



Technology Enhanced Learning

Module Design in Brightspace

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Brightspace offers us an opportunity to provide students with an enhanced learning experience regardless of the mode of delivery. The collaborative affordances of this Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has the potential to enable a shift towards more interactive teaching approaches. This provides a distinct opportunity to motivate students to engage at a deeper level with module learning materials, activities and assessments and to reflectively participate in the learning experience.

This resource aims to provide guidance to assist module coordinators to design or redesign modules to present them via Brightspace in a contextualised format. It will support module coordinators in making decisions based upon the pedagogical requirements of a module thus enabling the potential to utilise Brightspace as an active teaching and learning environment.

The guide comprises of the following sections;



[Design Principles](#)



[Design Steps](#)



[Guidelines for Presenting Learning Materials and Activities in UCD VLE](#)



[Module Design and Structure Considerations in Brightspace](#)



Design Principles

Constructive alignment is the most fundamental principle of design in the outcomes-based curriculum that is used in UCD, it is concerned with ensuring there is coherence between learning outcomes and the alignment of teaching and learning activities and assessments.



For more [ideas and case studies on Module Design and Enhancement](#)

[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) is a principle-based approach to curriculum development to provide all students with equal opportunities to learn. The framework recommends that educators follow three core principles when designing learning experiences by including;

- multiple means of engagement
- multiple means of representation
- multiple means of action/expression

Implementation of universal design should be done at module/programme design stage regardless of mode of delivery.



Design Steps

Starting from the aforementioned principles, to inform your module design, it is recommended that the following steps should be considered:



Step 1: Outline the Learning Outcomes and Assessment

- Review the [Nine Principles for Universal Design for Instruction](#) and consider some simple strategies for implementation in your module design.
- Consider what your students will learn, or what they will have achieved at the end of the module.
- Consider the needs of your student group and the context of their learning, e.g. your student cohort, their previous experience.
- Determine the various types of assessment and feedback tasks the students will do to demonstrate what they will have learned. Then you can determine which structure, content and assessment and feedback activities fit.
- Based on this write the module learning outcomes.



For some practical examples and strategies to implement see; [Universal Design for Curriculum Design; Case Studies from University College Dublin](#)



Step 2: Determine Learning Materials and Activities

- Consider the various activities students can do to work towards achieving the learning outcomes.
- Consider what learning materials should you include for students? Consider using a variety of types of materials to engage all students i.e. slides, documents, multimedia etc. Which of these learning activities or assessments would best lend themselves to an online format and which to a face-to-face format?
- How can students learn from each other? Emphasise active student learning, in particular students' peer learning, self-monitoring and autonomous learning. From this a learning pathway will emerge that connects all these activities.
- Based on this align the module learning outcomes assessment approaches and teaching and learning activities



Step 3: Define your Role as a Lecturer (or tutor)

- What learning materials do you make available and when? What do you present/demonstrate in the face-to-face or online lectures? Consider a variety of methods of instruction.
- Where do you offer space for student interaction with peer and/or lecturer/tutor.
- How and when do you give students feedback and how do they develop their own skills of self-monitoring.



Guidelines for Presenting Learning Materials and Activities in UCD VLE

These good practice guidelines are adapted from the [UCD Teaching and Learning Blended Learning Initiative](#) and are informed by the current literature. They are applicable for all [Technology Enhanced Learning modes of delivery](#).

The purpose of learning materials and assessment activities are clearly presented.

Provide clear narratives within Brightspace for students; outlining module expectations, making explicit the purpose of learning materials and how learning activities map to the overall assessment of the module. In the case of online scheduled learning and activities clear guidance for students on when to do an activity and how long they require to complete it is necessary.

The sequence of learning materials and assessment activities should be structured in a way that enables students to achieve the stated learning outcomes.

Provide students with a learning pathway, ensuring that module materials and activities flow in a logical progression and navigation is intuitive while naming conventions are relevant for students. Ensure students are guided through scaffolded activities, discussions, opportunities for reflection and extension activities as required. In the case of blended learning delivery, your Brightspace module should provide an efficient sequence which coherently links the face-to-face delivery to the out of class online learning activities and assessments.

Learning materials and activities are ‘chunked’ or grouped into manageable segments to assist students navigate and engage fully with the learning experience.

Create a thematic structure to the module (to help reduce information overload), chunk learning materials by either theme/subject, time-scale or activity, presenting related learning materials and activities in grouped segments. How learning materials are presented within Brightspace (i.e. through learning units or subunits) has the potential to change the focus from a list of content resources to a more thematic contextualised student-centred structure.

Incorporate learning materials and activities that maximise opportunities for learning through interaction with self, with peers as well as with the instructor.

