to start reinforcing self-regulation, motivation, and student progress within my actual assignments. I was working under a traditional, because I teach in computing, a

traditional lecture lab model. So start off with a lecture. My students do the lab. I grade the lab. The next week, we repeat again. I was finding that process a little draining and a little demotivating. Taking a page from design thinking and iterative development in the technology world, I started having my students complete assignment change logs. This was the first step. So if somebody is handing in an assignment, when I give feedback, that's not the end of the assignment. Instead, they have the opportunity to change, adjust, update, resubmit, get feedback back again. The other thing I started to do was something called lab portfolios. Instead of saying, "Okay, at the end of the week, on your lab, you've received a grade." Now saying, "We're not going to have grades on our labs. Instead we're going to really focus on using our labs as learning." Because I work in a post-secondary and an accredited post- secondary institute, of course, I do have to have grades. I just removed it from those weekly labs, focusing instead on the intrinsic motivation and making sure we were skill building. At the end, they would take all of their labs, everything that they have done. I usually split it into two because this takes practice and time for students, especially when it's something new. I'll usually have them submit a portfolio halfway. And then at the end, summarizing what they did in their labs. Summarizing if they made changes, what feedback did they get? How did they think they do? And at the very end, assigning themselves a grade.

Again, this isn't perfect, but it was what I started with. Some examples of what the lab portfolios look like and what the change logs looked like.

There's a question in here, "What would you do if the assessment is perfect and there is no room for improvement or modification?" Let the student know. I still give them some feedback. I tell them what I liked about it and what I thought was really well done. Then sometimes I've started to, and I'll get into this in my next set of slides, do peer reviews. If a student is doing really well, I'll ask them if it's okay for me to share that within the class. Or if they're interested in pairing with a student who had some challenges and could use some support in their improvement process.

With these first things, from the student side, it was going pretty well. I was getting a lot of good feedback. I was noticing my instructional surveys that we do at the end of the term, students were feeling like the methods of evaluating were more fair and appropriate. They felt more like they had more time. I noticed stress levels go down, and feedback on progress. It increased metacognition skills throughout the course. For example, two terms ago, I had some students who had some pretty drastic life issues happen. Two students who were diagnosed with major medical conditions and a student who lost their housing part way through term. Historically, I would have seen these students drop out of my class, have a really hard time getting through it. But because of the flexibility and the focus on the learning process, we were able to figure out ways for them to maybe take a step back from class when they needed to, put in some strategies to help them. And I still saw them get all the learning outcomes they needed and succeed in the class. Of course, it wasn't all perfect. Some of the big challenges that we faced were my students struggled to find feedback and knowing where their areas of improvement are. So we use at BCIT a learning management system called D2L. It works very

similarly, I know some of you use Canvas and it looks very similar to that. In D2L, when you have submitted an assignment, especially if you've submitted multiple iterations, it takes a lot of clicks to go through and see where your feedback is. The feedback is all chunked in weird places. Sometimes students would be clicking through and they're like, I don't know where my feedback is, I can't really clearly tell. Sometimes they would miss something on a previous one and not see it on the next one. Just made it really complicated and challenging. Then when it came to the learning management system on my side, I often found that I felt like I was trying to fit a circle in a square box. Instead of... I was trying to do something that the system wasn't intended to do. Even when I would have now in D2L, at least on assignments, I can have a box that says it doesn't have to have a grade attached to it. But I quite like the quiz feature and the way that it lays out questions. And you can look at them, all the students, at once. But you have to have grades or a number attached to those. Then if you wanted to incorporate some of, maybe even just on a quiz or a test, some of self- reflection questions, again, you have to have a grade attached to it. There's no way to remove it. As a result, I found that my workload and the time spent trying to provide feedback and figure out how to give that went up a lot because I couldn't simply just add it into the system in the way that I was doing it before.

