Model Course Structure – For Faculty
Developing Your Online Course

This guide is for use by faculty interested in more detailed information on designing and developing their online course. It is also downloadable from the Faculty Resources module in the General Use template itself.

Course Home Page

Banner
You can swap out the default banner for one of your liking by choosing **Change Image** from Banner Settings menu (see the three dots in the upper, right-hand corner of the banner).

Announcements
These should be used both to welcome your students and on an ongoing basis to pass along information. They can be in the form of text or video. Announcements will not only establish your presence in the course, but also provide course updates, due date reminders, any news items of interest, etc. In the sample welcome message (Figure 1), the **bolded phrases** could be replaced with hyperlinks to relevant pages in the Brightspace course site.

Widgets
There are a number of widgets that have been designed to highlight key information and support your students. Widgets can be customized, as needed, under **Course Admin** > **Widgets**. In the **Custom Widget List**, look for the following:

TEMPLATE: Campus Resources
TEMPLATE: Instructor Info*
TEMPLATE: Start Here Button
TEMPLATE: Syllabus*
TEMPLATE: Synchronous Session Link*
TEMPLATE: Time at Dalhousie

* Customize these widgets with your own information.

Figure 1. Sample Welcome Message

<u>**Welcome, {FirstName}, to ABCD1234: Sample Course**</u>

[Write a welcome message here. You may consider including elements such as:
- Links to initial activities, such as **reading the syllabus**, **posting an introduction**, or **visit the Orientation (Start Here) page**
- Description of course format (held online through Brightspace, asynchronous/synchronous elements, etc.)
- Ways students can personalize their course space (e.g., uploading profile picture, adjusting notifications settings, etc.)
- Suggestion that students download the **Brightspace Pulse app** to keep track of their courses on the go
- Information on where students can get technical support for Brightspace or other instructional technologies, such as a link to the **Help Desk** or the email address helpdesk@dal.ca]

[you may consider inserting a personal welcome video message here]

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me via email or through the **Course Questions or Help forum**. I look forward to learning with you this term!

All the best,

Your Name

<u>**TEMPLATE: Instructor Info**</u>

Customize this widget by including your name and email address, as well as office hours. Include a photograph of yourself to help establish a teaching presence in your course.

Instructor Information

Name
[your email]

Office Hours

Tuesdays 11:35-12:30 Atlantic
or by appointment

[PICTURE HERE]

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

elearning@dal.ca

TEMPLATE: Start Here Button

Link the Start Here button widget to your course orientation (i.e., **Content > Orientation: Start Here** module).

TEMPLATE: Support & Resources

These support and resources links can be customized to include ones specific to your Faculty or department. Mental health resources for students is highlighted.

Support & Resources

Accessibility Support

Black Student Advising Centre

Important Deadlines

Indigenous Student Centre

International Student Centre

LGBTQ2SIA+ Collaborative

Online Learning Resources

Student Health and Wellness

The Writing Centre

Support for Your Mental Health

TEMPLATE: Syllabus

Customize this widget by linking the "Course Syllabus" text to your syllabus in the Content area of Brightspace. Keep your Manage Files area organized by putting your syllabus and other general course documents in the **Course _Documents** folder.

Course Syllabus

If you ever have any questions about the course schedule, assignments, my contact information, policies, or more, consult the Course Syllabus.

TEMPLATE: Synchronous Sessions

Customize this widget by adding a link to your synchronous class sessions, such as those held through Collaborate Ultra or Microsoft Teams.

Link to "Live" Class Sessions

[Insert link to synchronous class session here. Make sure it "opens in a new window."]

TEMPLATE: Time at Dalhousie

Display this widget to indicate the time at Dalhousie to make it easier for students in other time zones.

Time at Dalhousie:
05:29 PM Atlantic

FOOTER: Plain (or customized by Faculty)

Include this widget at the bottom of your course site homepage. Use the footer that corresponds to your Faculty or the Faculty of the course or choose from the plain footer.

