Daniel Alvarado

From: Elise Baker
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 9:36 AM
To: Full Time Faculty; AdjunctFaculty
Cc: Instructional Council
Subject: Online Teaching Certification Interest Form

Good morning COS faculty,

As you are probably aware, our local online teaching certification course has been on hiatus for one semester while an updated version of the course is developed. That new online teaching certification course will be offered for the first time in Fall 2025. The course is entirely asynchronous and will require an approximately 40-hour time commitment over 8 weeks. If you are interested in taking the COS Online Teaching and Design course, please fill out the form linked below. This form does not guarantee enrollment - faculty will be enrolled on a first-come-first-serve basis, with priority given to those who require certification to teach their upcoming assigned schedule, and efforts made to equitably enroll both full-time and part-time faculty. This enrollment form is for those interested in completing or updating their certification sometime between Fall 2025-Summer 2026. If you plan to complete or update your certification in a future year, you do not need to fill out this form.

Fill out the Interest Form for COS' online teaching certification course.

More information on alternate online teaching certification pathways will be coming soon. COSTA, COSAFA, and I are collaborating on a Fall convocation workshop to cover the new procedures and contract language related to distance education, so stay tuned for that. In the meantime, direct any questions about your contract to your union representatives. As the DE Coordinator, I am only able to answer questions about online certification options and processes, not the terms of the contract and how they are applied to faculty.

Please let me know if you have any questions,

Elise Baker, she/her
Distance Education Coordinator
Office: ESS 114
eliseb@cos.edu
(559) 730 - 3981
College of the Sequoias
currently reading *Let Us Descend* by Jesmyn Ward
and *Sharp Objects* by Gillian Flynn

Daniel Alvarado

From: Elise Baker
Sent: Tuesday, December 10, 2024 11:18 AM
To: Full Time Faculty; AdjunctFaculty
Cc: Tracy Redden; Danielle Alberti; Instructional Council
Subject: Spring 2025 DE Certification Option

Good morning COS faculty,

As many of you know, our newly-approved faculty contracts include updated requirements and training options for teaching distance education/online courses at COS. The Distance Education Committee (DECOS) is currently developing the systems and trainings needed to support these changes. As of October, we have discontinued the former 12-hour Online Teaching Certification Program and plan to launch the new programs and processes in Fall 2025. This transition has led to a one-semester pause in new DE certifications at COS, which has created a bit of inconvenience for those of you that want to get online certified by Summer or Fall 2025.

I've been working on a solution and am happy to announce that I have found one through a partnership with Reedley College. I will be teaching their Spring 2025 Online Teaching Certification course, and am able to invite COS faculty into that course. The course is CELA 307, Section 51242. Online Teaching: Engaging and Effective Strategies**.** The course will introduce you to effective practices in online instruction by covering California Community College distance education policies and procedures, course design skills, and alignment with the CVC-OEI Course Quality Rubric. The capstone project for the course is a fully-built online Canvas shell. Successful completion of the course certifies you to teach online at both COS and Reedley College.

This certification option is not compensated but *may* be eligible for units toward salary advancement through Fresno Pacific University. A *Request for Approval of Credit for Salary Advancement* must be submitted to COS HR at least one week prior to beginning the course.

Details:

When: Spring 2025. Course opens 1/13 and closes 5/22. Open Entry/Open Exit – this means you can choose to start and finish any time during the spring semester.
Format: Online Asynchronous. 45 hours of "in class" asynchronous learning, and *up to* 100 hours of "homework and projects" based on your level of experience. If Canvas and/or web technologies are unfamiliar, expect to spend more hours on the course.
Recommended prerequisite skills: Although this class is designed for novice online instructors, you should enter with:

- Basic computer skills (word processing, email, file management)
- Basic Internet skills (use of browser, searches, uploading/downloading files)
- Basic understanding of Canvas (if you have never used Canvas before, please consider taking this self-paced Introduction to Canvas course before enrolling)

Cost to register: Free. This is a noncredit course.

How to Register for CELA 307:

1. Apply through CCCApply.
2. Once accepted, register for the course through Self-Service.
   Location: Reedley College
   Term: Spring 2025
   Subject: Cont Ed Learning Academy
   Course number: 307

Section number: 51242

Email me with further questions,

Elise Baker, she/her
Distance Education Coordinator
Office: ESS 114
eliseb@cos.edu
(559) 730 - 3981
College of the Sequoias
currently reading *First Lie Wins* by Ashley Elston
and *Dinner for Vampires* by Bethany Joy Lenz

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Module 0.5: Canvas Basics (Optional, but Recommended before beginning Module 1)

1. Canvas Why and Support
2. Why use Canvas?
3. The Canvas Tutorial Tool
4. Canvas Technical Support
5. The Global Navigation Menu
6. Your Canvas Dashboard
7. The Calendar
8. Inbox and Messaging
9. Canvas Studio
10. Commons
11. The Course Navigation Menu
12. Settings
13. Choosing the Home Page
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15. Modules
16. Announcements
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20. People
21. Discussions
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24. New Analytics
25. Zoom
26. Customizing the Course Navigation Menu
27. More about Canvas
28. Rich Content Editor (RCE)
29. Student View
30. Immersive Reader
31. Copying a Canvas Course
32. Additional Resources and Support

33. Canvas Basics Q&A
34. Canvas Basics Quiz - Self Assessment
35. What else would you like to learn about Canvas? - Discussion
36. Looking for deeper Canvas training?

Module 1: Distance Ed Foundations and Backward Design (Aug. 25-31)

1. Unit 1 Overview
2. Foundations of Distance Ed
3. What counts as "distance education"
4. Principles for Quality Online Teaching
5. Student Success at-a-glance
6. Backward Design
7. Introduction to Backward Design
8. From Course Outcomes to Unit Objectives
9. ★ Share Your COR With Me - Find and Submit
10. Units = Modules (in Canvas)
11. Writing Good Unit Objectives
12. ★ Creating a Course Road Map - Course-building Activity
13. Additional Resources and Support
14. Foundations of DE / Backward Design Q&A
15. End of Module 1 - Recap

Module 2: Creating Aligned Assessments (Sept. 1-7)

1. Unit 2 Overview
2. Creating and Revising Assessments
3. Deeper into Backward Design: Aligning Assessments to Unit Objectives
4. Formative and Summative Assessments
5. Creating Authentic Assessments
6. Using the TILT Framework
7. Befriending AI: Your Personal TILT Assistant

8. ★ TILT a Summative Assessment with AI - Discussion/Course-building Activity
9. Developing Rubrics and Providing Feedback
10. Developing Assessment Criteria and Rubrics
11. Giving Feedback for Formative and Summative Assessments
12. ★ Design a Formative Assessment - Course-building Activity
13. Additional Resources and Support
14. COS Course Design Rubric, Section C: Assessment
15. Aligned, Authentic, Transparent Assessments Q&A
16. End of Module 2 - Recap

Module 3: Community and Communication (Sept. 8-14)

1. Unit 3 Overview
2. Humanizing Online Interaction
3. Humanizing Online Learning (Theory)
4. ★ Write a Welcome Letter - Course-building Activity
5. Title 5, § 55204: Regular, Substantive Interaction
6. What's Regular? What's Substantive? What's Interaction?
7. More RSI...
8. Standards for RSI
9. Bite #1: Have a Communication Policy, and Follow it!
10. ★ Write Your Communication Policy - Course-building Activity
11. Bite #2: Provide Meaningful Feedback on Assignments (AKA not just a grade)
12. Bite #3: Using Announcements
13. ★ Scheduling Announcements - Course-building Activity
14. Bite #4: Facilitating Discussion
15. ★ Adding a Discussion and Participation Expectations - Course-building Activity
16. Bite #5: Creating and Curating Instructional Content (aka Teaching the Class!)
17. Bite #6: Monitoring Student Engagement and Success
18. Bite #7: Using Third-Party Software to Teach Your Class
19. Bite #8: Interaction Should be Obvious

20. ★ RSI - Lil' Quiz
21. Additional Resources and Support
22. COS Course Design Rubric, Section B: Interaction
23. Community and Communication Q&A
24. End of Module 3 - Recap

Feedback Survey

1. ★ OCTA Feedback Survey

Module 4: Creating, Curating, and Organizing Content (Sept. 15-21)

1. Unit 4 Overview
2. Organizing and Directing Traffic
3. Customizing the Course Navigation Menu
4. Estimating Student Workload in an Online Course
5. Using Modules to Organize Instructional Content
6. ★ Naming a Unit - Discussion/Course-building Activity
7. Choosing the Home Page
8. Designing Online Lessons
9. Making Your Own Instructional Videos
10. ★ Create a Video - Course-building Activity
11. Creating Text-based Content
12. Sharing Files? Students Need Context
13. Legally Using the Content of Others
14. Finding Open (Not Copyrighted) Content
15. ★ Using the Content of Others - Lil' Quiz
16. Evaluating External Content
17. Putting the Pieces Together
18. ★ Making Your Course Homepage - Course-building Activity
19. ★ Creating Your Own Course Feedback Survey - Course-building Activity
20. Additional Resources and Support

21. COS Course Design Rubric, Section A: Content Presentation
22. Creating, Curating, and Organizing Content Q&A
23. End of Module 4 - Recap

Module 5: Accessibility and Universal Design (Sept. 22-28)

1. Unit 5 Overview
2. Accessibility Essentials
3. Accessibility and Accommodation
4. 1. Headings
5. How Do I Make Accessible Headings?
6. ★ Build or Remediate Course Content - Course-building Activity
7. 2. Links
8. How Do I Make Accessible Links?
9. ★ Complete the CCCAC Creating Accessible Links Training - CVC Badge
10. 3. Color and Contrast
11. How Can I Check Color and Contrast?
12. ★ Complete the CCCAC Accessible Stylings Training - CVC Badge
13. 4. Images
14. How Do I add Alt Text?
15. ★ Adding Alt Text - Lil' Quiz/Course-building Activity
16. 5. Tables and Charts
17. ★ Complete the CCCAC Tables and Accessibility Training - CVC Badge
18. 6. Video Media
19. ★ Complete the CCCAC Creating Accessible Captions Training - CVC Badge
20. Putting the Pieces Together
21. ★ Check the Accessibility of One Page in your Course - Course-building Activity
22. Additional Resources and Support

23. COS Course Design Rubric, Section D: Accessibility
24. Did You Enjoy the 20-minute CCCAC Credentials?
25. Accessibility Unit Q&A
26. End of Module 5 - Recap

Checkpoint 1: DE Shell Progress

1. DE Course Shell Checklist (Week 6)

Module 6: Policies and Procedures in the Online Course (Sept. 29-Oct. 5)

1. Unit 6 Overview
2. Setting Up Expectations and Support
3. ★ What Do Students Need in an Online Course Orientation? - Discussion/Exercise
4. Building an Orientation Module
5. Humanizing Your Course Policies
6. Online "Attendance"
7. Putting the Pieces Together
8. ★ Writing and Revising Online Course Policies - Course-building Activity
9. ★ Submitting an Accessible Online Course Syllabus - Course-building Activity
10. ★ Create an Orientation Module - Course-building Activity
11. Additional Resources and Support
12. COS Course Design Rubric (Full Version)
13. Policies and Procedures Unit Q&A
14. End of Module 6 - Recap

Checkpoint 2: DE Shell Progress

1. DE Course Shell Checklist (Week 7)

Module 7: Submit Your Sandbox (Oct. 5-12)

1. Unit 7 Overview
2. Reviewing Your DE Course Shell for Accessibility
3. Pope Tech Accessibility Checker
4. Submitting your DE Sandbox Shell
5. Capstone Project: Submit your DE Course Shell
6. Final Course Survey
7. That's all folks!
8. End of OCTA - Course Conclusion

Syllabus

No due date

★ Adding Alt Text - Lil' Quiz/Course-building Activity

★ RSI - Lil' Quiz

Due Aug 25 at 12am

★ Pre-Course Survey - Survey

Due Aug 25 at 12am

★ Add a Profile Photo - Activity

★ Set Up Your DE Shell Sandbox - Activity

Due Sep 1 at 12am

★ Share Your COR With Me - Find and Submit

Due Sep 8 at 12am

★ Creating a Course Road Map - Course-building Activity

★ Design a Formative Assessment - Course-building Activity

Due Sep 15 at 12am

★ Using the Content of Others - Lil' Quiz

Due Sep 15 at 12am

★ Adding a Discussion and Participation Expectations - Course-building Activity

★ Creating Your Own Course Feedback Survey - Course-building Activity

★ Making Your Course Homepage - Course-building Activity

★ Scheduling Announcements - Course-building Activity
★ Write Your Communication Policy - Course-building Activity
★ Write a Welcome Letter - Course-building Activity

Due Sep 22 at 12am

★ Create a Video - Course-building Activity

Due Sep 29 at 12am

★ Build or Remediate Course Content - Course-building Activity
★ Check the Accessibility of One Page in your Course - Course-building Activity
★ Complete the CCCAC Accessible Stylings Training - CVC Badge
★ Complete the CCCAC Creating Accessible Captions Training - CVC Badge
★ Complete the CCCAC Creating Accessible Links Training - CVC Badge
★ Complete the CCCAC Tables and Accessibility Training - CVC Badge

Due Oct 6 at 12am

★ Create an Orientation Module - Course-building Activity
★ Submitting an Accessible Online Course Syllabus - Course-building Activity
★ Writing and Revising Online Course Policies - Course-building Activity

Due Oct 13 at 12am

Capstone Project: Submit your DE Course Shell

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There are no announcements for this course.

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Welcome to OCTA

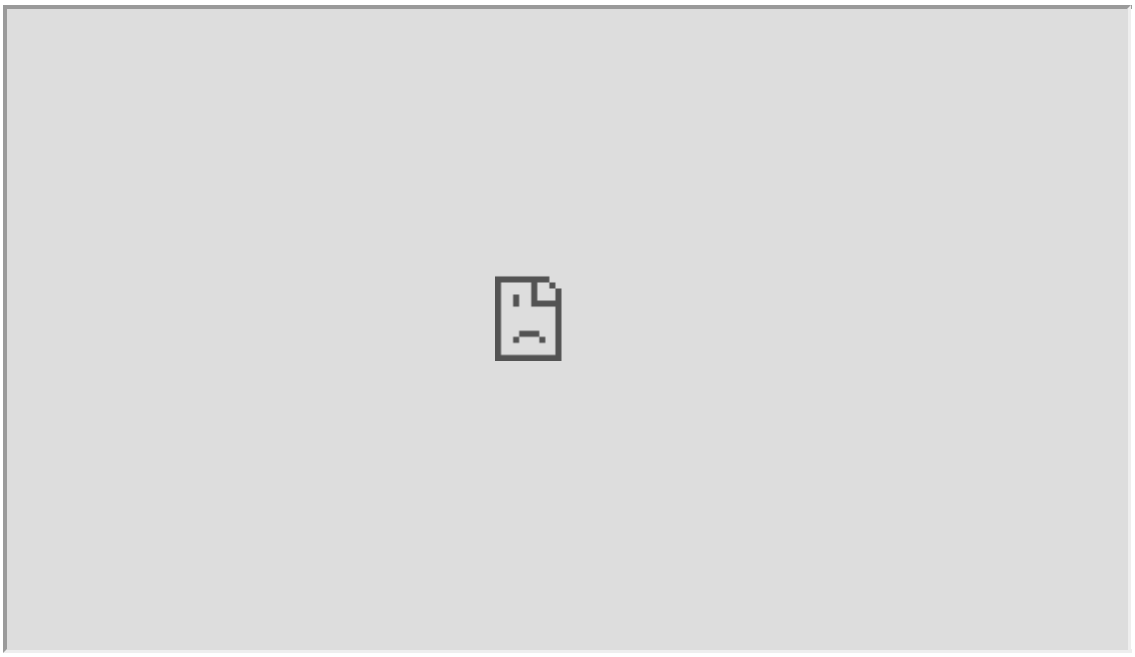
Earning Your Online Certification in Teaching and Accessibility

Well done - you've found Orientation!