Consider activity-led and collaborative opportunities for students to engage with peers as well as with the instructor that supports and scaffolds learning. In addition, consider creating self-monitoring learning opportunities within Brightspace which allow students to gauge their own progress and learn through interaction with self (through reflection e.g. ePortfolio).

Module information and learning materials are accessible to all students

An agreed universal design standard across a programme should be considered to ensure equitable treatment of all students regardless of ability or disability. All module information, learning materials and assessments should be presented in a consistent manner and in accessible formats across Brightspace modules including on mobile devices that students may use.



For further ideas on [making online material accessible for all students](#) and information on [inclusive practice with help of technology](#).



Module Design & Structure Considerations in Brightspace



Within Brightspace the following areas are outlined and considerations are highlighted regarding the key components of the platform that will assist in the design and structuring of modules;

1. **Module Homepage**

The module homepage is the initial page that students see when entering a module, it is comprised of a module banner, announcements, the module descriptor and the module calendar

2. **My Learning (Module Content Page)**

'My Learning' is accessible in the navigation bar, it takes you to the core area within your module where you can create and share module information, learning materials, activities and assessments with your students. It is comprised of the following sections; overview, bookmarks, module schedule and my content (detailed below).

3. **My Content (Module Content Page)**

The My Content panel lists the module structure in unit format. From here you can also view and manage content items and sub-units. Ideally you should aim to create a transparent module structure that supports and scaffolds learning. Consider if it is clear which learning outcomes students have to achieve. To assist students work towards this, use the Brightspace structures to sequence learning materials and activities and to design an optimal learning pathway. Brightspace allows you to organise and structure your module using the following components; units and sub-units containing content items.

1. Module Homepage

Brightspace Component	Consideration
<p>Module Banner is the image spanning the top of the module page. The same image is also used as a thumbnail image for your module available on login under 'My Modules'.</p>	<p>Module banners can be removed or replaced. It is recommended that you consider replacing the banner with an image that represents your module/programme and makes it easy for students to identify the module.</p> <p> Practical Tip: The module banner can be changed via the module homepage with options to change image (select image from the repository or upload an image), recommended file size: 1200 pixels (wide) x 200 pixels (height). Check if your School/Unit has images for use.</p>

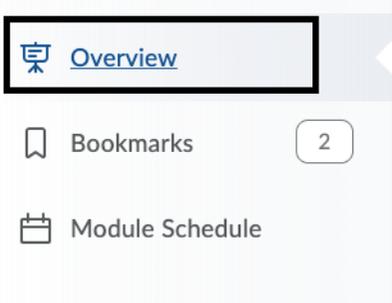
Brightspace Component	Consideration
<p>Announcements are a key method of communicating with all students enrolled in a module. All announcements are displayed on the module homepage and students can select to receive module announcements via email or the pulse app.</p>	<p>It is recommended that you use announcements as the primary method for communicating with your students, consider using them to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inform students of any relevant changes (rescheduling of classes), updates (i.e. new content) or remind students of due dates and deadlines • check-in with students in between classes (i.e. outline next steps or what is expected during this period of time) • present the message in context i.e. to include links to other areas of the module or an attachments as appropriate, to personalise the announcement you can use replace strings. <p> Practical Tip: Module announcements are one of the actions that triggers instant notifications which students can choose to receive. Ensure your students are aware how they customise their notifications in Brightspace (via their profile/notifications tool) so they can select to receive them by email.</p>

1. Module Homepage

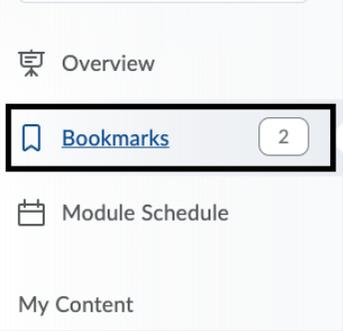
Brightspace Component	Consideration
<p>Module Descriptor widget is automatically populated to display existing module descriptor information that has been entered via the Curriculum Management System (CMS).</p>	<p>Module descriptors completed in the CMS will now be mirrored in Brightspace and will be available to students via their module homepage. The provision of key information in the module descriptor is an opportunity to fully capture, teaching and learning approaches, feedback and assessment strategies.</p> <p> Practical Tip: These should be completed in line with UCD Academic Regulations and as per the ‘how-to-guides’ for the CMS. Students will expect module delivery, assessment and feedback to be in accordance with the information in Module Descriptor which will now be visible to students on the homepage of all modules.</p>