Faculty Name Here

FOOTER: Architecture and Planning
FOOTER: Arts and Social Sciences
FOOTER: Computer Science
FOOTER: Dentistry
FOOTER: Engineering
FOOTER: Faculty of Agriculture
FOOTER: Graduate Studies

FOOTER: Health
FOOTER: King's
FOOTER: Law
FOOTER: Management
FOOTER: Medicine
FOOTER: Science
FOOTER: Sustainability

There are other standard widgets you can add to your homepage (e.g., **Groups**). For more information on customizing your course site homepage and widgets, see the Brightspace Tutorial, Homepage Management - Create and Manage a Course Homepage.

Calendar Widget – Entries can be added manually or will automatically populate when due dates are set in activities and assessments. When you use the calendar widget, students can see these dates in the Brightspace Pulse app or sync them with their Office 365 calendars.

Content

Overview

In the Overview tab on the Content page, include an overview of the course, a course description, and the course learning outcomes. These can be easily copied from the course syllabus and pasted here. In addition, or as an alternative, these can be added at the beginning of the Orientation module. **(If you do not post anything in the Overview area, the link will not be visible to students.)**

A word of caution: files attached to the **Overview** page are NOT downloadable for students. We recommend not putting the syllabus in this area.

Table of Contents

The content for your course, which will also include links to a course orientation, activities, and assessments, will appear as modules under the Table of Contents in the Content area of Brightspace. A simple modular structure is easiest for students to navigate. Modules include:

Orientation: Start Here

In description area of the **Orientation: Start Here** module, highlight information for students, such as:

- Course description and course learning outcomes (unless on Overview page)
- A video tour of the Brightspace course site – If you are using the Model Course Structure, a course tour video has been provided for you to use.)
- How the course is organized (e.g., synchronous/asynchronous, by modules, etc.)
- Communication plan (e.g., how you will use announcements, emails, discussions; frequency of communication; periods of downtime, etc.) – You do not need to be available 24/7 just because you're teaching online… establish "no screen" days and encourage your students to do the same
- Orientation activities (e.g., locating and reading the syllabus, posting introductions, etc.)

When appropriate, hyperlink the text of the orientation to take students to other key areas of Brightspace (Introductions discussion, course syllabus, Module 1, etc.).

In the content area below the orientation description, link to files and areas such as:

- General course discussions: Two have been set up for you: one for **Introductions** and one for **Course Questions or Help**. You may wish to include instructions (see samples below in Discussions section of this document) in the description area of these discussion topics.
- Instructor video: This short (2 minutes or less) video where you talk about yourself and background, generally about the course, and your expectations of students. You may choose to put this in your homepage welcome announcement instead.
- Information on specialized software, technology, or digital skills required for the course
- Participation or group work guidelines

- [Netiquette guidelines](#)
- Digital resources or e-textbooks
- Synchronous elements such as office hours or live class sessions

Syllabus (Submodule)
In the **Orientation: Start Here** module, the **Syllabus** submodule is where you upload your course syllabus. (In the Manage Files area, this can be placed in the **Course_Documents** folder.) Upload the syllabus to this submodule and then link to it from the homepage widget.

> In the description area of the Syllabus submodule, you might consider creating an interactive, web-based version of the syllabus, rather than only attaching it as a PDF. You can create hyperlinks within the text and make edits without having to upload a new document.

Help & Support
The next module is one that includes links to student support resources, such as a link to the Course Questions or Help discussion (also linked from Orientation module). In addition, support resources include:
- Instructional Technology Resources and Help for Students
- Find, Borrow, and Do Research at Dalhousie Libraries
- On Track (Dalhousie Academic Support)
- Online Learning at Dalhousie
- Brightspace Pulse App: Online Learning on the Go!
- Video Tutorials on Navigating Brightspace (Playlist)

Other resources for students are included in the campus Support & Resources widget. If you choose not to use this widget on your course site homepage, consider including the links from it in your **Help & Support** content module.