This will likely be a very interesting course for a number of reasons:

1. This is the first time it has been run at COS, following the now-retired Online Teaching Certification Program (OTCP) that many of you may have earned your initial certification in.
2. It mixes both novice and veteran online instructors sharing one virtual space to discuss and learn from me and from each other.
3. This course is not about Canvas tips and tricks - it focuses on instructional design and pedagogy. It might even be the first time you're being exposed to instruction on how to teach *at all,* let alone how to teach *online*. You may find yourself wanting to make adjustments and updates in your face-to-face classes as well, while going through this course.
4. We don't know what we don't know. Even if you have been teaching online for decades and are only here because you have to be, there *will* be something here you've never considered or were never told. I promise... and it's kind of exciting to await that discovery.

Allow me me to introduce myself and this course!



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Course Description + Learning Goals

This course will lead to full Distance Education Certification at College of the Sequoias.

You're about to embark on a 8-week journey with a cohort of peers to launch or improve your online teaching. There are faculty in this course who have never taught online, and others than have been teaching online for many years. This is by design - those who are brand new to a practice have just as much to offer as the veterans.

Please use your cohort as a supportive network during this course and beyond, to bounce ideas off each other, share tools and tricks, and create a community of practice. Designing an online class takes planning, and developing the material and confidence takes time, so let's get started!

Your Role

The Student and the Teacher

Throughout this course, you're going to be wearing two hats - the student taking this certificate course, and the instructor designing your own course. As you move through each unit, direct some focus toward the Canvas experience and perspective of the student, then apply that experience to designing your own class.

It's going to be an information-rich journey, and we want you to get the most from the experience. So, as you move through this first week in OCTA, I ask you to think about what *your* students will need to start their journey in *your* class.

Course Description

Whether you're building your first online course or revising an existing one, this 8-week course will show you how to create the course you've always dreamed of teaching. You'll explore online learning theory, approaches to online course design, and strategies for supporting student success from within the structure of the four sections of the COS Course Design Rubric:

1. Course Design
2. Interaction
3. Assessment
4. Accessibility

We will focus on each section of the rubric as we train in this course, and will finish the course with a fully-aligned online-ready Canvas Shell.

The learn-by-doing focus will have you building a powerfully designed course, which you can then use as your own online course starter template. To this end, you will see a variety of assignment types in this course like Course-building Activity, Exercise, Lil' Quiz, Discussion, Exercise, etc.

All assignments that must be completed for certification are marked with a ★.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

develop a comprehensive course plan for a fully online or hybrid course
use the core features of the Canvas course management system to design an online or hybrid course
develop an introductory orientation module
develop learning units with clear objectives aligned to the course outcomes
design accessible course content
locate Open Educational Resources and other material curated from the internet to support student learning
design formative and summative assessments to support and measure student learning
use a variety of communication tools both within and external to Canvas to support student success

Prerequisites and Recommendations

Although this class is designed for novice online instructors, you should enter with:

Basic computer skills (word processing, email, file management)
Basic Internet skills (use of browser, searches, uploading/downloading files)
Basic understanding of Canvas.

Learning Canvas Basics

Canvas is the broadly used learning management system (LMS) at COS. This course will provide some instruction on Canvas use in an optional "Canvas Basics" module, but we

will not spend very long on the basics of Canvas. This module is not a required part of the course, but is recommended for beginners-to-Canvas and to Canvas veterans alike. I bet there's something then you don't yet know!

If you have *never* been exposed to Canvas in any capacity and need more support than the Canvas Basics module in this course offers, please enroll in either the self-paced or facilitated version of **Introduction to Teaching with Canvas** before or concurrently with taking this course.

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Course Materials

Readings

You do not need to purchase any materials to complete this course. All required reading will be available online from within the Canvas.

You will have access to the course material in perpetuity beyond the date the course closes.

A quick tip for Safari users:

If you are unable to see images in Canvas, and instead see boxes with question marks, adjust your Safari settings: Safari Preferences Privacy Unselect “Prevent cross-site tracking".

...or use Chrome as your browser!

Required Technology

To be a successful online instructor, a working knowledge of Canvas is vital. Please note that you do not need to be an expert by any means, and that Canvas has provided a host of resources to help you with specific questions.

Canvas Instructor Guide is a great resource that has alphabetized How-To guides. Canvas Student Guide is the student equivalent of the

instructor's guide, and is a great tool to not only help you understand the student side of Canvas, but also provides guides that you can embed in your course directly within relevant assignments and content pages to help support your students as they work.

Getting Canvas Support

Canvas has a great hotline for supporting both instructors and students. I recommend putting the instructor support number into your phone, and posting the student support number in your Canvas orientation materials.

They are also always available by clicking the "Canvas Help" life-preserver icon on the Global Navigation menu.

Faculty Hotline: 833-221-7459

Student Hotline: 877-894-3392

Canvas Chat Support

For COS-specific Canvas issues that cannot be resolved via the hotline or chat support, please submit a Web Help Desk ticket thru MyGiant.

Ticket type: *Teaching Support Canvas*

Please be sure to view all four tabs before clicking *Next.*

Computer
Webcam Microphone
Adobe Reader
Word Processor

Computer

It is recommended to take this course on a fairly new Mac or PC device. New in the "tech world" usually means within 3 years, but if you are using a well-running older device with up-to-date software, you should be fine. A laptop or desktop device is encouraged wherever possible.

It is important to note that not every campus you may teach at is able to provide the most up-to-date equipment to its faculty and students. The good news is that much of the content in this course is fully accessible from the Canvas App, which you can download for free from your device's App Store. I suggest you try out both the Canvas Student app and the Canvas Teacher app to give you a look at what students taking your course on a handheld device might experience.

Webcam Microphone

We may be in different places as we engage with this course, but I still want to see and hear you, and so do your students! We will be creating videos in this class, which means you need a camera and microphone. Most computers have integrated cameras and mics, but please check your computer to ensure both work and to familiarize yourself with the settings.

If you do not have a webcam and microphone, you can use your smartphone to record. There will just be a few extra steps to get your

content online... but again, this is a frequent student experience so there are benefits to trying it out for ourselves!

Adobe Reader

Some material in this course may be presented in PDFs. To view these materials, you will need the most current version of Adobe Reader.

Word Processor

You may have assignments in this course that prompt you to use a word processing application. There are numerous options available when it comes to word processing software. Here are links to three free options you may use: Microsoft Office 365, Google Docs, Apache Open Office

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Course Policies is not currently supported

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Contact and Communication Policy

Contacting Me

Preferred Name and Pronouns: Elise Baker, she/her

Preferred Contact Method: Canvas inbox *only.* Please do not email me with questions about this course. I will respond if you do, but I might redirect you to contacting me via inbox in the future, just to keep myself organized as these courses run alongside my daily work. I appreciate your understanding!

Office Hours: Mondays 3-4 PM and Thursdays 11-12 PM. Join from the link on our course home page, from the COS.edu Online Learning Resources webpage, or right here.

Turnaround Time: M-F, you can expect a response within 24 hours. Usually I respond same business day. If you don't hear back from me within 48 hours (I'm sorry), please send me a follow-up message. If you email me on the weekend, you may get a response, but you also may be waiting until Monday morning. This is a good reason not to procrastinate and to ask questions during the week!

QA Discussion Boards: There is a QA discussion board at the end of each learning unit in this course. You can ask questions there and expect a response in 24-48 hours. Feel free to respond to one another there as well, if you know the answer to a question asked by a colleague and I haven't popped in to respond yet.

Contacting You

I will be an active participant in this course. You can expect me to reach out several times a week using one of the following methods:

1. **Announcements.** I will post announcements every Monday mornings for the duration of the course, and will sometimes post a second announcement during the week. Keep an eye out and make sure you have notifications set up on Canvas.
2. **Canvas Inbox/Messages**: I will sometimes reach out to you via Inbox to check in with you about work you've submitted, missed, or done exceptionally well on.
3. **Discussion Boards:** I will pop into discussions to summarize key points, prompt a new line of thought, redirect misunderstandings, or just because I think you've said something interesting and I want to encourage you to develop the idea more.
4. **Graded Assignments:** Always open the grading rubric attached to an assignment for my specific feedback. Sometimes I will write feedback, and sometimes I'll leave audio or video feedback for you.

Contacting Your Cohort of Peers

1. **Discussion Boards.** We will sometimes use discussions to build community and talk about the central concepts and ideas in the course. There will also be an open discussion board at the end of each unit where you can post questions, concerns, experiences, share notes, and discuss the course and your online teaching practices relevant to that module.
2. **Canvas Inbox/Messages.** You can message other students in the course using the same Messaging tool you use to

communicate with me, or by clicking the People tab and viewing the list of other enrolled faculty.

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Policies: Participation, Feedback, and Success

Participation and Time Commitment

Online courses turn the idea of attendance on its head. Online, you can "attend" class in your pajamas at 2 AM, or while sitting by the pool on a tropical vacation. Attendance is not marked by your body in a chair, but rather by your *participation* in the class activities and *timely submission* of assignments.

While some professional development is self-paced, **this course follows a weekly schedule**. Each week you may interact with your peers in discussions, and complete a series of activities and assignments, or build and improve on content for your own online course. The weekly schedule keeps everyone together on a path toward our shared learning goals (and keeps your DE Coordinator from losing her marbles entirely!) Please plan to **log in to the course several times each week.**

The course is designed to take *about* 5 hours per week for 8 weeks. This is an estimation. Some of you may fly through this content in 2 hours a week, while others who are brand new to online teaching may spend more than 5 hours a week on the content. Some units are "heavier" than others, and time spent will vary based on your familiarity with a concept or tool being studied.

The workload (readings *and* graded assignments) has been specifically calculated to take 3-4 hours a week, to allow 1-2 hours of dedicated time each week to work on your capstone task due in Week 8, the DE Course Shell.

Grading and Feedback

Any time there is an error or room for improvement on an assignment, you will receive feedback from the instructor (usually your DE Coordinator), which offers another opportunity for revision, learning, and growth. Some assignments (like the Course Road Map) must be completed at 100% before you can advance through the course.

Successful Completion of the Course

The goal of professional development is to grow, so some assignments in this course may (and should) challenge you.

> To successfully complete the course, you will need to **submit all assignments,** earn a **total score of 90%** or better, and fully **align your final project shell with the COS Online Course Design Rubric**.

This may seem like a high standard, but when we're dealing with things like Title 5 and Ed Code, RSI, accessibility, and teaching the approved curriculum, 100% compliance is the standard the institution is expected to meet.

Be aware that revision is an expected step in this course. You might get something right the first time, and that's awesome if you do! But we often can make really minor tweaks that make a world of difference in the student experience. Revisions are what get something that was already good to something really great.

Each assignment includes a detailed grading rubric. Please review the rubric before submitting your work to ensure you have addressed all the required elements of the assignment. If your work is submitted on time, I will make every effort to review and comment on the work within the week. I encourage you to review the feedback, and, *if needed*, submit a revision.

Flexibility

Your participation is integral to the success of this course, but you are also human beings with (too) many commitments, stressors, and challenges alongside your teaching. If you have reach a point where you can't keep up with the weekly schedule, please contact me. We can discuss creating a path to success that accommodates this issues, while keeping you on track.

If it becomes apparent that the course isn't fitting in with your other obligations, there's no shame in switching to "observing" the course, and re-enrolling in the future.

Remember, this training is important, but your family, your health, and your students come first!

Critical Guidelines (in summary)

Below are the guidelines and policies we will follow to guide participation and maintain your status in the class.

Success

Check in and interact with the course at least twice a week.

Participate in all discussions on time.
Carefully review the Overview Page of a new module at the beginning of each week, and plan your time accordingly.
Read all pages and do the work *in the order in which the module is organized.*
We all know, the most common cause of errors and revisions is when students think they already know something, and jump straight to the assessment without engaging with the materials. Save yourself time, and complete the assessments AFTER engaging with the content.
Use or at least visit the QA Discussions often!
Always check for grading feedback, even if you received full credit for an assignment. Sometimes, suggestions are offered even if it was a job well done!
Work a little each week on your final DE Shell project (details ahead!). Procrastination is not your friend on this project.

Maintaining Active Status in the Course

Connect with me in advance if you are going to be disconnected from the course for more than 4 days.
I will attempt to contact you if you are in jeopardy of being removed from Active status in the course. You may be moved from "Active" to "Observer" role in the course (which is the equivalent of being dropped) if:
You are not actively engaging in the activities (discussion, assignment, survey, Canvas preparation, etc.) during the first week of the course.
You are not actively participating in the course for 2 consecutive weeks at any time during the course.
You have not completed **all** assignments from week 1 through 4 by the end of week 4, which is our halfway point.

A personal note: this may seem strict for professional development, but there are hundreds of COS faculty needing initial training or renewal of their DE certification at this time. I just can't manage a flood of 11th hour submissions while still giving meaningful feedback. If this course looks like more than you thought it would be during a busy semester, please let me know ASAP that you want to postpone, so I can get another faculty member enrolled in a timely manner.

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AI Use Policy

This course encourages thoughtful and practical engagement with emerging tools, including generative AI, to support your development as an effective online instructor.

As faculty members exploring best practices in digital pedagogy, you are welcome (and even *required* at times in this course) to explore AI's potential as a personal or instructional design assistant. However, it's essential that all work submitted represents your authentic understanding and professional identity.

Permitted Uses of AI

You may use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard, Copilot, Perplexity, Claude) in the following ways:

As a **brainstorming partner** for assignment ideas, lesson planning, or discussion prompts

To **revise and improve** assignment instructions, rubrics, or course materials (we will do this in this course!)

To **assist with coding or technical tasks** (e.g., HTML for Canvas pages, accessibility remediations)

To **streamline writing** in non-reflective tasks (e.g., compressing a policy, rewording an objective, rewriting something in student-centered language)

To **generate drafts** of professional resources that you then personalize and adapt

In these cases, you remain responsible for critically reviewing, editing, and contextualizing any AI-generated content. AI loves to lie.

So pretend it's your personal assistant that you don't entirely trust yet, and always check it's work.

Prohibited Uses of AI

To ensure authenticity and uphold the spirit of this certification, please do **not** use AI tools to complete assignments that require:

Personal reflection on your teaching practices, experiences, or beliefs

Descriptions of **how course content applies to your current or future teaching**

Discussion of your own understanding of core concepts

Statements of intent, professional goals, or instructional philosophy

These activities are vital to your growth as an educator and must be completed in your own voice. Submitting AI-generated content for reflective or experiential tasks undermines both your learning and the course's integrity.

Transparency and Accountability

If you use AI to support your work in a permitted way, you are encouraged (but not required) to note it briefly (e.g., "Initial draft generated using ChatGPT and revised for my course context").

Any use of AI that bypasses the requirement for authentic reflection may result in a request for revision or re-submission of the assignment.

In the spirit of this transparency expectation, *I* **used ChatGPT to help me generate this policy**! Here is the prompt I provided to it:

> *Help me write an AI Use Policy for the online certification course I am leading at a CA community college. The participants in the course will be faculty members. I am OK with them using AI as their personal assistant, coding assistant, to revamp assignment guidelines, etc. but am not OK with them using it to generate responses to tasks that require personal reflection or articulation of experiences, beliefs, understandings of their role, reflections on identities of their students, etc.*

I took the output, altered some wording, plugged in some of my own "e.g." relevant to this course, and voila! My 30 minute task took 4. Keep an open mind about AI!

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"Settings" up for Success is not currently supported

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Setting up Your Canvas Settings and Profile

Here are two things you should do right now to help put you on the path to success:

Review Your Canvas Settings

The discussion forums in Canvas are much more fun when we can put a face to a name (seeing your friendly face along with your post really helps to build community!).

Profile Picture and Pronouns

Please take a minute to update your Canvas profile information to include a **picture** or avatar of yourself.

While logged into Canvas,

1. Click the **Account** button. It is on the far lefthand menu, and should look like a blank avatar or if you have set a photo for yourself, it will have that photo.
2. Click **Settings.**
3. Click the **Edit Settings** button (right side of the page)
4. Select your **Pronouns** from the drop-down menu (Why do pronouns matter?)
5. Hover over the blank avatar button to set your profile photo.
6. Click **Update Settings.**

This will only work when accessing Canvas from a web browser on a computer. Canvas does not offer this settings option via mobile access. To learn more, please read the Canvas Guide, What are Profile and User Settings?

Notifications Settings



Canvas offers users the unique ability to customize *how* and *when* you (or your students) would like to receive **notifications** from the course. Users (both students and teachers) can tailor their notification preferences so that feedback on assignments, grades, and other communication activities within the Canvas course are pushed out to their email or phone.