Brightspace Component	Consideration
<p>Calendar contains all timetabled information and makes key due dates and submission deadlines visible.</p>	<p>It is recommended that you create one-time or recurring module events (i.e. weekly lectures, labs, online meetings etc) in the module calendar. As module coordinator you can adjust manually the settings for module learning materials, activities and assessments so they will display in the module calendar as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Units and content items within ‘My Content’ area - due dates will automatically be added to the calendar • Discussions - option to display start and end dates in calendar • Quizzes - option to display start and end dates in calendar • Submissions - due dates will automatically be added to the calendar

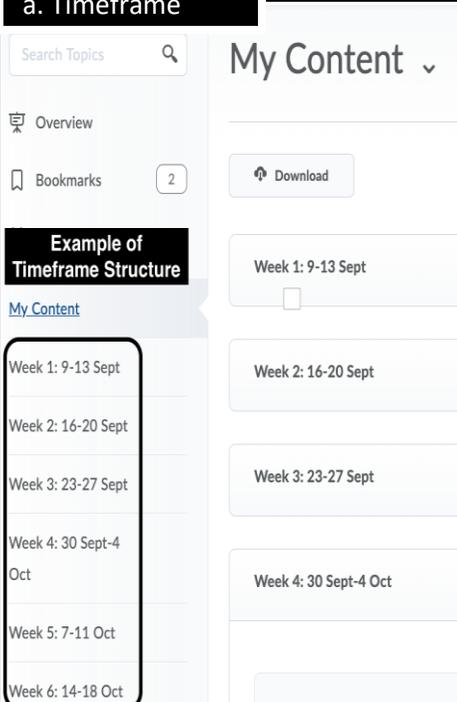
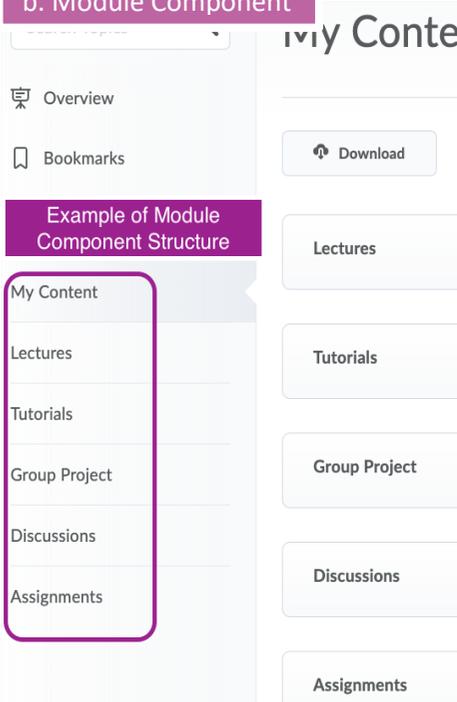
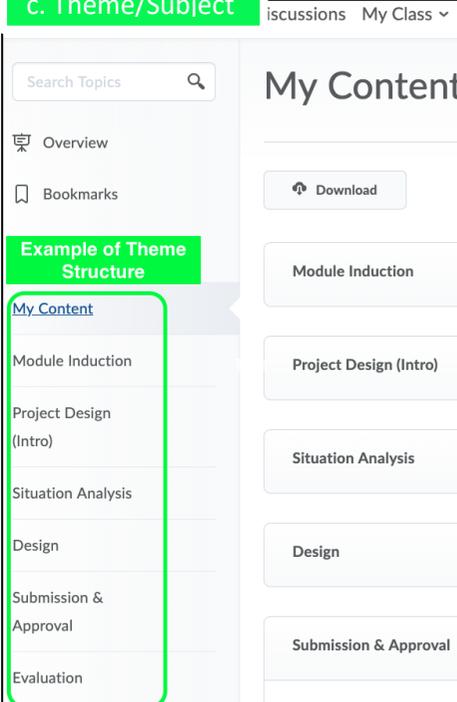
2. My Learning – Module Content Page

Brightspace Component	Consideration
<p>Overview is a space to display module information and is visible to students once they access their module via 'My Learning'</p>  <p>The screenshot shows a navigation menu with three items: 'Overview' (highlighted with a black box), 'Bookmarks' (with a '2' badge), and 'Module Schedule'.</p>	<p>You can insert module overview information using the html editor, and/or you add a file attachment. It is recommended that you consider using this area (as is appropriate to your module) which may include the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to welcome students to the module, as module coordinator you can add a suitable message or record a welcome video• to provide students with key contacts, office hours etc• to provide students with key module information i.e. that which is additional to the module descriptor (for example module participation expectations, timetable and submission dates, assignment briefs etc). This type of information could also be provided by attaching or embedding a module handbook <p> Practical Tip: If you do not put anything into the overview section it will not be visible to students. It is recommended that the overview area of a module should be used in a consistent manner across all modules of a programme.</p>