Content Modules
Content should be set up in a modular fashion and organized by week and/or topic, e.g., Module 1, Module 2, Module 3, etc. through Module 12. We recommend using the term "Module," rather than "Week" so as to avoid confusion when it comes to Reading Week.

Example module names could include:

Module 7 – just module number,

Module 2: Gender and the Media – module number and topic, or

Module 4: Neuroscience in Everyday Life – November 23-27 – module number, topic, date range

Each module could include:

- An **introduction** to the week, including specifying module-level outcomes
- Brief **video lecture** (with captions) outlining important details, punctuated by formative quizzes, reflective or written exercises, and activities
- **Links to readings and content videos.** Consider submitting a list of readings to the [Libraries Course eReserves](#) and have the placed in your course site.
- **Activities** that allow students to practice meeting the learning outcomes. These may be group-based or individual, with detailed instructions and related rubrics.
- **Assignment, quiz, or other form of assessment** – Link to the assignment dropbox or quiz on those module pages where an assignment or quiz is due that week. Students can also access all their assignment dropboxes and quizzes from the Assessments menu item at the top of the page.

A new trend has been for faculty to create a separate module or submodule dedicated to giving students assessment descriptions, instructions, or rubrics—highlighting information that is included in the course syllabus. Student feedback has indicated that assignment descriptions and rubrics are best included in **Assessments** > **Assignments** menu of Brightspace.

In the new assignment creation and editing experience in Brightspace, you can describe assignments by uploading a file, linking to the Content area or OneDrive, or linking to the web. You can also record audio or video to describe an assignment and build a rubric right in Brightspace, associating it with a Grade Item to reduce the time you spend entering grades.

External Learning Tools
A hidden module, with links to External Learning Tools, including Panopto, Collaborate Ultra, Urkund, and Campus Pack Wiki, is included for your convenience.

Faculty Resources
A hidden module with links to support for faculty is included for your convenience.

Discussions

Two general course discussions have been set up for you: one for **Introductions** and one for **Course Questions or Help**. You may wish to include instructions (see samples below) in the Description area of these discussion topics. Link to these from the course orientation.

In addition, as a way to create student community, you may wish to include an optional, informal discussion topic, such as "Student Café," where students discuss their weekend plans,

local news of interest, upcoming events, etc. The idea is to create a space to promote open conversation, the way that would normally happen before and after a face-to-face class.

Some professors choose to separate course logistics questions from course content questions.

Introductions

Please take a moment to introduce yourself to discover what you may have in common with your peers. Using a new or reply thread, please tell your peers and the instructor your name, program of study, pronouns, and anything personal you'd like to share (e.g., what you do for fun, about your family, your expectations for the course, etc.), as well as how you feel your peers and the instructors can best support your learning journey. **[Introduce yourself in this discussion topic in order to model for your students what you expect from them.]**

Course Questions or Help

Use this space to post any general questions you have about our class or this Brightspace site. You don't have to wait for me or the TAs to answer the question—**If you know the answer to something posted here, please respond to your classmate!** If you have a more individual concern, please email me directly. Note: you can post your questions anonymously, but the course instructor and TA will still be able to see your name.

Surveys

Two short, anonymous surveys have been included as examples of what you might choose to use with your students to collect their feedback. Feel free to use these as is or adapt them for your own course context. Link to them from the content modules.

Feedback Survey Sample #1
1. Please rate your satisfaction with this module.
2. Would you like additional information or resources? Do you still have lingering questions? I welcome your comments or questions about this module or the course.

Feedback Survey Sample #2
1. What aspects of the course—Brightspace layout, announcements, activities, assignments, content, office hours, etc.—do you find helpful and should continue?
2. What can I do differently to make the course a more valuable experience for you?

For instructions on implementing the templates, <u>visit the Online Teaching website</u>.