More on Notifications…

This includes the option of having announcements sent directly to your email or texts (which I recommend!) We will officially begin each week with an announcement, and will occasionally use announcements during a module to remind you of important due dates, events, or supplemental resources. Announcements are a really important tool that allows the instructor to deliver timely communication to the students in the course by ***pushing information out to them***. This is a great tool for regular, substantive interaction, usually referred to as RSI (more on that to come…)

A few important details about Announcements:

The announcements that come to you in email do not have videos and images that may be in the Canvas version of the announcement.
If you need to check a video or an older announcement, all course announcements are archived and can be accessed via the

"Announcements" link in the course navigation menu.
When you log-into our course, the most recent announcements will be listed at the top of our course homepage.

More on Announcements...

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★ Set Up Your DE Shell Sandbox - Activity



"Crying boy with his teddy bear in a sandbox" by simpleinsomnia is licensed under CC BY 2.0

.

What is a Sandbox?

A Sandbox is a sample course (without students) that you can use to build your course and play with the Canvas tools. It is an empty course "shell" for you to test things out and build content within. Each participant in this course has their very own DE Sandbox for completing your assignments. You will retain access to your Sandbox

as long as you work at COS, so you can always use it as a student-free shell in which to test assignments, create modules, build courses for importing, play with design features, etc. It is your online course building laboratory. If things explode, it's OK!

In a Canvas course, participants can be assigned specific roles. In this class, I am the "teacher" and you are the "student." In your own courses, you're the "teacher" and your students are, well, the "students." A teacher can enter and work in a Sandbox at any time, but students can only enter and work in a course if it is ***published***.

How do I get a Sandbox?

As part of your participation in this professional development course, you will be provided with a free Sandbox. Your Sandbox will appear on the same dashboard as the courses you teach.

You may have already received an invitation to your Sandbox. If not, be patient! It will be generated by the end of the first week.

You can request a separate sandbox at any time for a new course you are building.

To do so, put in a Web Help Desk ticket through MyGiant for Teaching Support > Canvas.

What do I submit for this assignment?

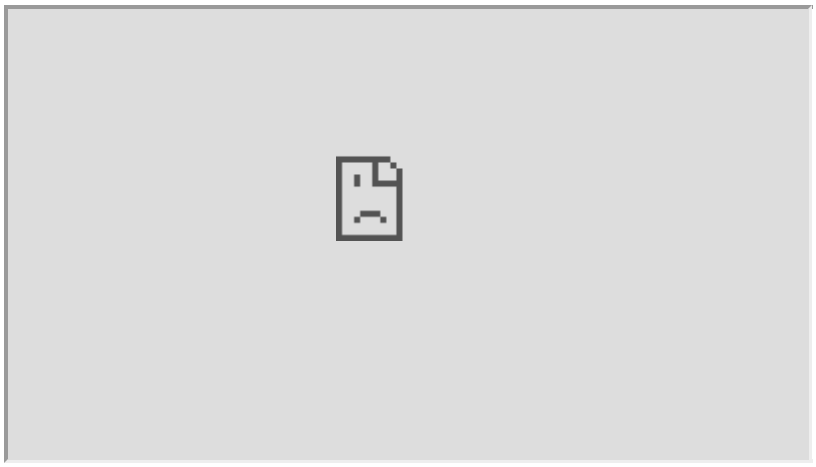
Your Sandbox is an important part of this course. In order to ensure your Sandbox is correctly set up and accessible to you, I ask that you *publish* your Sandbox and then submit the URL of the Sandbox to this assignment. I will use this URL to verify that 1) you have your Sandbox, 2) it's published, and 3) that I also have access to it.

Submission Guidelines

1. Find your Sandbox on your dashboard, and enter the course.
2. Publish your Sandbox
3. Copy the URL and submit it to this assignment

Resources

Canvas Communtity: How Do I Publish a Course?



Grading

You will receive full credit if you publish your Sandbox and share the link here.

If you do *not* receive full credit, please look for my comments, as you will likely need to resubmit.

Due at: Aug 25 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 5.0

Submitting: Online URL

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★ Add a Profile Photo - Activity

Profile photos don't have to be serious, but they should be of you!

File Profile picture.webp could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

File IMG_0093.JPG could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

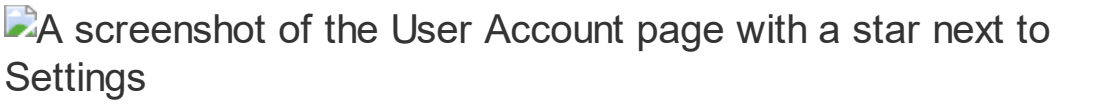
File Hamster in bucket hat eats watermelon in Egypt.webp could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

Add a Profile Photo

There are a lot of options for you to personalize in your account profile and settings. For this activity, I'd like you to add a profile photo if you cdid not already do this earlier in the module.

Submitting this Assignment

1. Click on the icon of a gray outline of a person on the left side of Canvas.
2. From the menu that expands, select Settings.



3. To add a profile photo, hover over the image of the gray person until you see a pencil. Click on the pencil to upload or take a photo. (Below there is a photo of me instead of a gray person, but yours will be in the same spot.)

   To further edit your settings, choose the Edit Settings button on the right sidebar. You cannot update your name, but you are able to add pronouns, change the language and the time zone. If you *want* to update your name, put in a Web Help Desk ticket via your MyGiant Portal to Ticket Type: Teaching Support > Canvas.

   From the right sidebar, you can add additional email addresses (if you'd like to send Canvas notifications somewhere else), and other contact methods.

   ***To submit this assignment,* use the Mark Done button on the bottom of the page beside the "Next"**

button.

Resources

How do I add a profile picture in my user account as an instructor?
How do I change the settings in my user account as an instructor?
How do I mark a module item as done for a module requirement?

Due at: Aug 25 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 5.0

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Accessing Canvas on-the-go

Canvas Apps

We encourage you to participate in this course through the Canvas Student mobile app. This will help you be more informed about the experiences of most of your students.

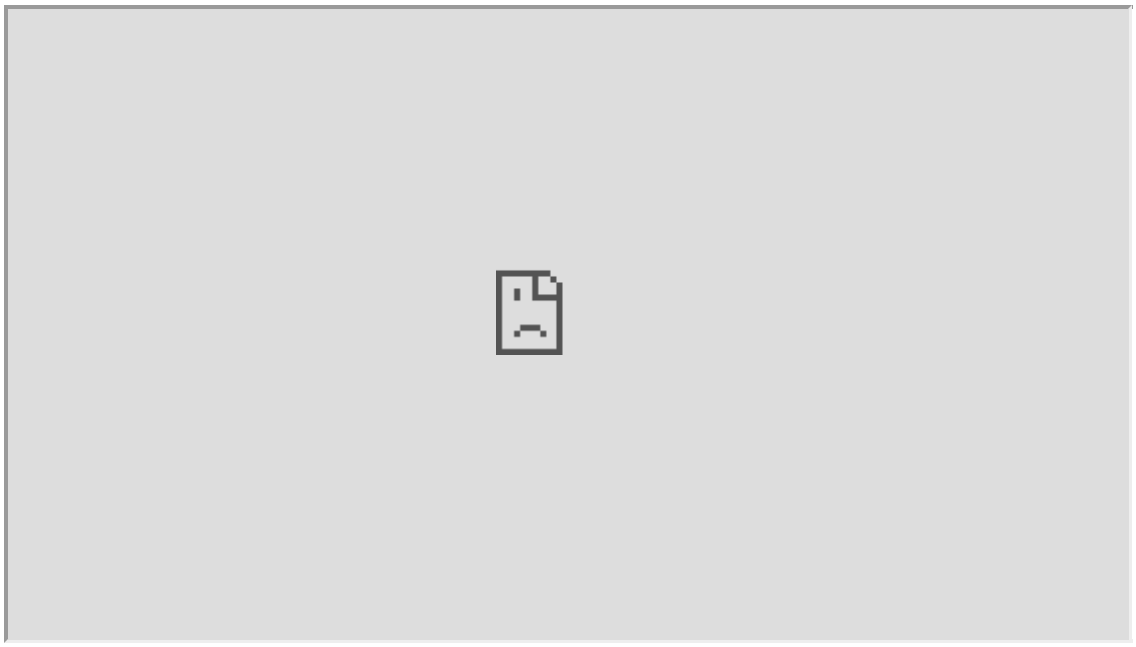
File unnamed.webp could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.File unnamed.png could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

Canvas *Student* App

Follow the steps below to log into your @ONE courses with the Canvas Student app:

1. Download the free Canvas Student mobile app from the Apple Store or Google Play.
2. Open the app on your mobile device.
3. Select "Find my school."
4. In the "Find your school or district" field, enter ccconlineed.
5. Select Go or Enter.
6. When prompted, log into your @ONE Canvas account.
7. A list of your courses should now appear. Navigate to the course of your choice!

If you would prefer a video explanation and to learn how to get started if your app is already connected to another Canvas instance, view the following video:



Canvas *Teacher* App

There's also a Teacher app!

Canvas Teacher helps teachers to facilitate their courses on the go by providing access to three of the most frequent course facilitation tasks for teachers:

Grading: Browse submissions and provide feedback to your students with a new and improved mobile SpeedGrader embedded in this app.
Communicating: Send announcements and messages (including "Message Students Who..."), and participate in course discussions from a mobile device.
Updating: Need to change a due date? Or publish an assignment? Or fix a misspelling? The app lets you update your course content.

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Project Preview is not currently supported

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Project Preview: The DE Course Shell

What's Ahead

As we get started in this course, I want to give you a heads up on the capstone project for OCTA which will be due at the end of Week 8: the **DE Course Shell Project**. This project is where you'll bring together everything you learn in this course to showcase a clearly organized, accessible, and student-centered course shell, designed for a distance education modality.

What is the DE Course Shell?

You'll see this project referenced throughout the course, in every module. There will be many assignments that guide your design and eventual build-out of this Shell. It will be referred to as the DE Course Shell or the DE Shell. The purpose of the DE Course Shell project is to give you a Canvas "sandbox" in which to practice and test out the skills we will be mastering in the weeks ahead, and to send you off into the sunset with a fully-accessible course that you can use as a template upon which to develop any future courses you may teach online.

What will it need to include?

Here’s a preview of the types of things you’ll be asked to include in your course shell:

A **Welcome Letter** set up as an Announcement

A **Home Page** that welcomes and orients students to your course

Modules organized by week or unit

Summative Assessment(s) designed using the TILT framework

Formative Assessment(s) that allow students low-stakes practice with your course concepts

Image with alternative text

A **Student Feedback Survey**

Captioned video

Scheduled Announcements

Discussion Boards with clear expectations

...all **free of Accessibility Errors!**

Don't panic!



The Office Gif by @theoffice on Giphy

If you don't know what half (or any) of the things on this list are, it's OK! You're in the right place. This course is designed to teach you about each of these things and give you practice creating them, well before this big (not so) scary DE Shell comes due. You'll look back at this moment in awe of all that you know, I promise.

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Exit Ticket is not currently supported

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★ Meet your OCTA Cohort - Discussion



Photo by Drew Beamer on Unsplash

Initial post due by Wednesday at 11:59 pm | Two replies due by Sunday at 11 pm

Overview

Designing and teaching an online course and staying current with technology requires collaboration with a network of peers -- a community of online teachers, faculty supporter staff, and instructional designers. This course is one place you can begin developing or build upon your existing network at COS.

Community-building happens more naturally in face-to-face classes... whether you plan for it or not, students get to know one another before and after class and whisper questions to one another (and maybe even roll their eyes when we're droning on and on. ;)

In an online course, instructors need to intentionally create

opportunities for students to build community, and that starts in week one - before students begin to engage with course content.

Instructions

Initial Post: due Wednesday by 11:59pm

Post your initial reply post to this discussion by Wednesday night at 11:59 pm by clicking the **"Reply"** button below. In your post please include the following:

1. A brief summary of your experience level with online teaching, including where you are teaching/have taught, your discipline, and the specific course(s) you'll be teaching online (if known). Let us know if you have used *Canvas* -- our Learning Management System -- or any other LMS.
2. Share some of your feelings and perceptions about online teaching.
   Are you energized or exhausted by the idea of teaching online?
   If you've taught online before, do you find it easier or harder than traditional classroom instruction?
   Are you feeling nervous or overwhelmed? Something else?
3. Answer one of my "just for fun" questions:
   1. What is your favorite smell? Why?
   2. If you could have an unlimited supply of something other than time or money, what would you choose?
   3. What did you want to be when you grew up?

4. What/Where/Who is your Happy Place? *bonus for sharing a picture!*
5. What is the best thing you've ever eaten? Where can I try it?
6. When is the last time you did any public speaking? How did that go?
7. What are you looking forward to right now?
8. What is something you like that isn't good for you?

Peer Response: due Sunday by 11:59pm

By Sunday night at 11:59 pm, please reply to at least two of your peer's posts. In each reply, please do **one of the following**:

1. Note something you have in common with your peer.
2. Share some feedback or advice in response to their thoughts or feelings about teaching online.

Grading

Remember, to complete this certification, you must complete every assignment with a ★ marking it (even the ones not content-related).

Review the rubric before you submit your assignment. Rubrics help students understand the instructor's expectations, clarify what will be graded, how points will be distributed, and really streamline the grading process.

To view the grading rubric for a discussion board, click on the Menu icon  and then select **Show Rubric**.

Please note, if viewing the course via the Canvas mobile app the rubric does not appear on this page.

Due at: Aug 25 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 4.0

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★ Pre-Course Survey - Survey

Task and Purpose

Using a "get-to-know-you" survey is a great way to show your students that you're a human, and you see them as humans by asking things like how they'd like to be referred to, what challenges they anticipate facing this semester, their future goals, prior exposure to the topic, etc. You might also want to know how they'll be accessing your class, by asking what kind of technology they have or are familiar with.

This is a version of that type of survey, but for me as your DE coordinator and certification instructor.

It's not set up to be anonymous, but your answers are confidential. I may use this information to make last-minute changes to this course, and to anticipate ways in which I can support you throughout the class.

Resources

>> Canvas Guide: How do I take a quiz?

Adapted from the "Getting to Know You Survey" by Michelle Pacansky-Brock s in the Public Domain, CC0

Due at: Aug 25 at 12am

Points: 5.0

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Additional Resources and Support is not currently supported

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Need Help?

When you need help, your frustration level likely rises. I've done my best to anticipate when and where you will need our help, and to provide opportunities for getting rapid feedback in the course, but here is a handy reminder of where you can go to get the help you need.

There are a variety of resources at COS, within the CCC system, and within Canvas that are here to help you make the best use of your time and limit your frustration with technology. In addition, consider exploring and bookmarking:

The @ONE DE Course Showcase
The Canvas Community is a great resource for all things Canvas!
Elise Baker, Distance Education Coordinator for COS
Erin Heasley, Instructional Designer and Professional Development Coordinator for COS
Your division representative on the Distance Education Committee (DECOS)
The CCC Vision Resource Center, a free resource for CCC faculty and staff

Do you have a personal question or emergency? Contact Elise Baker.

If you have a time-sensitive, personal question, your best bet may be to contact me via the Canvas Inbox. From the Canvas Navigation Pane, click on "Inbox" to access your Canvas conversations. Or, simply click on the "Help" icon. A dialogue box with a series of help options will open. Contacting your instructor is the top choice. Most messages/emails are returned within 24 hours, Monday through Saturday.

Do you have a non-urgent course content question? Post to the QA discussion.

If you have a question about the course--especially a question your peers might be pondering, as well--please post it to the QA discussion. I will respond within 24 hours (usually daily except weekends), and, even better, like crowdsourcing, a colleague may jump in and answer your question sooner.

Do you have a technology question? Seek our Canvas support.

In this course, and in your day-to-day teaching in a virtual classroom, you are going to be asked to work with technology, and, well, technology doesn't always work the way we think it should! To stay sane, and keep your friends, family, and colleagues sane, you will need to develop a balanced approach to technology frustration. Here is the two-pronged approach to balancing technical woes:

1. Have grit. Google it (this is what I do when you ask me something I don't know!), watch YouTube videos, and get to know your Canvas Guides. Learning how to find and use tech resources will save you so much time and frustration.
2. Ask a colleague or faculty supporter for help. Don't try so hard to figure it out yourself that you end up frustrated.

Do you have a question about instructional design? (like "how do I assess mastery of this specific skill in this class format?")