2. My Learning – Module Content Page

Brightspace Component	Consideration
<p>Bookmarks are content items bookmarked that appear in a list on the bookmarks page.</p> 	<p>It is recommended as a module coordinator that you understand how this tool works: To add a bookmark click the add bookmark icon while viewing a topic to add it to your bookmarks list. The number beside the bookmarks link on the left navigation indicates how many bookmarks you have.</p> <p> Practical Tip: Bookmarks are user-specific, meaning that you will only see the content items that you have bookmarked for yourself, and your students will only see the content items that they bookmark themselves.</p>
<p>Module Schedule page lists due dates, start/end dates and other upcoming events for the next seven days and from the calendar tool</p>	<p>If you set availability dates or a due date for learning materials or activities it appears in the Module Schedule page and the Agenda view in the Calendar tool.</p> <p>It is recommended as a module coordinator that you understand how this tool works: Click Module Schedule to view all past, current, and future course events. The number beside the Module Schedule link indicates how many upcoming events you have.</p>

3. My Content – Module Content Page

Brightspace Component	Consideration
<p>The My Content section consists of:</p> <p>Units are broad (level one) categories, which are used to structure module content i.e. weekly, thematically or by module components. You must create a Unit before you can add module content items.</p> <p>Content Items are learning materials/activities contained within a unit (or sub-unit), these can consist of content files, embedded content, links to (existing) learning activities (i.e. quizzes, assignments, discussions etc).</p> <p>Sub-units are used to divide learning materials/activities further within a unit (level 2/3).</p>	<p>It is recommended that you organise your module’s learning materials and activities into units as appropriate to your teaching context. Brightspace offers flexibility in that you can structure units by;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Timeframe (e.g. weeks of semester) Module components (e.g. lectures, tutorials/labs, assignments etc) Theme/subject (i.e. if you have content that encompasses more than one week) <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>a. Timeframe</p>  </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>b. Module Component</p>  </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>c. Theme/Subject</p>  </div> </div>

3. My Content – Module Content Page

Brightspace Component	Considerations
<p>The My Content section consists of:</p> <p>Units are broad (level one) categories, which are used to structure module content i.e. weekly, thematically or by module components. You must create a Unit before you can add module content items.</p> <p>Content Items are learning materials/activities contained within a unit (or sub-unit), these can consist of content files, embedded content, links to (existing) learning activities (i.e. quizzes, assignments, discussions etc).</p> <p>Sub-units are used to divide learning materials/activities further within a unit (level 2/3).</p>	<p>Regardless of the structural method you choose when creating units (sub-units) it is recommended that you consider the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create unit titles that ideally include the theme as well as the week/date it begins as is appropriate to your module and which are meaningful for students. • Add unit (sub-unit) and item descriptions which will appear below the title, they can be used to provide student with a learning pathway (or prompts as to the purpose) or specific instructions on how to complete the activities. • List your units (sub-units) with learning materials and activities in the order that you would like students to view them (the sequence should be logical). • Include links to all your module learning activities (i.e. discussions, quizzes, checklists, assignments) in the appropriate units (sub-units). • The use of sub-units is optional and should be carefully considered from the perspective of student navigation as it adds additional layers of complexity (see tip below). • Use HTML content templates to structure units (currently generic templates are available in Brightspace while a UCD version of these templates is in development). You must create a unit or subunit before you can add a new HTML page via the 'create file' option, essentially this allows for the creation of web pages which can contain text, links, images and embedded video. • Use the module builder tool within Brightspace to structure, visualise and review your entire module (see outline of this tool below) <p> Practical Tip: Use sub-units with caution as they can add an additional layer of navigational complexity for students. Consider using them only if you have a lot of content items within a unit (12-15 content & activities items). If you do need to use a sub-unit limit it to one and place it at the end of your unit items.</p>

The Module Builder

The module builder is a Brightspace tool that enables you to build a module structure from one consolidated interface allowing you to visualise and review your entire module at once. Whether you are designing your module from scratch or updating the existing structure it is recommended that you consider the use of this tool as it will enable you to incorporate instructional design best practice.

The module builder facilitates you viewing your module structure in a hierarchical view, which can be very useful when it comes to structuring units and subunits within your module. As you build your module, the module builder interacts with the following Brightspace tools: My Learning (content), manage files, discussions, assignments, quizzes, grades, learning outcomes (please note the possibility of linking activities/items to learning outcomes is currently not available in UCD).

The module builder also allows you to copy the structure of one unit to another, this is useful if you want to quickly replicate a structure for every week/theme before adding content. Learning materials and activities can be added directly via the module builder using the drag and drop functionality once you have the overall structure created.



This tool is accessible via; module tools/module admin/module builder. To learn more about the [Module Builder and how this tool can assist in structuring your module](#).