

Blackboard Course Building Guidelines

1. Prepare Yourself Before Getting Started

Instructors may need to increase their technical skills to ensure they are familiar with the tools most used in online courses (e.g., discussion boards, quizzes, posting documents and video), as well as increase their familiarity with learning theories and active learning techniques. In addition, we highly recommend that faculty who plan to teach online first take an online workshop or course.

2. Plan the Course Map

- Set Course Goals
- Create Unit Learning Objectives
- Develop Assessments
- Choose Learning Activities

3. Produce Media and Materials

Once the course map is ready, we will need to fill it in with detailed information. It may be tempting to add files to Blackboard as you create them, but to save time (and avoid accidental loss during content creation) consider creating all of your materials on your local computer and choosing your course structure before uploading them to your course site.

4. Publish the Transformed Course

- **Choose a Meaningful Organization Scheme**
 - If the content of your course will be consistent over time, consider grouping your content by week (i.e. all content students will need for a given week will be grouped in one place)
 - If not, consider grouping content by topic or by item type (e.g. readings, assignments)
- **Customize the Course Menu** - The course menu defines the primary organizational structure of a course, and can help or hinder students' abilities to locate course materials.
 - Customize the course menu to help students identify critical course areas.
 - Rename menu items to reflect their contents.
 - Group similar items together.
 - Use headers and dividers tools to separate groups of items.
 - Hide menu items that are not used in the course.
- **Create & Organize Content Folders** - Within each course area, content folders can be used to group materials and files. Commonly, items are grouped by unit (or week), topic, and by how they will be used.
- **Add Course Content** - Add all course material to the course (e.g. files, Web links, tools, videos, e-reserves, quizzes, orientation materials, etc.). Check for misspellings, missing content, and broken links.
- **Peer-Review the Course** - Before making the course available to incoming students, invite a colleague, student, or instructional designer to review your course to ensure course instructions are clear and free of errors.

5. Promote Student Performance

The success of an online course relies not only on the structure and content of the course, but also on the instructor's ability to facilitate student learning. Students can benefit from various types of support at different times in the course.

- **Welcome**
 - Send an email that consists of Instructor's welcome message and a brief introduction of the class.
 - Include a copy of the course syllabus, schedule, and any special course requirements
- **Orient**
 - Provide a guide to getting started, a to-do-list that guides students to explore the course.
- **Frame & Remind**
 - Each week, post a Blackboard announcement (using text, audio, and/or video formats) and send an accompanying email to inform students of their progress through the course, summarize past accomplishments, and remind students about upcoming due dates.
- **Guide**
 - Use Blackboard's Grade Center and related tools to provide feedback. Comment on what students did well and several focused areas of improvement.
 - Utilize Blackboard's quiz tool, as appropriate, for self- and instructor-graded assessments.
- **Monitor**
 - Log in frequently to check on student activities, such as discussion posts and assignment submissions.
 - Utilize Blackboard's built-in features designed to help track student activities and participation.