Contact Erin Heasley, COS Instructional Designer. Erin is an expert in adult learning theory and pedagogy across discipline and instructional

modalities. Get to know her! She is here to help us build classes that achieve outcomes, and feel authentic to both student and teacher.

A Quick Reminder...

We have a lot of terrific tools for supporting instructor-student interaction, but there are some important steps you can take to keep the communication lines open and healthy.

Set your notifications

Canvas allows you to customize when and where you receive announcements and other messages sent to you from the instructor. Be sure you set your notifications so that you have timely updates from the course.

Read the Announcements

Announcements contain important information about the course, but they also have content tailored to the unit, and often to the needs of this particular cohort. Take the announcements seriously--they really help!

Remember we are human

The golden rule of communication is to remember that we are all human. Your peers, I, and you will all make mistakes and need some grace from time to time!

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Orientation Q&A

Course-Related Questions? Just Confused?



Photo by charlesdeluvio on Unsplash

Click the "Reply" button to ask course-related or "how do I do this?" questions.

Along your journey, you may want to ask me or your colleagues about a topic, get some additional thoughts about an online teaching strategy or challenge, or you may just need some clarification about an aspect of the class. If so, jump in and ask it here! If it is a question about one of the content pages and/or assignments, please be sure to identify the location of the page as thoroughly as possible so we may troubleshoot promptly (providing a URL is ideal!)

Successful teaching and learning require a village in any modality Any participant is welcome and encouraged to respond to discussion posts. If you know an answer or have a resource to contribute, jump in and help out a friend!

If you have a personal question or concern about the class that you'd like to speak with me about, please Canvas message me directly.

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End of Module 0 - Recap

You've Completed the Orientation Module!

You have reached the final page of the Orientation module. You now have a solid understanding of our course policies, have made connections with your peers and instructor, and have customized some of your Canvas settings.



Seth Myers Go Time by @latenightseth on Giphy

Please select the Next button to proceed to an optional Canvas Basics module.

Even if you're a pro, I recommend skimming it. I bet there's something you don't know yet in there ;)

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Module 0.5: Canvas Basics (Optional, but Recommended before beginning Module 1)

1. Canvas Why and Support
2. Why use Canvas?
3. The Canvas Tutorial Tool
4. Canvas Technical Support
5. The Global Navigation Menu
6. Your Canvas Dashboard
7. The Calendar
8. Inbox and Messaging
9. Canvas Studio
10. Commons
11. The Course Navigation Menu
12. Settings
13. Choosing the Home Page
14. Pages
15. Modules
16. Announcements
17. Syllabus
18. Assignments
19. Grades
20. People
21. Discussions
22. Quizzes
23. Files
24. New Analytics
25. Zoom
26. Customizing the Course Navigation Menu
27. More about Canvas
28. Rich Content Editor (RCE)
29. Student View
30. Immersive Reader
31. Copying a Canvas Course
32. Additional Resources and Support

33. Canvas Basics Q&A
34. Canvas Basics Quiz - Self Assessment
35. What else would you like to learn about Canvas? - Discussion
36. Looking for deeper Canvas training?

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Canvas Why and Support is not currently supported

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Why use Canvas?

Once certified, you are not contractually *required* to use Canvas as your learning management system (LMS) in your online courses at COS, but we encourage it *VERY* strongly. It is the only online course delivery system that your COS LMS Administrator, Instructional Designer, and Distance Education Coordinator can support you with. If you choose to teach off Canvas, you're on your own.

Benefits of Using Canvas include:

Canvas integrates with Banner, so students are automatically added to your class
There is 24/7/365 technical support for Canvas.
Most students have some experience with Canvas, expect to use it, and understand its features.
Canvas supports ADA requirements. Making materials accessible to those with disabilities is a federal law.
The Canvas Assignments feature:
allows students to submit assignments in many formats to fit the unique assignments of your discipline (direct text entry, uploaded file, audiovisual media, cloud location, YouTube or Google Drive link, etc.)
allows you to attach Scoring Rubrics to assignments to save you time on grading (and to show students in advance!)
includes a Comment Box for you to make comments and provide meaningful feedback about student work.
The Canvas Quiz option has many useful features:
Multiple choice, True or False, Matching, Text Entry, Mathematical formulas, file uploads, and more.
Auto-grading. You can save time on the scoring aspect, and use that time to pre-emptively input feedback to show to students when they choose an incorrect answer, to direct them to find the information in your course materials.
The Canvas Rich Content Editor (RCE) allows you to embed videos and images as a part of your course content, to bring the human element to the course. Humor, memes, personal pictures, and more.
Zoom is integrated into Canvas.

Canvas has a FERPA-compliant grade book.
Canvas Discussions provide a mechanism for students to interact with *each other* (which is called RSI - and is also a federal requirement)
Canvas Announcements provides a mechanism for you to initiate interaction with *your students ...* also RSI!

Back to Module 0.5: Canvas Basics (Optional, but Recommended before beginning Module 1)

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The Canvas Tutorial Tool

Whether you are new to Canvas or a veteran user, the Canvas Course Setup Tutorial is useful for helping you become familiar with all the features available.

In each area, the tutorial displays a brief overview of the feature and links to user guides that relate to that feature. The tutorial can be useful when creating a new course or when learning about an individual feature area! As DE Coordinator, I use the Canvas Community Guides *all the time.*

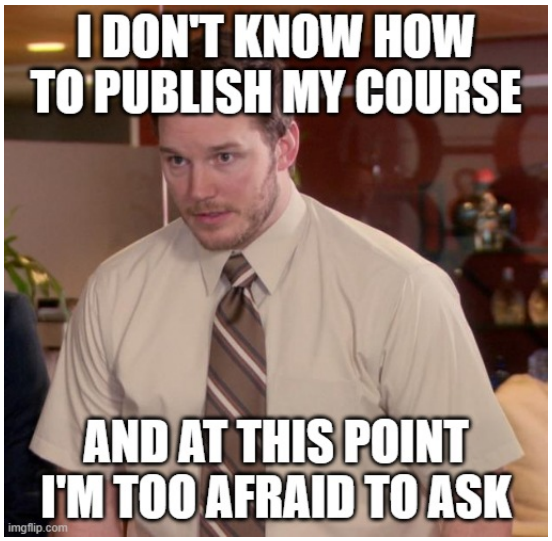
When you open a new course for the first time, the tutorial may start up automatically. If it doesn't, you can make sure the tutorial is enabled by completing the following steps:

1. Log in to Canvas and click on the **Account** link in your Global Navigation menu (near the top left corner).
2. Select **Settings**.
3. Scroll down to **Feature Options**.
4. Make sure that the **Course Set-Up Tutorial** has a **green check mark** next to it.

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Canvas Technical Support



Canvas Technical Support

For technical questions, it is best to call Canvas Technical Instructor Support directly at 833-221-7459. They are available 24/7.

Students can also call them at a different number: 877-894-3392. *(I recommend posting this number on a Resources page somewhere in your course!)*

COS Technology Support Services

If you contact Canvas and they tell you it's a local problem, put in a COS web helpdesk ticket. Someone will contact you as soon as possible.

Instructure Community

One of the nice things about Canvas is that it is so widely used that it is often very easy to find answers to your questions by just searching online. Google searches will often turn up useful results from the Instructure

Community pages, and you will see that many of the links in this module go there as well. Like I said on the previous page, I use Canvas Community almost every day. Often, when an instructor emails me with a question about a feature I'm not familiar with, I'll head straight to the Community pages to find the answer for them. Learning to go there first will always get you a quicker solution!

Other issues?

That's me, the Distance Ed Coordinator! Email me at eliseb@cos.edu, visit my online Office Hours, call me at (559) 730-3981, or just stop by my office in ESS 114.

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The Global Navigation Menu is not currently supported

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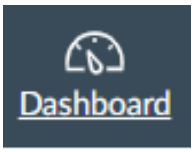
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Your Canvas Dashboard

Dashboard Basics

When you first log in to Canvas, you will find a set of colored tiles showing your courses. This is known as your **Dashboard**.

From within Canvas, you can get back to your Dashboard any time but clicking the Dashboard icon in the left hand Global Navigation menu.

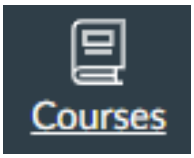


Finding Your Courses

Your courses may be split up into two menus, **Published Courses** and **Unpublished Courses**.

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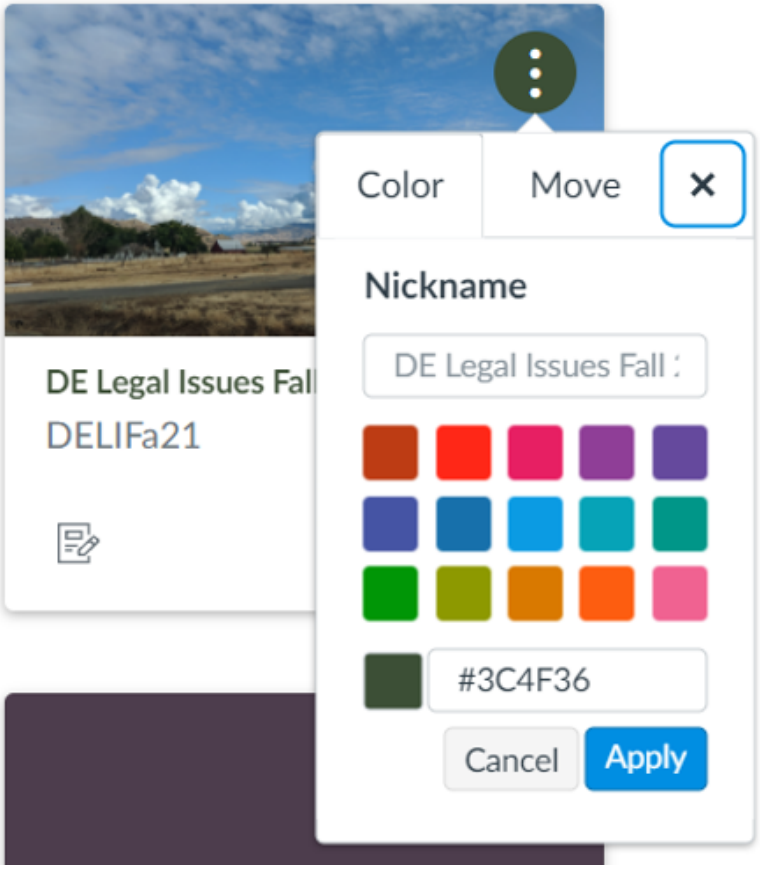
If you don't see a course that you expected to see on your Dashboard, click the Courses icon in the Global Navigation menu, and click "All Courses."



You will be able to view all past, present, and (sometimes) future courses that you are assigned a role in. Click the star-shaped button to the left of a course if you'd like to appear on your Dashboard. If you do not see a class in your All Courses list that you believe ought to be there, contact your division chair to be sure the course has been assigned to you.

Custominzing Colors and Course Names

Instructors and students can both change the images and colors of course tiles by clicking on the 3 dots in the corner of the tile. You can select a color from the menu, or input a HEX code if you have a specific color you want to use. You can also give the course a Nickname. Be aware that the nickname you give the course will appear to your students as well, unless they give it a different Nickname on their own Dashboard.



If you'd like to use a certain picture as your course image on the Dashboard, enter the Course, click Settings on the course navigation menu, and upload your image using the 3 dots in the corner of the placeholder for the Course Image.

You can learn more about the Canvas Dashboard.

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The Calendar

The Canvas Calendar is a dynamic tool that can be used to support student success.

The Canvas Calendar is a powerful organizational tool that helps both faculty and students keep track of due dates, events, and course schedules across all enrolled courses in one place. It provides a visual overview of upcoming assignments and activities, and it updates automatically when due dates are changed. Pretty cool!

Key features of the Canvas Calendar include:

Color-coded course events for easy distinction between classes

Automatic population of assignment due dates

The option to add custom events or to-do items, such as exam reminders or office hours

Integration with personal calendars, allowing students to export their Canvas calendar to Outlook, Google Calendar, or iCal

The Calendar helps ensure that students have a clear view of the pacing of your course, and can serve as a central hub to stay on top of coursework.The Calendar can be accessed from the Global Navigation Menu.

For more information on the Calendar, visit Canvas Community Guides.

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Inbox and Messaging

Communicating Within Canvas

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The Inbox is the internal messaging system in Canvas. You can send individual messages to students or send messages to an entire class. Students can use the messaging system to contact you as well. When you and your students set your notification preferences, you determine where Canvas messages go - if they stay in Canvas, or bounce to your email or cell phone.

I like to have my Canvas Messages come to my COS email account as well, so I can respond directly to students from there. Make your decision based on which tool (Canvas or e-mail) you think you will access most frequently, or if you'd like to keep a separation between student and colleague/supervisor correspondence.

If you have a preference for using email or Canvas Inbox, make sure to let students know in your Communication Policy.

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Canvas Studio

Create and share interactive video content from within Canvas

Canvas Studio is the integrated video platform within Canvas for you to create, upload, edit, and share videos in your course. It offers tools for recording, screen-casting, captioning, and viewing analytics, and helps engage students with multimedia content that's easy to make accessible.

Where to find Canvas Studio

Canvas Studio is located in the Global Navigation Menu on the far left of your Canvas screen. You can also access it directly from the Rich Content Editor while creating Pages, Assignments, or Discussions, or from the *Studio* link in the course navigation menu (if you've enabled it). However you get there, when you click into *Studio,* you'll be taken to your personal media library. From there, you can:

Upload existing videos you've recorded elsewhere
Record brand new videos or screen captures
Organize your media content into folders and collections
Edit and manage the accuracy of your auto-captions
Share videos across multiple courses

Recording and Uploading Options

Studio offers multiple ways to get video content into your course:

Record from your webcam or screen using the built-in screen recorder
Screencast with voiceover only, for tutorials or demonstrations
Upload videos from your computer
Import YouTube videos (YouTube videos stay hosted on YouTube, but can be embedded so viewing can be tracked from Studio)

Once uploaded, Studio videos can be edited, captioned, and reused across your courses. It's a simple way to host all of your content in

Canvas, and prevent links from becoming "dead" or broken after a few semesters.

Captioning Content in Studio

Studio will generate automatic captions, but they're never perfect. They will often misinterpret slang, acronyms, phrases in other languages, or discipline-specific jargon.

> ***You must always check auto-captions for accuracy, and edit them to ensure they are correct***.
>
> This can be time-consuming for newly created content, but once it's done, you can use the video for semesters ahead, knowing it is perfect and accurate. **This just one of those things about teaching online**: we don't have to deliver the same lecture 3 times in a day, we just have to do it once every few semesters, and the tradeoff is that we spend a few hours checking captions.

To check your captions for accuracy:

1. Open the video in Studio and click "Captions".
2. Select the language and request automatic captions.
   - This is *very* important if you are recording a video in a language other than English. Studio defaults to "listening" in English, so if you are speaking Spanish or French, the captions will be a total disaster.
3. After captions are generated, click "Edit" to review them, and correct any errors.
4. Save and publish the corrected captions.

Caption editing is tedious but essential — ***an inaccurately captioned video is an ADA violation.***

Sharing Videos with Students

You can share Studio videos in several ways:

Embed them into Pages, Assignments, Announcements, or Discussions using the Studio button from the Rich Content/Text Editor
From your Studio library:

1. Click the 3 dots to the right of the video
2. Click "Share Media" "Links" copy the embed code, and paste it into the Rich Text Editor using the / button at the bottom.

Copy the link from the Share Links window, and create a clickable link on a content page or paste it into an email, Announcement, or Message.

Studio videos include viewing analytics so you can see which students have watched your content and how much of it they viewed. Enable student comments on videos to encourage engagement and feedback!

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Commons

Find and Share Openly-licensed Course Content

Not sure what "openly-licensed content" is? Don't worry - *we'll get there!*

Commons is a learning content repository built right into Canvas. It allows instructors to search, share, and adopt course materials across institutions and within the broader Canvas-using community. Instructors share everything from individual quiz questions to complete, adoptable course shells. Commons makes it easy to build high-quality content without totally starting from scratch.

Commons is located in the Global Navigation Menu on the far left of your Canvas screen.

What can you find in Commons?

