Course Signals™
Quick Reference Guide for Instructors

Kent State University
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Step by Step Instructions to Calculate a Signal

1. **Initial Set Up**
   a. After logging in for the first time in a term, user will land on the “Home” tab.
   b. Each term, the instructor must enable their courses in Course Signals.
   c. The message directs the user to the select the Settings tab.

2. **Setting Up for the Term**
   a. Access the “Settings” tab
   b. Select term
   c. Select courses within the term for which you want to use Course Signals, click “Courses” to select all
   d. Set “Reminder” if you would like to receive an email reminding you to calculate signals.
   e. “Save”, then “OK”..."Settings data updated successfully "

![Course Signals Interface](image-url)
3. Run A Signal

a. **At least one graded item must be in the Blackboard gradebook before a signal can be run**

b. Access “Course Progress” tab, select course from “Section” dropdown
   i. Do not alter “Grade Criteria” unless you feel your grading system and success in this course, as well as, any future courses, necessitates a different risk band.
   ii. Click “Next”

c. Select Gradebook items (select only those items that have been graded and that you want to include in the signal calculation),
   i. Click “Next”
4. **View Results**
   
a. Click “Next”
5. Review Messages
   a. Add Course ID to Subject line of each message
   b. Update default messages as desired. Note: there are 3 messages that should be reviewed (only High Risk emails will be sent out.) Click on High Risk, High Effort in the Messages column to navigate to the next message.
   c. Update any placeholders (such as your office hours, or other course-specific information).
   d. Click “Save” of the three messages,
   e. click “Next”

6. Finish
   a. Select “Publish signal and send email”,
   b. click “Finish”
7. Student View of Their Signal in Blackboard

On your course home page, the student will see their most recent signal. When the student clicks on the hyperlink text, a pop up will display the email message associated with that signal. The student is also able to review their signal and message via their college email.
I am contacting you because I am very concerned about your performance in class to date. You are not doing well and if you continue on your current path, you could be at risk of not receiving a passing grade. You need to put more effort towards this course and seek out resources to help you succeed. You need to start making changes immediately in order to improve. If you need help please visit me during my office hours (available on request). You can also visit the Academic Success Center and other resources on campus for assistance. Please ask for help. I know you can be successful in this course.

Click here for more details about your progress in this class.
Institutional Defaults

The college determines institution-wide settings which default into Course Signals when you run the calculation. You may use these defaults, or you may modify them if needed.

1. Course Grade Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Level</th>
<th>Minimum %</th>
<th>Maximum %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Risk (Green)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Risk (Yellow)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Risk (Red)</td>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Effort Timeframe

**NOTE:** At this time, Kent State does not use Effort in the Signal calculation, please keep the default settings.

The effort/grade timeframe defines how far back in the term Course Signals should measure student engagement in Blackboard. The default 2-3 weeks. You may use this default or modify if needed.

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**Availability of Signals Calculation**

Course Signals uses **term** start and end dates (not part-of-term dates) to enable when signals can be calculated. You may calculate signals for your courses at any point within the start and end dates of the term with which the course is associated.

To calculate a signal, at least one gradebook column must contain grade information.

**Laying the Groundwork; Creating Positive Expectations**

Communicating with your students about Course Signals is a critical precursor to a positive and effective implementation. The following sample statements can be used verbatim or modified as appropriate for your course.
1. **Simple Description of Red, Yellow, and Green Signals**

   Red- Student is at risk of earning a poor grade in the course. It is extremely important that the student meets with the instructor immediately and/or uses resources recommended by the instructor.

   Yellow- Student could be performing better and is possibly at risk of earning a poor grade. Student should seek assistance from the instructor and/or use appropriate resources recommended by the instructor.

   Green- Student is doing well in the course. Student should continue to practice effective study skills and consider using appropriate resources to aid him/her in persisting on the path to success in the course.