Enter approach number two, and this is where I'm at right now. I started to imagine what my ideal LMS would look like. In some cases there are just small tweaks to the one that I already have. The first to help with my workload, as well as to increase social and co-regulation skills or peer review, and having that built into the system. I know UBC has done some really cool open education and open resource work around some peer-review tools. But for the big companies out there, that's not really already in learning management systems. For the ones that you can add on, they're either not located in Canada, don't follow our privacy laws, or extremely expensive. Thinking about how can I implement peer review in my class while still using the technology? Because right now what I'm doing, when I do want to do it, is basically printing things off and handing them around the classroom. Then I started to think about new forms of technology. How can I make that feedback process clearer for students? How can I reduce their workload and mine and focus on some skill building?

There are few things that I wanted to see in my next gen LMS. The first is feedback indicators. Instead of grades, indicators that feedback has been left. There may be some suggestions for changes or if it's been approved. On the students side, something that shows it's been pending, that it's been reviewed and there are comments, or it's been endorsed. On the instructor side, something that shows me that it's either pending for submission, submitted, resubmitted, or finalized for the student. That is another thing. Sometimes giving feedback back and forth. And when you have to click through so many different places in the interface, I couldn't tell if this is what the student was submitting for final or if it was still in progress and those sorts of pieces. The next is being able to incorporate exercises in metacognition and self-regulation. That forethought phase, especially and that self-reflection phase, being able to add customizable questions around them that don't necessarily have points or grades attached. Threaded commenting or feedback is another big one that I think would really benefit our learning management systems. So on submissions, and I'll show a little comparison of what it looks like

now and what it might look like. Being able to see comments and give students the opportunity to respond and explain themselves. It's one thing for me to be able to give feedback and then maybe they'll make some adjustments. But I wanted to be able to hear what my students thought about that. If they had any questions, if they needed some clarification or even if they just want to respond and say, thank you for the comment, I'll use that moving forward. Help them track their progress. Be able to do peer reviews, allow other students to view and provide comments. I've looked at a few different peer-review tools, and I think it's useful to be able to say all students can see, so being able to, for example, if we're doing something and I let students know next week, be prepared. What we've just worked on is going to be shared across all students and they can click through and see what their peers came up with. Especially, I teach some classes where they do things like design or they come up with workflows. Being able to see and be inspired by each other is really beneficial. It doesn't necessarily, I don't want them to have to cross-post something into a discussion board. Being able to allow pure feedback and assign to specific students or assign to random students. Oh, that's great to know. Yeah, Google Forms can be great too, and I know quite a few instructors who use that. Then finally, easy access to history and changes. At its simplest, all submissions would at least be viewable on one page instead of having to have multiple windows open. Or click and close and open a new one and then close it and go back and open the next one. Because you can't really compare across iterations of assignments. And what would be even better is highlighted changes or document tracking like we have in our standard Google or Microsoft Word documents now.

What could it actually look like? I've just started to play around with some. If I could redesign what I have right now, what I might change. That first thing would just be, like I said, I specifically like the quiz tool over the assignment tool because of the way that it allows you to view and compare students. Also being able to ask pre-set questions rather than just having them upload a document and seeing them in those questions. Doing something like being able to remove the points that are attached to everything, Being able to... I can already section things into something like a pre-lab, a post-lab reflection, and the actual activity. But adding in that option to peer review. Being able to say not peer reviewed, assign randomly, or assign specific when actually setting up the questions.

Again, being able to remove those points and then including something like include a peer review for those specific questions. Because sometimes you might not want all the questions, you might not want students to be able to see each other's self-reflections. In some cases you might, but it all depends. And enable track changes.

Then the next one. I don't have this in a slide because it involves scrolling. But the actual view that students see that I see and that I would like to be able to have students see. Right now, I can see questions for different students on the left-hand side. But what I would really like to be able to see is not only different students but the iterations of that student. Too much. There we go. If a student has, not only can I provide a comment, the student could reply with a comment. Being able to see the revisions and when they were submitted and simply view those changes

all on one page to be able to track student progress and learning. It's pretty, what I consider simple or small changes. All functionality that exists within our current learning management system but in different places. And simply being able to unify it in one place and add the option to remove some of those grading aspects.