Commons includes a wide range of resources, such as:

Entire courses/templates
Modules
Assignments, quizzes, and discussions
Multimedia-rich content pages
OER-based instructional materials

You can filter by content type, grade level, subject, institution, and license (e.g., Creative Commons) to find exactly what you need.

Did you know?

COS faculty have been designing readily-adoptable Canvas course frames for you to adopt - all using totally zero-cost instructional materials.

Wondering if your course is available yet? Take a look at the growing list!

Interested in building a course shell? Email

Interested in building a course share? Email Richard Lubben to see if your course is needed to complete a zero-cost degree pathway. *There are grant funds available if so!*

Searching in Commons

1. Click **"**Commons" in the global navigation menu (on the far left of your Canvas screen).
2. Use the **search bar** at the top to type keywords (e.g., "Public Speaking Introduction," "MLA Formatting Quiz").
3. Use the filters on the left to narrow results by content type, grade level, or license.
4. Click any resource to preview its contents and details.
5. Click **"**Import/Download" to bring it into your course. You can select one or multiple courses to import the item into.

Imported content will appear as unpublished, so you can modify and review it within your Canvas shell before students see it.

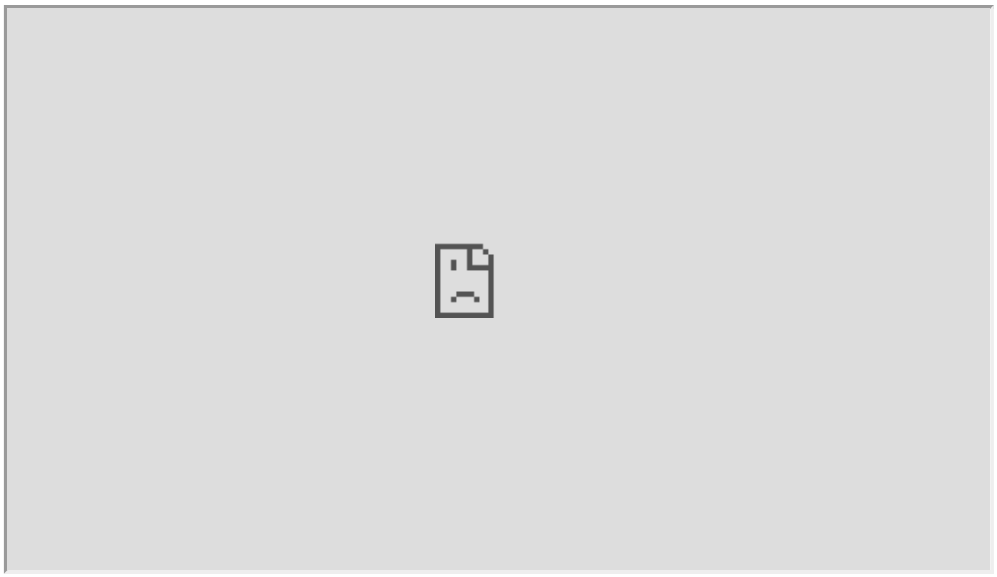
Sharing your own content to Canvas Commons

You can also contribute to Commons by sharing individual pieces of content you've created.

1. From within your course, go to the Modules, Pages, Quizzes, or Assignments area.
2. Click the three dots next to the item you want to share.
3. Select "Share to Commons."
4. Choose your sharing settings:
   Who can use it (your institution, specific users, or the public)
   License type (e.g., CC BY, CC BY-NC)
   Tags and descriptions for discoverability
5. Click "Share" to publish it to Commons.

Here's a 4-minute video demonstrating the adoption of a single module into a Canvas course. *Ignore the content here, and pay attention to the*

process.



Or, you can choose to share your entire course:

1. **Go to your course** in Canvas.
2. Click **“Settings”** at the bottom of the course menu.
3. On the right, click **“Share to Commons.”**
4. Choose who can see it:
- Only Me (you, the creator)
- People at your institution
- All Canvas users
5. Fill in:
- Title
- Description
- Tags (keywords that might help someone find it)
- License type
- Grade level
6. Choose **“All Content”** to share the full course.
7. Click **“Share”** at the bottom.

You can always return to Commons to update or remove your shared resources if you choose to.

Tips for First-time Commons Users

Use descriptive titles and keywords when searching for content.
Always preview and review imported materials before publishing to students.
Look for items marked with star ratings, detailed descriptions, and licensing info for higher-quality content. (I also like to look for number of imports - more imports often indicates better content.)
Consider adapting found content rather than using it “as-is” — customizing ensures it fits your course objectives, teaching style, and COS student needs.

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The Course Navigation Menu is not currently supported

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Settings

"Settings" are at the bottom of the Course Navigation menu

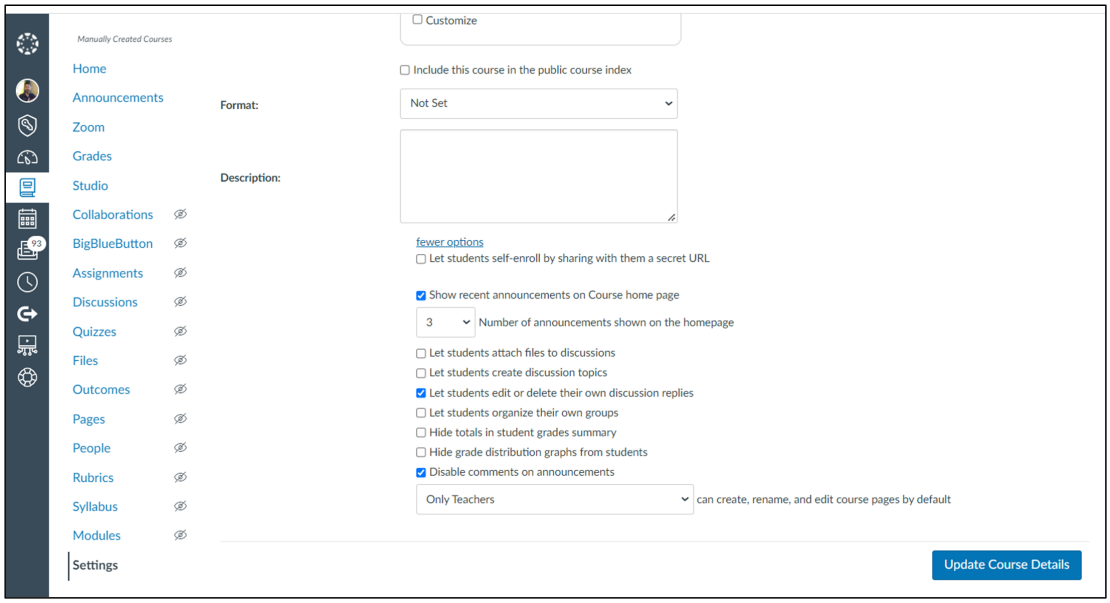
When you click the Settings link at the very bottom of the Course Navigation menu, you arrive at a page with several tabs at the top: **Course Details, Sections, Navigation, Apps, and Feature Options.**

Course Details Tab

The default tab that you will land on initially is the Course Details page. For the most part, you should not change much information on this page, as it is directly tied to Banner. There are several exceptions to this rule, however.

1. You can change the appearance of your course tile on the Dashboard at the top by adjusting the "Image" section.
2. You can scroll down to the bottom and click on "more options." Doing so opens some possibilities for customization that you may want to use, such as having announcements appear on your home page, allowing students to edit their Discussion Board posts once published, letting students create their own Discussion Boards, etc.
3. You can choose if you want students to be able to access the course before or after the scheduled start and end dates. Things to consider:

- Do you use the same materials, exams, or assessments for several semesters in a row before updating them? If so, consider restricting students from viewing the course after the end date, to mitigate sharing of your materials with future-enrolled students.
- Is your course going to be important reference materials for students as they navigate their pathway in years to come? If so, consider locking assessments and exams manually, but leaving the course accessible for students to revisit content in the future.
- Do you want students to be aware of expectations before coming to the first class? If so, consider allowing students to access the course as soon as it is published, rather than waiting for the scheduled first day of the term.



Navigation Tab

The Navigation tab is an important one, as this is where you can make changes to your Course Navigation menu.

For any links that you *don't* want your students to have access to, drag and drop the item to the lower portion of the page. Be aware that *you* can still use that tool, and it will appear on your own course navigation menu, but students will not be able to access it. For example, I do this for *Files*. I will upload my lecture slides to *Files* so I can post them and access them from anywhere with an internet connection, but I do not let my students have access to all the course files.

Important: Be sure to scroll down and click the Save button once you've made your updates.

Course Details | Sections | Navigation | Apps | Feature Options | Integrations

Drag and drop items to reorder them in the course navigation.

- Home
- Announcements
- Syllabus
- Modules
- Grades
- People
- Attendance
- NetTutor
- Office 365
- Google Drive
- New Analytics
- Studio
- EvaluationKIT Course
- TechConnect Zoom
- Student Connect

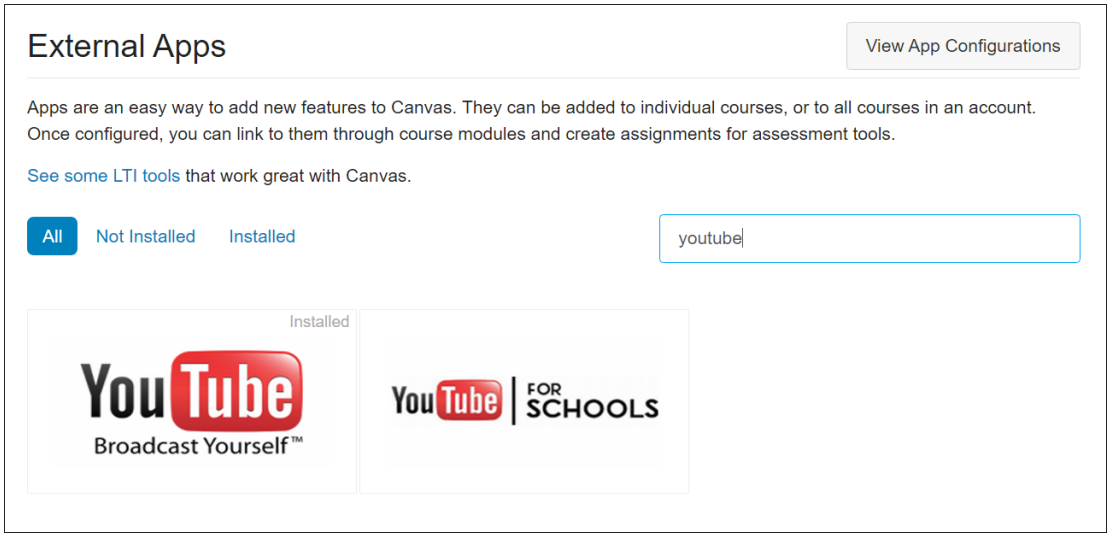
Drag items here to hide them from students.

Disabling most pages will cause students who visit those pages to be redirected to the course home page.

- Files
  Page disabled, will redirect to course home page
- Pages
  Page disabled, will redirect to course home page
- Outcomes
  Page disabled, will redirect to course home page
- Rubrics
  Page disabled, will redirect to course home page
- Collaborations
  Page disabled, will redirect to course home page
- BigBlueButton
  Page disabled, will redirect to course home page

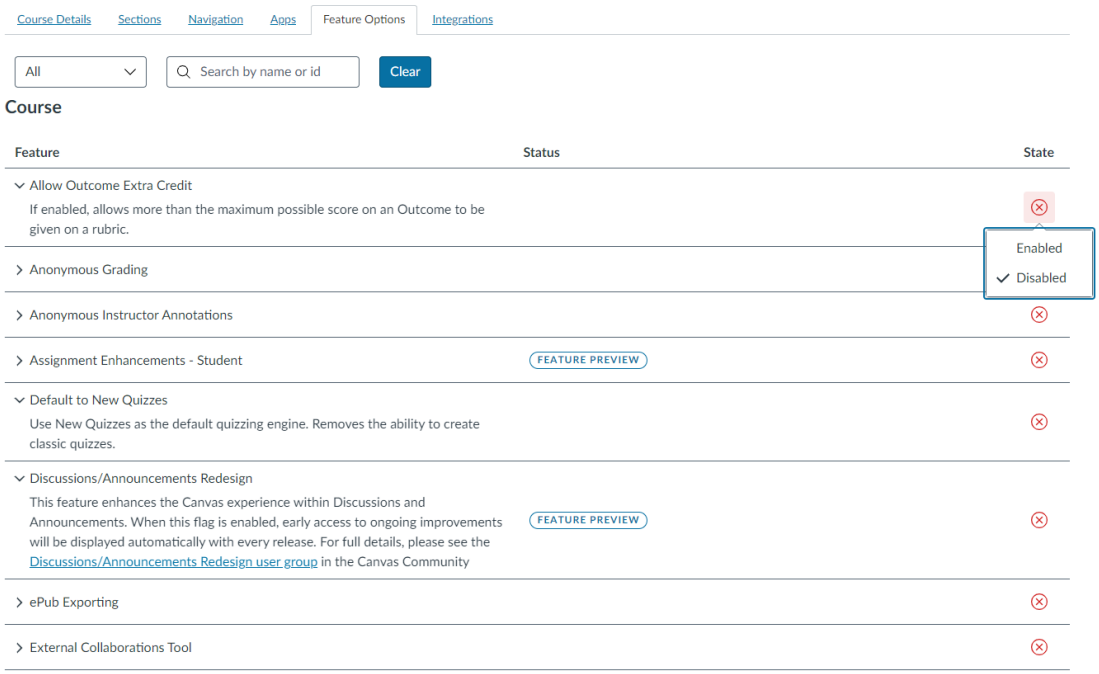
Apps Tab

Canvas allows the integration of various educational applications through the Apps feature. For example, you can add the YouTube app to allow you to embed YouTube videos directly by using the Rich Content Editor.



Feature Options Tab

The Feature Options tab allows you to explore Canvas tools that you may find useful. For more information on any tool, click the arrow to expand the nested details. If you'd like to enable or disable a tool, click the red X or green check to the right of the the tool and an options menu will appear.



Sections Tab

You can generally disregard the Sections tab unless you want to merge two sections of a course (e.g., some ESL classes allow students to enroll in either a credit or noncredit version of the same class, in which case it really makes sense to merge the two sections as the students are all in the same course.

For more on how to do this, see How to cross-list two sections of your course.

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Choosing the Home Page

Note: this page appears twice in our course.

The Home page is the landing page for your online course.

This is the page students will first see when they open your course. Having a clear and organized Home page is really important as we try to "direct traffic" in the first few weeks of the course. A Home page should be welcoming, clearly organized, visually interesting, clearly indicate a "Start Here" point, and act as a comfortable home base from which to navigate out.

You can select the page that will appear as your Home page from several options.

Home Page Options

"Pages" Front Page (recommended)

Benefits:

Custom Welcome and Orientation. You can provide a *welcome message*, *instructor photo*, *contact info*, and *clear "Start Here" guidance*—critical for online student success. Sets the tone and establishes a human presence from the start.
Centralized Navigation Hub. Include buttons or links to important areas like:
Weekly modules
Syllabus
Tech help
Office hours
Announcements
Prevents students from having to dig through multiple menus.
Supports RSI and Accreditation Best Practices. A thoughtfully designed front page encourages *regular and substantive interaction (RSI)* and

demonstrates clear teaching presence—aligned with *Title 5*, *ACCJC*, and *RSI* requirements.
Visual Appeal and Branding. You can include graphics, icons, layout formatting, and school/program branding to make the course feel professional and engaging. Encourages a *consistent and welcoming first impression*.
Tailored to Student Needs. You control *what's emphasized* (not just what's most recent), helping students focus on what's important or urgent.

Drawbacks:

Requires Manual Setup and Maintenance. You have to *create and update* it yourself—this includes changing dates, updating links, and checking for broken buttons. If you copy a course forward, links may break or go out of date.
Not Automatically Updated. New announcements, assignments, or due dates *don't show up unless you link or embed them* manually or guide students to check the appropriate area.
Can Be Overdesigned or Overwhelming. If packed with too many buttons, links, or decorative elements, it can confuse students rather than help them. Needs to be *accessible (WCAG-compliant)* and mobile-friendly for students with varying devices.
Doesn't Show Recent Activity. Unlike the Course Activity Stream, it doesn't provide a quick glance at what's newly posted—students must look elsewhere for updates unless you clearly direct them.
Learning Curve for Faculty. Some instructors may need guidance or templates to create accessible, well-organized pages—particularly those new to Canvas or instructional design.