2. **Introducing Students to Course Signals**
   a. Include description in syllabus (sample text below);
   b. Send an announcement via Blackboard (sample text below);
   c. Provide a brief overview of Course Signals on the first day of class;
   d. Provide a more detailed overview closer to time of first signal;
      i. Description of Course Signals’ purpose and meaning of signals.
      ii. Explanation that students will receive an email to their campus email regarding their signal and will find their signal in Blackboard. Explain that clicking on the link next to the signal in Blackboard will take them to your message as well.
      iii. Describe the frequency students can expect to receive a signal and/or message from you throughout the term (i.e. weekly) starting the early in the term.
      iv. Describe the steps the student should take if they believe they have received a specific signal in error.

3. **Sample Announcement in Blackboard**

   “We will be using Course Signals in this course to assist you in tracking your progress throughout the semester. The goal of using Course Signals is to ensure that you have frequent feedback from me to assist you in understanding course material and taking steps to be successful in this course.”

4. **Messages**

   Key elements to include in your Course Signals messages at the beginning of the semester-
   
   - Reinforce the purpose of using Course Signals in your course, the meaning of the signals, and frequency they can expect to receive a signal and/or message from you;
   - Your availability to help students;
   - Your desire to see them succeed in the course;
   - Reinforce course expectations and study tips (ex. study time they should be dedicating to the course);
   - Most helpful campus resources for your course (include this information in messages to your low, moderate, and high risk students).

4. **Maximize the Effectiveness of Course Signals**
• Make your availability to meet with students widely known; where, when and how;
• Promptly respond to students’ emails;
• Initiate face-to-face, phone, or email follow-up with students who have received consecutive red signals;
• Update your messages for each signal that you send to ensure messages are specific and relevant for each week

5. Sample Syllabus Language

“Course Signals is an innovative early intervention system that warns you when you are at risk of underperforming in a course. An intuitive stoplight tells you if you are performing well, holding steady, or underperforming in a course, and prompts students to take action. Participating faculty will generate a Signal every other week (although this may vary by course). You will see your Signal in the Course Signals channel on your course’s Blackboard homepage and will receive a supplementary email at your student email address. You should periodically check for Signals and follow up with your instructors in order to maximize your academic performance.”
Course Signals Guidelines & Login Information for Instructors

1. Login Information
   a. Access Course Signals via FlashLine on the Faculty & Advisor Tools Tab
      b. You will need to sign into Course Signals with the same sign-on credentials as FlashLine
         i. Username = XXXXX
         ii. Password = XXXX

2. Running Signals
   a. Must have at least one graded item in Blackboard gradebook in order to run a signal
   b. Leave default grade scale in place
      i. Exception is unless you feel your grading system and success in this course, as well as, any future courses, necessitates a different risk band.
   c. Set reminders to “Never”, or Set reminder emails to be sent as you desire.
   d. Edit email messages
      i. Make the following edits on each of the three high risk emails:
         1. Replace “XXX” in Subject line with the Course ID (e.g. PSYC 11762)
         2. We recommend adding the date at the top of the email to make reference later easier. You will need to manually enter the date into each email.
e. Run signals and send email message based on the following guidelines:
   i. Early assessment and feedback provides students with the best opportunity to gauge
      their effort and subsequent success in a class. We highly recommend providing
      assessments, and an initial Course Signal by the 4th week at the latest. We also
      recommend a minimum of 3 Signals during the semester. Course Signals should be
      sent after significant assessments have been given.
   
   ii. **Do not run signals during the same time frame as midterm grades are posted.**

f. If you choose to edit a signal, you must enter a comment explaining your reason.

g. Please do not edit more than two signals in a row for a single student. If a second signal
   continues to not be reflective of the student’s success in the course, then you must evaluate the
   information being used to create the signal (such as the Blackboard gradebook and/or the grade
   risk bands) to determine if they are accurate for your course.

3. **Support for Course Signals**
   a. Questions about Course Signals? Need Help?
      i. Carole Pegoraro- [crichte1@kent.edu](mailto:crichte1@kent.edu)