

VLE Baseline Checklist

Audience: This checklist is designed for TU Dublin lecturers who are teaching using a virtual learning environment (VLE).

The aim of this checklist is to help you:

- Review your Brightspace (or other VLE) module and see where you can make structural or practice changes which will benefit your students
- This checklist contains a set of good practice recommendations for the design and management of modules in TU Dublin's virtual learning environments (VLE).

Why it's important:

Student feedback on VLE usage frequently highlights the desire for a consistent VLE experience. Following this baseline will help deliver that consistent experience, and also ensure that your Brightspace modules are following current best pedagogical practice.

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1.Student Orientation Create a content unit called ‘Welcome’ or ‘Module Orientation’ & within it provide the following information for students	Done?
1.1 Welcome message – include a short welcome message to greet and orient learners. This can be text, video, or audio based.	
1.2 Staff information page – introduce yourself to students by including a bio, photo, and additional contact information as needed (communication preference and response times can be specified for learners in your module’s ‘communication statement’, see point 1.6 below)	
1.3 Provide a link to your module descriptor and learning outcomes and outline any special technical requirements for participation (software, hardware etc.)	
1.4 Module overview and navigation guide - To help learners navigate your module, provide an overview with information about each of its components and the relationships between them	
1.5 Assessment overview – provide an outline of the module assessment strategy, including a schedule of submission deadlines and opportunities for feedback	
1.6 A short ‘communication statement’ – include a section which details: how you will communicate with your students; their expectations with regards to your availability, ‘virtual office hours’ and response times; contact info for relevant support staff; class ‘netiquette, i.e. acceptable standards of communication and expectations of participation in the virtual classroom, discussion forums etc.	
1.7 Create a sense of connection – encourage students to update their profile with a short bio and profile picture, configure their notification settings and install the mobile app for their VLE (if available).	
2. Structure your Content Organise your syllabus content, activities and learning resources clearly and consistently using content units and topics. Key recommendations include:	Done?
2.1 Use clear and consistent terms – across the programmes of which your module is a part, agree consistent and clear use of terminology for organising content within the VLE (e.g. ‘unit 1, topic 1’, ‘week 1’, or descriptive headings)	
2.2 Break up your content – divide content/lecture materials into smaller, more digestible units or ‘chunks’ to facilitate learner navigation and engagement (e.g. break down subjects into a series of distinct subtopics using module ‘units’ and ‘topics’).	
2.3 Use Introductions – provide short introductions for each content topic/unit/week to orient your students.	
2.4 Add or release content incrementally throughout the semester rather than making it all available at once. Guide learners’ progress through module content and activities with conditional release.	
2.5 Integrate content and activities – link core material, at appropriate intervals, to activities that help learners to check their understanding and progression (such as self-correcting quizzes, discussions, ePortfolio reflections, or checklists).	
2.6 Provide a reading and resources list for each content unit/topic, with links to content hosted online	

<p>3. Live lectures and tutorials</p> <p>If you intend to host live or ‘synchronous’ webinars as part of your module, it is recommended that you:</p>	<p>Done?</p>
<p>3.1 Provide a clear schedule of live classes/lectures in advance, including session dates, times, and consistent descriptive titles.</p>	
<p>3.2 Notify learners - use the VLE’s communications tools to remind learners of upcoming live classes/lectures (e.g. announcements).</p>	
<p>3.3 Link to recordings - add links to webinar/virtual classroom recordings to your module as a resource</p>	
<p>3.4 Orient new learners - for new learners, such as first year cohorts, consider hosting a short preliminary virtual classroom session for troubleshooting, icebreakers, and orientation. Link to information about minimum technical requirements for participation.</p>	
<p>4.Communication</p> <p>Communicate regularly with your students. It is recommended that you:</p>	<p>Done?</p>
<p>4.1 Provide a communication ‘statement’ in the Orientation unit (see 1.6 above for details) and adhere to it.</p>	
<p>4.2 Use the announcements tool to communicate important updates to learners, such as key dates, upcoming online classes, or new module information. Encourage students to enable email notifications.</p>	
<p>4.3 Enable lecturer and peer communication - Use the VLE’s inbuilt tools (e.g. Discussion forums and FAQ tools) to facilitate peer communication, establish a module ‘knowledge-base’, and reduce the time you spend dealing with common queries.</p>	
<p>4.4 Establish presence - Where possible, enact lecturer ‘presence’ within the VLE – and model good communications for learners – by participating actively in module discussion forums.</p>	
<p>5.Assessment and Feedback</p> <p>Use the VLE to organise your module assessments</p>	<p>Done?</p>
<p>5.1 Provide a clear assessment schedule and overview in the Orientation/Welcome unit. (See 1.5 above for details)</p>	
<p>5.2 Balance assessments across the programme – carefully consider the timing of online assignment submissions and ensure that these do not clash with others set in the programmes of which your module is a part</p>	
<p>5.3 Link assessments to learning outcomes - as you create an assessment, note in the assessment description box the learning objectives that it is addressing. Where available, include marking schemes or rubrics.</p>	
<p>5.4 Promote Academic Integrity – and enable the plagiarism detection software for each assignment created.</p>	
<p>5.5 Link to guidance on online submission - include links to instructional guides for the tool being used to conduct the assessment and explain any technical requirements for submission. Where applicable, use tools such as FAQs or Discussions to address common student queries/issues (see point 4.3 above).</p>	

6.Resources	Done?
Create a resource unit into which you could upload the following:	
6.1 Provide a list of clearly labelled complementary resources for students to review (balancing formats: documents, webpages, audio, images and videos or other freely available open educational resources)	
6.2 Provide a copy of the overall module reading list identifying core texts. Bear in mind students may not have access to the physical library, so include descriptive links to content that is hosted online.	
7.Accessibility	Done?
To ensure that all participants can easily navigate and interact with your module:	
7.1 Fonts and accessibility - check that your font size is large enough to be read comfortably on screen. Ensure there is high contrast with any coloured text for better readability, avoid using colour as a way of conveying information	
7.2 Navigation and linking - Make sure that module content is clearly organised and labelled and use a consistent navigational style; verify that all links provided are live and not broken, use descriptive link titles, if links will open in another tab or window, make this clear.	
7.3 Media captioning and descriptions - ensure that all media assets used have meaningful descriptions and alternative text. Where feasible, include text transcriptions or captioning for audio and video.	
7.4 Adhere to TU Dublin accessibility guidelines issued by Disability Services	
7.5 Check accessibility - if your VLE supports it, employ an accessibility checker to identify and resolve common accessibility issues.	
8.Quality Assurance (QA)	Done?
8.1 QA - provide the students with the QA module evaluation form at the end of the module in accordance with Academic Affairs guidelines	

Recommendation!

**Make easy changes first
and revisit this checklist
when time allows**