Best Practices for Using a Pages Front Page

Recommendations

Include:	Keep it:
Welcome message + photo "Start Here" or Week 1 button Clear links to syllabus and modules Office hours/contact info Optional embedded video (captioned!)	Simple Mobile-friendly Updated regularly ADA/WCAG 2.0 compliant

Modules as the Front Page

Benefits:

Clear Course Structure. Presents content in *logical, sequential units* (e.g., Week 1, Week 2, Unit 1, Unit 2), helping students stay on track. Reduces confusion about “where to start” and “what to do next.”
One-Click Access to All Key Materials. Students can easily access:
Pages
Assignments
Discussions
Quizzes
External tools (like PlayPosit, Google Docs, or Zoom)
Keeps all related resources in one place without needing to click around.
Supports Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI). Encourages the instructor to build out structured, consistent interaction opportunities (announcements, check-ins, graded discussions, feedback loops) within each module.
Mobile-Friendly and Accessible. Modules are responsive and work well across devices. Canvas’ accessibility tools support module navigation for screen readers and assistive tech.
Familiar and Intuitive for Students. Especially helpful for dual enrollment, first-gen, or adult learners who benefit from consistency and clarity. Mirrors the navigation in many other Canvas courses, which reduces cognitive load.
Requires Minimal Orientation. If designed clearly, students can often begin immediately by opening the first module without needing a lengthy tutorial.

Drawbacks

Not Very Welcoming. Lacks a *personalized welcome*, instructor photo, or human touch unless those elements are included inside a “Start Here” module.
No Visual Design or Custom Layout. You can’t change fonts, colors, or add visual flair—it's a utilitarian list of links. This may make the course feel sterile or uninviting without additional effort.
Not Ideal for Self-Paced or Open Exploration Courses. If your course is exploratory, non-linear, or student-directed, modules may feel too rigid or restrictive.
Can Be Overwhelming if Not Chunked Thoughtfully. If too much content is dumped into one giant module, or if items are poorly named, students may

struggle to find what they need. Effective use requires thoughtful *labeling*, *chunking*, and *naming conventions*.

Assumes Students Understand Canvas Modules. Students new to Canvas may not immediately understand how to use module navigation unless guided.

Best Practices for Using Modules as the Front Page

Recommendations

Include:	Keep it:
"Start Here", Orientation, or Welcome Module" at the top Overview pages and due date summaries in each module Instructions and regular reminders for interaction (e.g., discussion posts, Zoom links, feedback expectations) Module prerequisites and requirements to guide student progress	Consistent and predictable Organization: Modules should follow a similar structure each week. Naming: Follow a similar naming onvention for each week/unit/module.

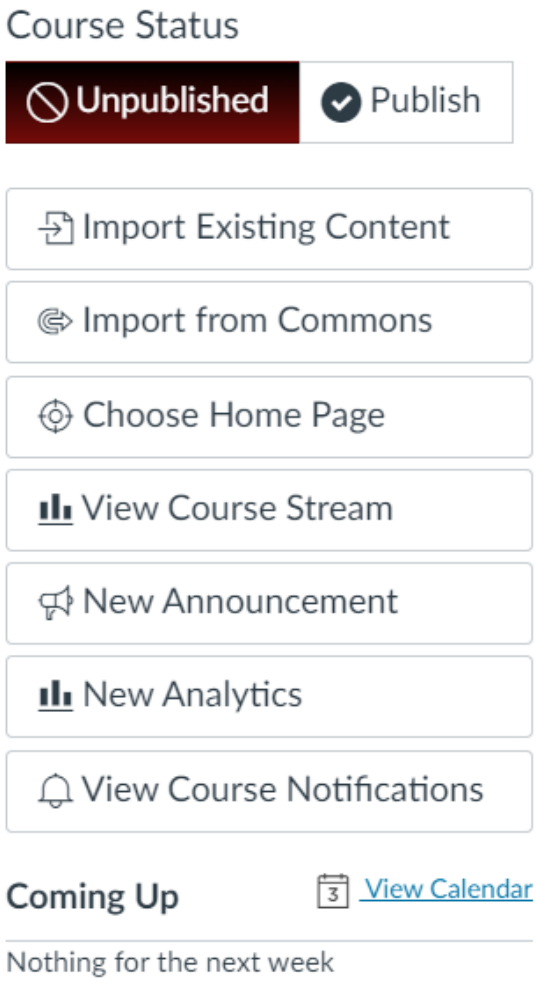
Other Options NOT Recommended

Avoid:

Course Activity Stream	Assignments List	Syllabus Page
Lacks a welcome message or orientation content Doesn't support structured navigation or a "Start Here" path Not customizable—auto-generated feed only	No welcome message or course orientation Lacks context for assignments (why, when, how) Displays tasks out of instructional sequence	May lack a welcoming, student-centered introduction Often feels formal or static — more policy than guidance Doesn't provide clear "Start Here" directions

Emphasizes recency over importance or sequence Can overwhelm or confuse students unfamiliar with Canvas Misses opportunities for instructor presence and engagement Doesn't align well with RSI or accreditation best practices	Doesn't guide students through learning activities or content Overemphasizes grading and deadlines over learning process or community Can feel overwhelming or transactional Offers no instructor presence or engagement cues	May overwhelm students with too much info at once (like SLOs, COs, etc.)

Selecting the Home Page



When you first open a new course, you will see a short menu on the right side of that initial landing page. From that menu, you can select which page from your course you want to appear as the Home page. You can select the Course Activity Stream, "Pages" Front Page, Course Modules, Assignment List, or syllabus as your Home landing page. Read more below for a key on what each of these elements do.

You don't need to do this first thing when you get into your new blank course. I often wait to set the home page until more content pages have been created and I have a sense of how I want students to navigate the course, and what I want to show them first.

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Pages

A Flexible Tool for Content Creation

Pages are one of the most versatile tools available in Canvas. Think of a Page as a blank digital slate — perfect for building and sharing content with students in a customizable, readable, and engaging format. Whether you're introducing a weekly module, embedding multimedia, sharing supplementary resources, or outlining assignments to come, Pages offer a flexible and accessible way to deliver asynchronous instruction.

What can Pages be used for?

Canvas Pages are ideal for:

Delivering instructional content (e.g., lecture notes, overviews, reading guides)
Embedding multimedia (lecture videos, images, audio files, YouTube playlists, Canvas how-to guides, etc.)
Linking to other places in the course (Assignments, Discussions, external websites, or documents)
Creating "Front Pages" that serve as a student-friendly homepage for your course or module
Building guided learning pathways with text, visuals, and navigation links

Unlike Assignments or Discussions, Pages don't collect student submissions—they're purely for content presentation and navigation.

Creating a Page

1. **Go to your course** and click on **“Pages”** in the left-hand navigation menu.
2. Click the **“+ Page”** button in the top right corner.
3. Add a **title** at the top and use the **Rich Content Editor** to build your content.
   You can add text, images, videos, links, tables, and HTML code.

4. When you're done, click **“Save”** or **“Save Publish”** to make the Page available to students.

You can also create Pages directly **within Modules** by clicking the “+” button in the module and selecting **[Page]** from the dropdown.

Ensuring Accessibility

1. While editing a Page, look for the **Accessibility Checker** icon - the little circular human figure in the bottom right of the Rich Content Editor. If there are issues, the Accessibility Checker will count them up as you work.
2. Once you're done building, click the icon to remediate the issues one-by-one. Canvas will highlight issues such as:
   Missing alt text on images
   Poor color contrast
   Improper heading structure
   Table formatting issues
3. Follow the guided prompts to fix any problems directly within the editor.

Accessibility Tip:

Use *descriptive link text* (e.g., “Download the syllabus” instead of “click here”) and *Heading styles* (Heading 2, Heading 3) to structure your content logically for screen readers.

More on this to come...

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Modules

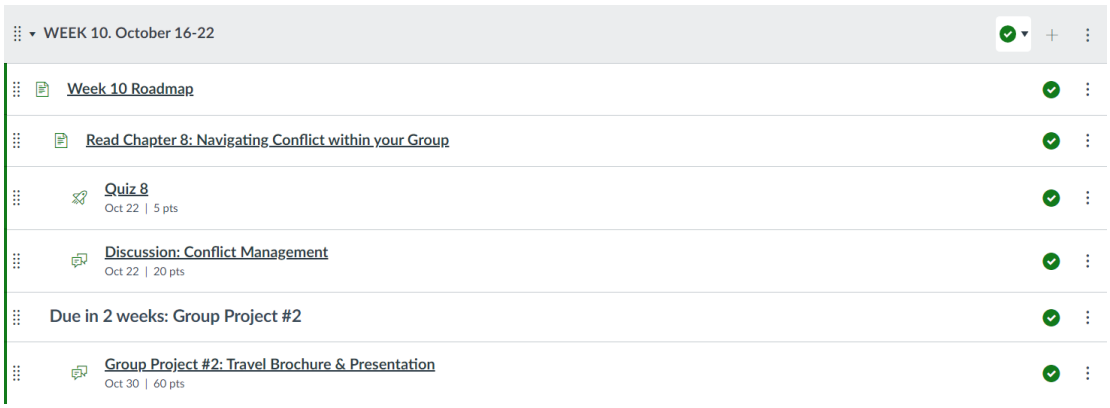
Organizing units of content into Modules

More on Modules to come...

With Modules, you can present content in "chunks" organized by a certain sequence, unit, topic, and/or context. You can create Headings for the content and indent to create visual organization of your materials. Modules can also be pre-scheduled for release on specific dates, or when specific prerequisites (like taking a certain quiz or reading a certain page) have been met.

The module you're in right now uses all three of these features: 1) the content is broken up under Headings, 2) indentation is used to visually break things up, and 3) it didn't unlock for you to explore until you had met the prerequisite of completing the Orientation module.

Here's a screenshot of a module that also uses these features:



Some teachers like to use Modules as their course Home page.

Additional information about Modules

What are Modules?

Canvas Video Guide

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Announcements

Announcements are the best way to make scheduled contact with students.

They can be used to share updates and roadmaps about progression through the course, information about special events, meeting or office hour cancellations, or really any kind of reminders and information.

Announcements offer a way of providing students with regular, substantive interaction (RSI), which is a legal requirement. Ways to use announcements for RSI include:

use Announcements regularly and predictably (e.g., once or twice a week)
make Announcements *substantive* - give information that advances student learning in areas of course content (e.g., announcements that call attention to patterns in student discussions, make reference to current events that are related to class content, provide additional readings or resources on "hot" topics, address common areas of confusion, etc.)
use Announcements to help students benefit from your feedback - i.e., let students know when you have completed individualized grading and feedback on assignments, so they can look for it and respond.
...more on this to come in Module 3 :Community and Communication!

Hot Tip: Schedule your Announcements in Advance

When you create an Announcement, you are given the option of posting right then and there, or scheduling for a certain date and time. For example, if you know you will be inaccessible due to conference travel on a certain set of dates during the semester, you can schedule an Announcement to release a few days in advance of those dates to remind students.

I like to draft a few weeks-worth of Monday morning announcements at a time, providing a "here's what we're doing this week" type of update. This practice ensures that I orient students at the start of each week (even if I forget on Sunday night or have a crazy Monday morning inbox) and allows

me to send another midweek announcement later on that has more substantive content.

More information about Announcements

Learn about using the Announcement tool by watching this short video.

You can also read about announcements in the Canvas Guides.

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Syllabus

Canvas courses include a dedicated *Syllabus* page.

It comprises two parts: 1) an editable Text Box to paste/write your course syllabus in, and 2) a Course Summary, which populates a list of assignments with the due dates you've set for them. If you are not using the *Assignments* tool in Canvas, the Course Summary section on the syllabus page will appear blank.

The editable Text Box

Below is a screenshot of the page with the text box in use to provide the Syllabus. A benefit of going about it this way (rather than simply dropping a Word doc into the text box) is that the Immersive Reader accessibility tool on Canvas will have no difficulty reading the syllabus to a student who utilizes a screen reader as a learning accommodation. Use Headings to format the syllabus (more on this to come!), and you'll ensure accessibility and ADA-compliance.



Course Syllabus

Jump to Today | Edit

COS
COLLEGE OF THE SEQUOIAS

COMM 8: Group Communication

Fall 2023 – Course #17041

3 units

Instructor Information:

Instructor name: Elise Baker

Instructor email: eliseb@cos.edu

Meeting times and location: Face-to-face Monday/Wednesday, 12:45 PM-2:00 PM, Lodgepole 205

Office hours and location: by appointment, ESS 114

Course Information

Description: Principles of communication in a variety of group contexts. Theory, application, and evaluation of group communication processes, including problem solving, conflict management, decision making, and leadership. The student will learn group dynamics, structures, the importance of maintaining structured agendas to complete task-oriented group discussions, and how to use substantive conflict to meet both the needs of the group and the individual group members. COMM 008 is an introductory course in Group Communication.

Textbook: *Forming and Sustaining Teams* by Jasmine R. Linabery, Ph.D, 2021. Zero-Cost Textbook. Access on Canvas.

The Course Summary

Here is an image of the auto-populated Course Summary page. This feature pulls the due dates I've set directly from the Assignments tool and organizes work in chronological order for students.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Wed Aug 16, 2023	Orientation Quiz	due by 11:59pm
	Self-Introduction Speech	due by 11:59pm
	Set Your Pronouns & Photo	due by 11:59pm
Sun Aug 27, 2023	Quiz 1	due by 11:59pm
Sun Sep 3, 2023	Quiz 2	due by 11:59pm
Sun Sep 10, 2023	Discussion: Group Experience	due by 11:59pm
	Quiz 3	due by 11:59pm
Sun Sep 17, 2023	Quiz 4	due by 11:59pm
Wed Sep 20, 2023	Group Project #1: Group Identity Packet and Presentation	due by 11:59pm
	Group Project #1: Minutes	due by 11:59pm
Sun Sep 24, 2023	Quiz 5 NEW - presenting as a group	due by 11:59pm
Sun Oct 1, 2023	Discussion: Language and Verbal Communication	due by 11:59pm
	Quiz 6	due by 11:59pm
Wed Oct 4, 2023	Midterm Exam	due by 11:59pm
Sun Oct 15, 2023	Citations Practice Activity	due by 11:59pm
	Quiz 7	due by 11:59pm

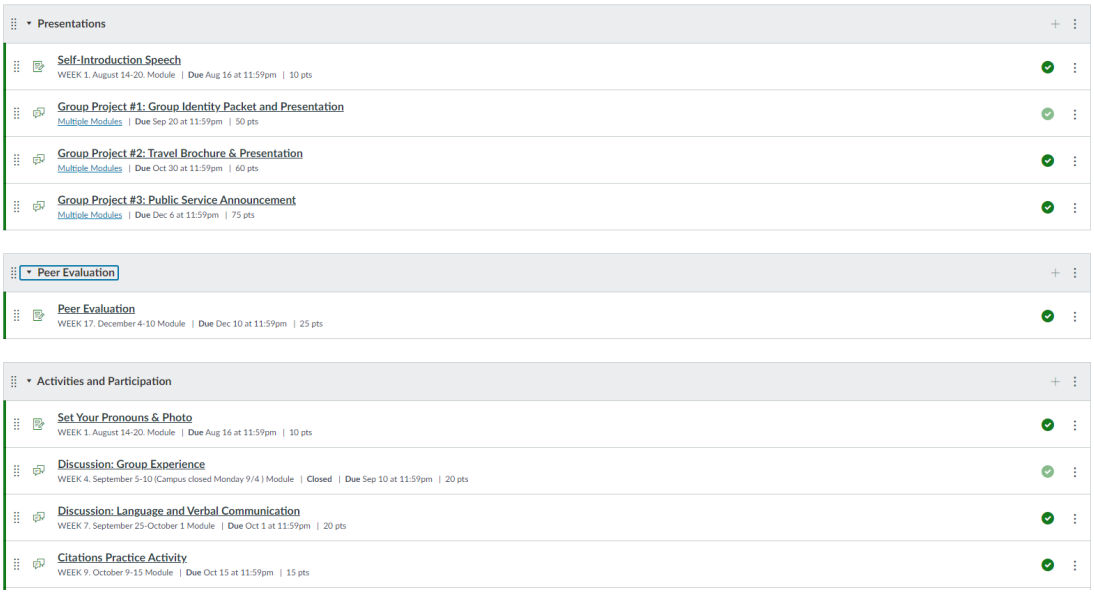
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Assignments

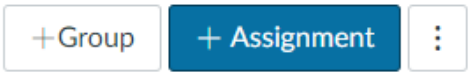
Canvas has a specific assignment tool that houses your assignment guidelines, due dates, point values and grade weighting scheme. Students can read your instructions and see related resources you share alongside those instructions, as well as submit their assignment directly to Canvas. You can set if students submit their work by uploading certain file types, a link or external tool, or by submitting direct written responses using a Text Submission box.