What are my next steps? Being able to implement some of these things. The first thing that I'm hoping to do is chat with my existing learning management system. D2L does sometimes take suggestions from people. They have forums where if something gets upvoted enough, they will work to implement it. At the very least, something I hope to do to make my world a little easier is to ask for the option to have questions in the quiz forum that don't require a grade or a mark attached to it. Then go from there chatting about maybe this is something they already have in the work, some of these things. And maybe they're not. I'm seeing some people respond in the chat. They're able to do, some of these things you can do already in a learning management system that I don't specifically have access to. But thank you. I will follow up and look at some of these for sure and see if it's something that I could potentially use. Then if not, looking towards being able to create my own version or start to prototype something that could be implemented into any LMS. To wrap up, I am done a little early, but I did want to open it up for questions and discussion because I'm really curious to see, like I said, who is already using learning management systems that allow for these things or has any tools or tricks. Or if there are people who've done something similar around trying to incorporate metacognition and self-regulation. What strategies have you taken? Have you found anything that works for you? I'm seeing lots in the chat, but I also feel free. I'm happy to take questions or comments over the mic as well. Awesome. It looks like PebblePad might be one for me to check out. Questions about using Google Drive or One Drive integrations with Brightspace. Google products have not been approved through PIA at BCIT. OneDrive has recently, and now all of our students, staff, and faculty do have Office 365. And that is actually something that I'm just looking into because previously our licenses weren't attached and we weren't able to share or track documents between faculty and students. But I am told that's changing in the spring and that's one of the very first things that I want to experiment with is integrating it into Brightspace. Briana, have you tried that at all? I'm curious to know how it went because...

BRIANA:
We haven't integrated OneDrive yet. We do have Google Drive. But the integrations work really nicely. Right. For students it's kind of seamless. But you can take advantage of the functionality of the tracking. Yeah. Like Microsoft Forms would be great for some of the things that you're doing.

ERIKA:
Exactly. And that is what I'm hoping for. I've been back and forth with our ITS and ETS staff and it sounds like hopefully I will be able to next term, but it takes some time...

BRIANA:
Did you try the discussions tool rather than the tool for some of this stuff?

ERIKA:
Yeah, I have tried the discussions tool. Again, I was just not quite finding that... Some things I wanted to be able to share. But those self- reflective pieces, I didn't necessarily always want students to have to share. I was finding then if I was using this discussion tools for some things, then students still had to go to another place to complete...

BRIANA:
You can use a group of one to make basically a private discussion area in Brightspace so that you have that option of having everything visible. Or if you use a group of one, it's basically a journaling space, so that doesn't have to be shared widely. Only you can see it.

ERIKA:
Okay, I will play around with that. These are great tips. I'm going to actually write some of these down quickly. Thank you.

MODERATOR:
Erika. There's another question there from Andy. Andy is wondering if you've been trying this in more of a domestic or international program or both? Both. I teach in a weird variety of courses. I teach one set of courses, or one course to a full-time cohort of students at Burnaby campus. They're typically domestic students with a few international students mixed into that cohort. I also teach two different online courses, and one is to a fully international cohort in South Africa. And one is to a fully domestic cohort here. So playing around with doing it in different places, I found when it came to some of this, my first approach, so really focusing on creating a community of learning and support. It has been more challenging with the online international cohort versus something like my in-class or in-person class, where I get to see the students face to face and talk to them and interact with them in a slightly different way. Yeah, great. A journal activity that you can comment on might work as well. Absolutely. And that's why to begin with, I wasn't even doing it in the learning management system. I was having students do these sorts of self- reflections and change logs or portfolios just in a Word document and then having them upload it. Awesome. I think that is all the questions then. Thanks so much. everyone. for your participation.

MODERATOR:
Great, thank you so much Erika for this very insightful and informative presentation.