You can arrange your assignments into Groups, or categories of similar assignments. See an example from a COMM 8 class:



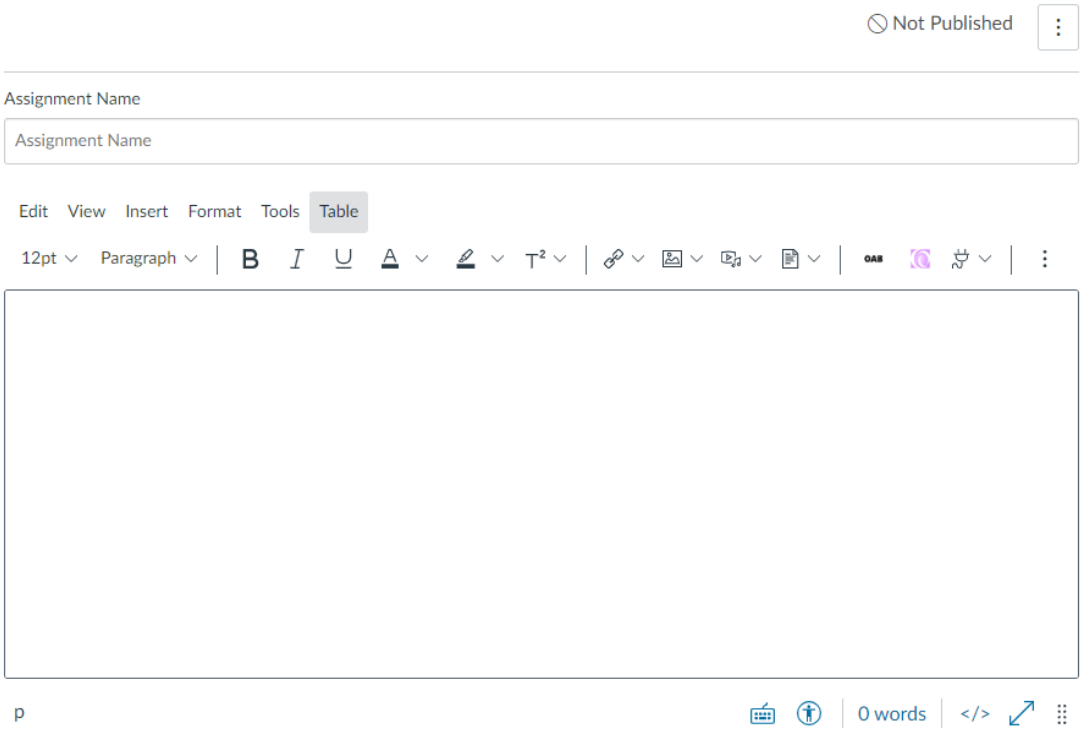
Creating an Assignment

To create an Assignment, click the blue "+ Assignment" button on the top right corner of the Assignments page.



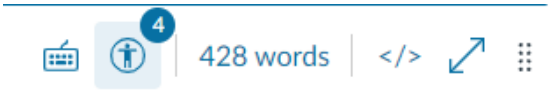
Doing so will open a page with a text box with all kinds of editing tools, as well as assignment settings. For more editing tools, click the three dots on the far

right side of the menu bar above the text box. You can type your instructions in to the text box, embed video or other media, etc.



Hot Tip: the Canvas Accessibility Checker

You might notice as you work on Pages, Assignments, and Discussions, add images, and highlight key point, etc. that a number appears next to our little friend at the bottom. They will let you know how many accessibility issues your text includes as you work. I recommend waiting to click on them until you're all done with your writing and formatting. They will provide pointers on where your text is not ADA-compliant, and will help you fix it. They're the best!



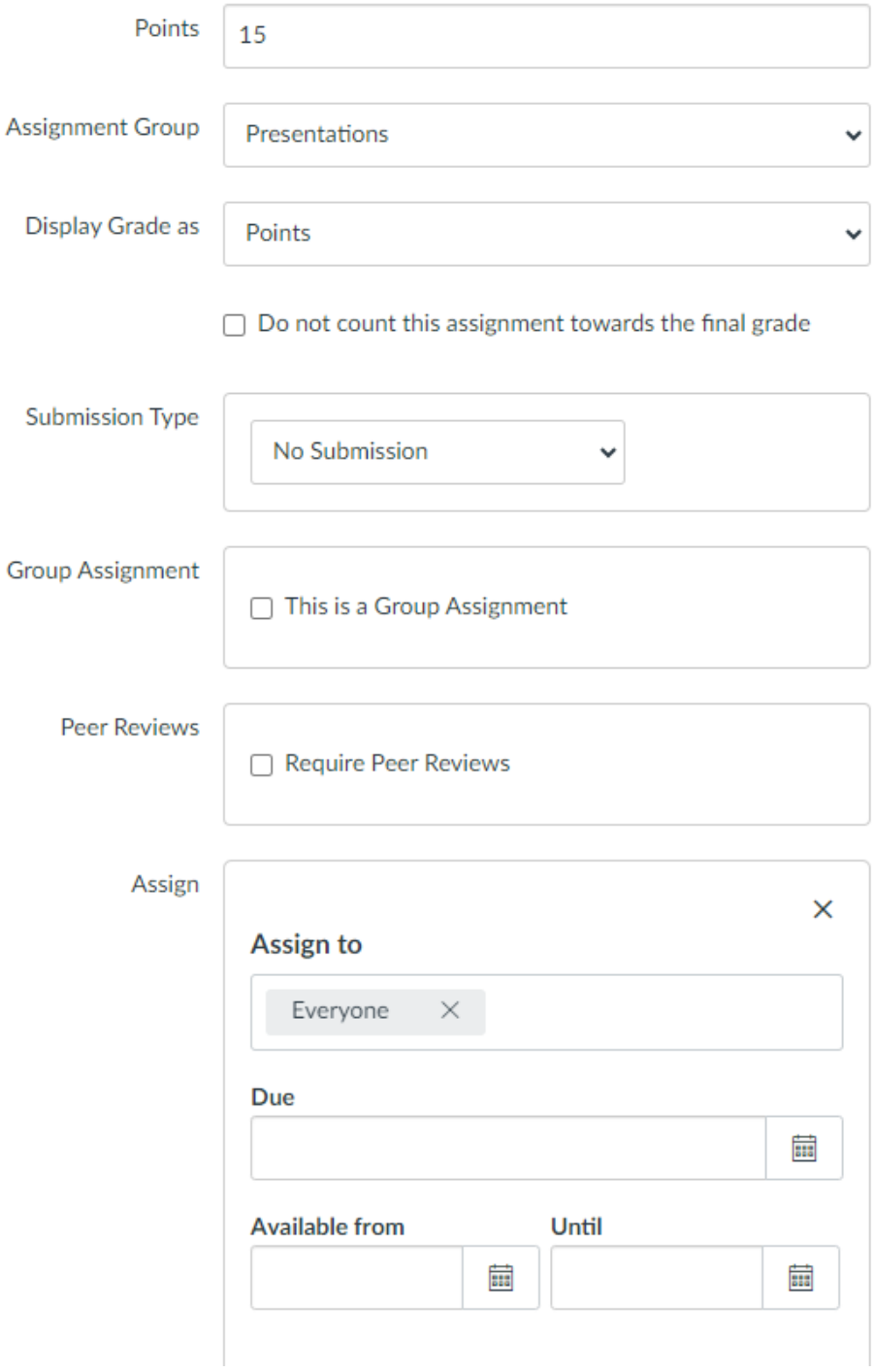
Assignment Settings

You can determine the point value of the assignment, which Assignment Group you want to categorize it into, and how you'd like the grade to appear (points, percentage, letter, complete/incomplete, etc.)

Determine the Submission Type (*On Paper* means it will be handed in in person, *Online* will open up a series of options that allow you to determine what kind of files are acceptable to upload (.doc, .pdf, .xlsx, etc...), and *External Tool* allows students to submit work to a URL or other integrate tool of your choosing.

You can also select if this is a Group project, and which Group set from the People tab you'd like to be applied to the assignment. If you'd like to use Peer Reviews for the assignment, you can also dictate that and if the reviewers should be assigned manually, automatically, and/or anonymously.

"Assign" is where you determine *who* is assigned this task, when it is due, when it becomes available to them, and when it will lock and disallow further submissions. In most cases, Everyone will be assigned an Assignment in a course. However, there may be some cases where a student needs an extension and you do not want to open the Assignment submission tool for everyone. In this case, you will leave the settings as they are for Everyone else, and click the +Add button that appears at the bottom of the Assignment options. This will allow you to type in the student's name, and set a new Available Until date (and even a new due date, if you don't want their work marking as "Late".)



More information about Assignments

Video Guide to Assignments

Canvas Instructor Guide: Assignments.

What are assignments?

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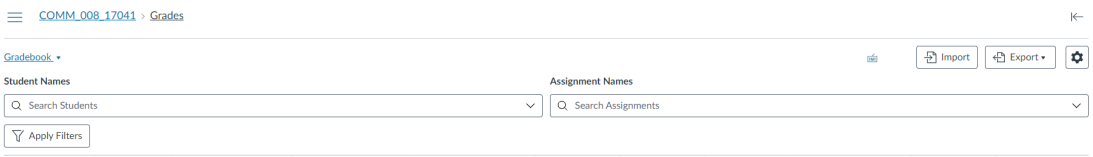
Grades

Canvas Gradebook Basics

The **Gradebook** is the central hub for viewing, entering, and managing grades in your online course. More than just a spreadsheet, the Gradebook helps us communicate progress, identify at-risk students, and ensure alignment with a course's grading policies. Students also rely on it to monitor their performance and plan their efforts.

Canvas is *not* intended to store permanent student grade records ad infinitum. In fact, some student data in Canvas may not be stable or accessible after the end of the semester without intervention from your LMS Admin. It is recommended that you download your grade records from Canvas at the end of each semester and store the records in a safe file for several years, just in case you need to retrieve the records at some point in the future.

To download your Gradebook from Canvas, open the Grades tool in the course navigation menu, click "Export", and select "Entire Gradebook." This will download an Excel file of all grades and student records for the semester. Attendance is not downloaded from the Gradebook - only assignment names, assigned scores, and the final grade.



Adjusting What You See

You can adjust what kinds of columns you see in the Gradebook and how they are organized by clicking on the gear/sprocket icon in the upper right corner, and selecting *View Options*. For instance, you can have your grade columns arrange by Module - First to Last, by Point Value - High to Low, etc.

You can also select to add a Notes column for your own personal use. Some teachers use this column to record things they need to remember, such as student accommodations, communication about an extension or an

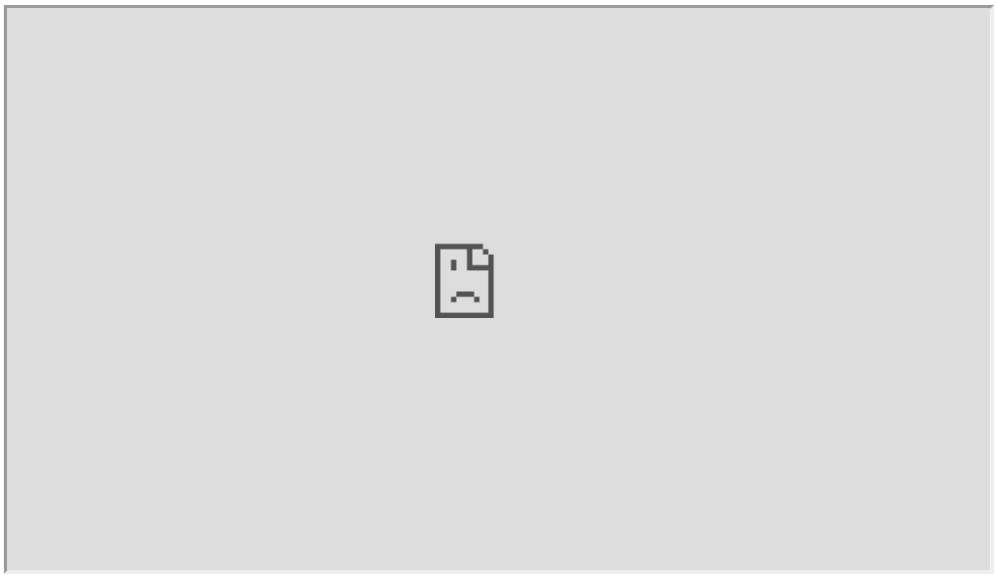
agreed upon new deadline, or information for a teacher who may be taking over your course mid-semester.

You can also move your "Total" column to the front of the Gradebook to sit next to the student's names, so you don't have to scroll al the way to the end in order to see current grades, and you can select whether you want the Total grade to appear as a numeric point value, or by a percentage of points earned with accompanying letter grade. Whatever change you make will also appear to your students. Be aware that if you switch the format to Points, you may get more questions like "What is my current grade in this class?" due to the difficulty of calculating points earned/current points available versus points still-to-come.

Hot Tip: the "Message Students Who" Tool

Canvas offers a feature in the Gradebook called “Message Students Who." This function allows you to get in touch with specific students who haven’t submitted something, scored low, or some other filter. We're required by law to monitor student engagement and success, and to reach out to struggling students, and this tool makes it a cinch!

Check out this 4 minute tutorial on using the tool:



SpeedGrader

SpeedGrader is where most of your grading will happen on Canvas. You'll notice on your Canvas Dashboard and on each course's homepage that you'll have a running To-Do list, which provides an itemized list of the work students have submitted that awaits your grading. Clicking on the items in that list will open the SpeedGrader tool, which allows you to begin scoring, annotating, and leading grading comments right on the students work, to be stored in the Gradebook! Scores that are entered in this way will appear in your Gradebook along with your commentary, for both you and your students.

Students can also leave you responses to your comments, and you can have conversations about specific assignments or bits of feedback all in one place. This feature is a great reason to enable notifications for "Submission Comments" in your Canvas Settings under Notifications. This feature being turned on ensures that you'll get an email or a push notification when a student leaves a submission comment, and you won't miss anything!

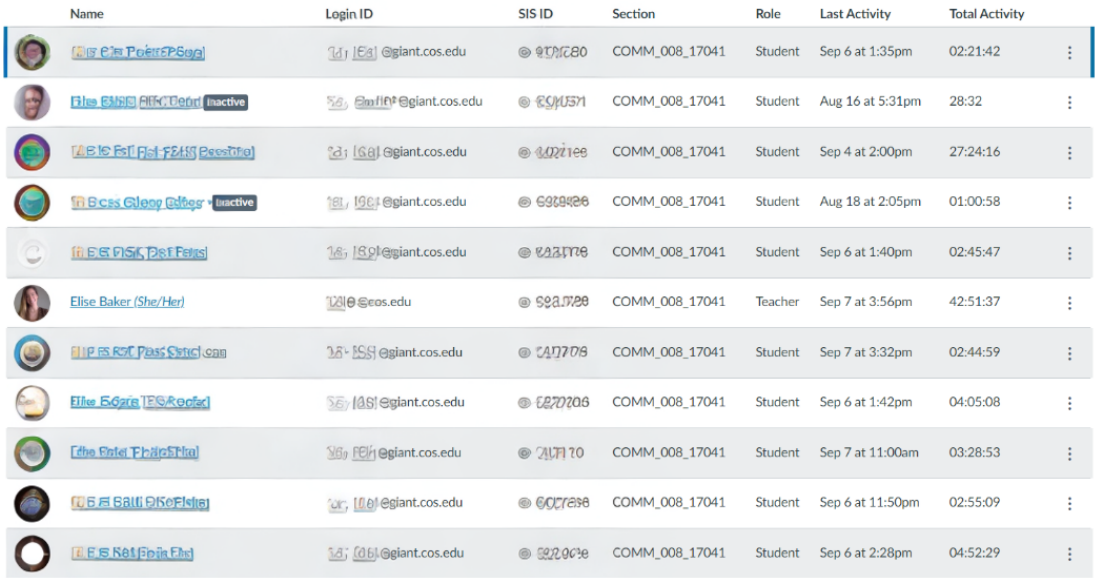
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People

People Page (as seen by the Instructor)

The People page shows you a list of all of the participants in the course along with some of their directory information. Participants can be Teachers, Students, Observers, Designers, etc. can also see how much time the participant has been "in" Canvas. This is one way to check engagement and determine drops during the first week of a fully online course.



People Page (as seen by the student)

When students click on the People link in the Course Navigation Menu, they see their peers' names but they do not see any other data. This could be useful to help them get to know their classmates and build community. If students don't need to contact one another in your couyrse, or you've pre-determined the ways and manners they'll do this (i.e. Discussions) then you might choose to disable this tab.

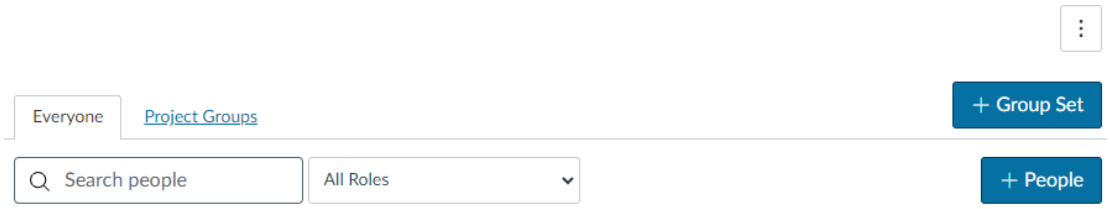
New Analytics and Student Interactions Report

Instructors can click on a student's namein the Gradebook, and click on "New Analytics" to learn about the student's participation in the course.

Another option is to click on a student's name on the People page, click on their name again in the panel that opens on the right, and click on Student Interactions Report. This can allow you to keep track of student activity, including assignments that have been submitted but haven't been graded yet, assignments submitted late or on-time, as well as how often a student has messaged you using the Inbox feature, and how often you have messaged a student using that tool.

Using "Groups" in the People Tab

If you require group work in your class, the People tab helps you out. Click the +Group Set button, and follow the prompts to determine how you want to create groups, membership limits, etc. Creating Groups essentially generates a Canvas shell just for that group, so groups can collaborate, create Discussions, share files, etc., and you can pop in and contribute to their discussions, check on progress, etc. There are also ways to set Assignments to grade as a group - we'll get there in a few pages.



View Prior Enrollments

After the end of your course, your students may have "disappeared" from view in Canvas until you click the View Prior Enrollments link in the upper right-hand

corner of the page.

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Discussions

Discussions are an Accreditation requirement.

Title 5 requires that all fully online courses demonstrate Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI). This means that instructors must be interacting with our students in ways that are predictable and content-based, and that we are providing prompts to engage students in these conversations with ourselves and each other. Discussion boards are one way to accomplish this.

More on RSI to come...

Creating a Discussion

To create a Discussion, click the Discussions tab in the course navigation menu, and select the blue "+ Add Discussion" button on the page. You'll be able to name your Discussion, and populate the Text Editor field with your prompt, guidelines, images, links, and anything else you want students to use to respond to your prompt.

Establish Transparent Expectations

To get the best results, we need to let our students know exactly what we expect from their responses to our prompt. Be concise and specific in what you want students to include in their posts, and if anything else is required of them.

Consider letting them know:

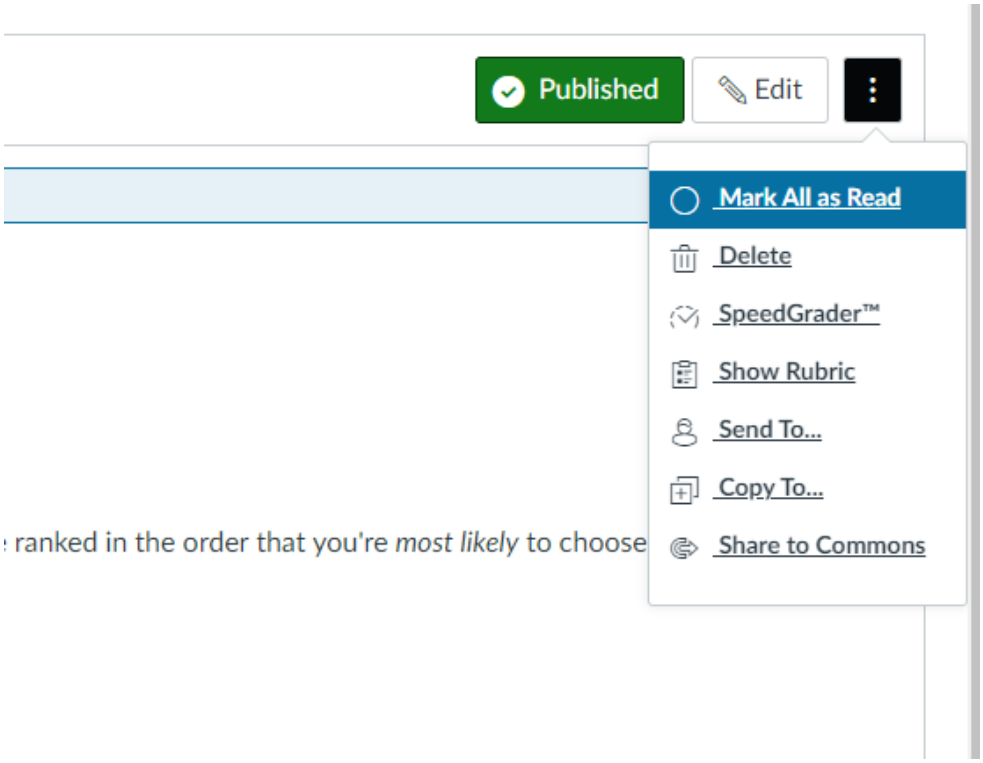
how many peers do they need to respond to?
what is the expected length and quality of peer replies?
any specific concepts you want them to mention?
expectations of source citation/integration? language use? comments that expand the discussion versus cycle it?
deadlines for their initial reply, and deadlines for their peer responses?
acceptable formats? (i.e. videos, text posts, pictures, audio recordings?)

criteria for success (in the form of a rubric or bullet list)

Create a Rubric

Using a Rubric can really simplify your life when you go to score Discussion posts. To add a Rubric, click on the three dot menu in the upper right corner of your created Discussion Board. Select "Add a Rubric." If one already exists, "Show Rubric" will appear in its place.

Ensure your Rubric aligns with the expectations you've laid out for your students in your prompt and guidelines, assign point values to each component for success, and you're all set! You can also decide if you want to use the rubric for scoring (i.e. you want to fill it in and have the grade enter into the Gradebook) or if you just want it there to leave feedback and let students know the scoring plan.



Discussions shouldn't be boring!

Here are some tips for keeping Discussion Boards relevant, (relatively) fun, and minimally tedious to both student participants and you as the grader.

1. **Ask yourself: What is the objective of this discussion?** Allow the answer to drive your content. If the objective is for students to display knowledge or understanding, perhaps that is an assignment rather than a discussion. If the objective is for students to engage with their peers as if they were in class for a conversation about the topic, then write your guidelines in a way that is reflective of that. Avoid nit-picking grammar or APA-formatting or perfect citations, and instead evaluate their contributions on the discussion-driving quality of their remarks.
2. **Have students write the discussion questions.** Rather than us determining what students are going to talk about, allow student interest, confusion, or prior knowledge to drive the discussion. This creates ownership, more frequent returns to the discussion board during the week, and minimizes duplicate responses, or the dreaded peer-paraphrase + "I agree." To assess, create a rubric that uses words like "thoughtful," "meaningful" and subjective terms, as well as criteria that assess if they cared for their discussion question, nurtured it by responding to peers in a timely manner, and put in visible work to make the discussion thrive.
3. **Use images, gifs, videos, and tweets.** Rather than requiring a certain written format (or even requiring writing at all!) and have students instead go find a video or meme or other form of media content to communicate their response. This is useful for check-in discussions, recognition of a concept in practice, etc. For example, I give my Persuasion students a list of values or a certain lifestyle, and ask that they find a car advertisement or commercial that demonstrates marketing choices designed for that value set or lifestyle and post the picture or video. Last names A-H are assigned Luxury, I-R are assigned Environmentalism, S-Z are assigned Rugged, so they don't all post the same things. They create an original post, and then must respond to a post from another Lifestyle than the one they were assigned. You wouldn't believe how enthusiastically discussion flows. Students even respond to the original posts with more gifs and videos.
4. **Be present.** This is a part of RSI! Ask probing questions. Students are accustomed to making their required number of posts and moving along for full credit, so challenge their answers, ask them to elaborate on why they agree, or to provide an example.

5. **Provide a menu of discussion prompts**. Rather than having everyone respond to the same prompt, offer two or three to choose from, and require that in their peer response(s) they respond to a different question than the one their original post was about. This ensures they are engaging with multiple discussion questions, covering more material and more closely reflects an in-class discussion where multiple questions would be asked and answered in one class meeting.
6. **Allow text or video posts.** We all get keyboard fatigue in online courses, whether we are grading work or submitting work. Allow students to choose how they want to submit. Post your instructions as a video with captions, and encourage students to reply with a captioned video as well. Choice goes a long way for a number of different equity groups.
7. **Split up due dates.** Have the initial post due by Wednesday, and the response post(s) due by Saturday, for example. This eliminates the stress our early bird achievers likely feel at having to wait until Saturday night to have any post to reply to, when they had their original post done by Tuesday morning. It also ensures there is a fruitful week of discussion, rather than hurried posts from iPhones between 10:30 and midnight on Saturday.
8. **DON'T DO A DISCUSSION BOARD EVERY WEEK.** If you're burnt out, they're burnt out. If you are addicted to a consistent modular format that demands a reading, a quiz, and a discussion board each week, then make your discussion board a GIF-style check in every few weeks. While discussions should usually be about content, it's OK to ask "How are we feeling at this point in the semester?" and if you receive multiple GIFs of explosions, people banging their heads into walls, or lemmings running of cliffs... well *there's some data!* :P

More information on Discussions

Discussions Video Guide

Learn about using Discussions in Canvas Guides.

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Quizzes

Quizzes provide just one way of assessing learning on Canvas.

Canvas Quizzes is a tool for building and delivering assessments that check for understanding and can provide immediate feedback to support student learning in the online environment. Quizzes can be used for a low-stakes practice quiz or for a major exam, or even to provide an ungraded survey to gather student feedback about the course so far.

Building a Quiz

To create a quiz:

1. In your course navigation, click **“Quizzes”** and then **“+ Quiz”**.
2. Choose **“New Quizzes”** (recommended) or **“Classic Quizzes,"** depending on what you're comfortable with.
3. Add a title and instructions for students. Let students know what resources they are allowed or not allowed to use.
4. Select quiz settings such as:
   Time limit
   Number of allowed attempts
   To drop the lowest attempt score, average all the attempt scores, etc...
   Shuffle questions or answers
   When and if students can view the correct answers
5. Click **“Build”** to add your questions. You can choose from a variety of question types:
   Multiple Choice, True/False, Matching
   Fill-in-the-Blank, Numeric
   Essay, File Upload
   Stimulus Questions (New Quizzes only) to pair content with related items

You can also use question banks to randomize questions and re-use content across multiple quizzes.

Sometimes, a student will provide documentation of an Access and Ability Center-approved accommodation, allowing them additional testing time. Instructors can customize these settings as needed by clicking on the Quiz and clicking "Moderate Quiz." Click the Pencil icon next to the student's name, and options will open to give them extra attempts or time.

Quizzes aren't always the best way to assess.

Canvas Quizzes are great for a number of things:

Low-stakes/no-stakes practice quizzes to reinforce concepts or provide students with personal assessment data
Reading or unit comprehension checks
Skill checks or applied knowledge assessments
Objective tests with auto-graded/auto-feedback questions
Essay-based exams that require reflection or analysis

For performance-based or collaborative tasks, consider using Assignments or Discussions instead.

Ensuring testing integrity online (without proctoring/surveillance software)

Since 2020, the use of online test-proctoring software has been the subject of heated debate. Many experience it as unsettling and nerve-wracking at best, and invasive and racist as worst. In the absence of a campus-wide testing surveillance system, you can promote integrity in more student-centered ways:

Use question banks and shuffle answers to create versions that will rearrange and be somewhat unique for each student.

Set time limits appropriate to the complexity of the quiz - enough to reduce opportunities for external searching.
Design open-book, higher-order questions that require critical thinking, application, or personal analysis.
Display one question at a time to limit pre-sharing of content.
Hide correct answers and feedback until after the quiz is closed to all students.
Clearly communicate your expectations for academic honesty in your syllabus and quiz instructions to sets the tone for responsible behavior.
Use Analytics thoughtfully. Canvas provides Quiz Logs and Access Reports that show when a student opened, submitted, or left a quiz. These tools should be used as data, not surveillance. They're most useful when following up on a noticed irregularity or when a student reports a loss or challenge of access.

You can also use question banks to randomize questions and re-use content across multiple quizzes.

Designing for integrity doesn't mean designing for distrust. Instead of focusing solely on restriction, aim to create assessments that are challenging, meaningful, and difficult to cheat on—because they are deeply rooted in learning, not memorization.

The Student Experience

Students will see:

The quiz title, instructions, and any time limits before beginning
Progress indicators, time remaining (if timed), and navigation tools
Immediate feedback (if enabled), including which questions were correct or incorrect
Access to scores and instructor comments once grades are posted

If a student encounters a technical issue (e.g., lost connection), instructors can grant additional attempts or manually reopen the quiz as needed by clicking on the Quiz and clicking "Moderate Quiz."

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Files

Your "Backstage" Organization

The Files area in Canvas is your personal file cabinet. It stores documents, images, videos, presentations, PDFs, and other media files you upload into your course. Every time you upload something to a Page, Assignment, Quiz, or Discussion you're designing, a copy is also placed in your course's Files folder.

While *Files* is a vital organizational tool for instructors, it's *NOT* intended to be a primary way for students to access content.

What do I use *Files* for?

As an instructor, you can use the Files tool to:

Upload, organize, and manage all course-related files
Create folders for weekly modules, assignment resources, or media libraries
Rename or replace files without breaking links inside course content
Keep your materials tidy and centrally accessible

Canvas automatically tracks where each file is used throughout the course, helping you manage updates without duplication.

Why students should *not* have access to your Files

By default, Files is hidden from students in the course navigation menu, and it's best to keep it that way. Here's why:

1. **Files aren't structured for students.** Imagine letting a student go through your office filing cabinet, with no guidance or instructions on what they're looking at or looking for. Students benefit from content that's framed alongside instructions, with context and flow. If you rely on Files for access, there's no explanation or guidance about what the file is, why it matters, what assessments it prepares a student for, etc. Students may

skip essential instructional elements on Pages or Modules and only access the supplementary materials you've uploaded to sit alongside your primary content.

2. **You lose control over the learning path.** When students can access your Files directory, they can see all course materials at once—even outdated, accidentally imported, future, unpublished, or personal items. If outdated versions, personal notes, or unpublished drafts are visible, students may download and use them. This can cause confusion or lead to unintended academic consequences. They may jump ahead, miss important steps, or become overwhelmed. Again, if you wouldn't let a student have free rein over your hard copy filing cabinet, don't let them have free rein over your online filing cabinet.

Best Practice

Best practice is to "hand out" your files to students within the context of content Pages, Assignments, and Discussions. This allows you to control when and how materials are accessed, and helps students stay focused and oriented within your course design.

***Files* is your behind-the-scenes storage system.**

It's powerful for you, but was never designed for students.

Use it to stay organized, but guide students through your course using Pages and Modules instead.

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New Analytics

A Built-in Reporting Tool

New Analytics is a built-in reporting tool in Canvas that can show you interactive graphs and tables that let you track data related to course grades, activity, and communication. You can track student grades, submission status, weekly course activity, individual student participation, and online attendance. You can also use New Analytics to message students based on their submission status or grade.

Students also get to use New Analytics to view and download data about their course grades, weekly online activity, and Inbox communication.

You can enable New Analytics in your course under Settings > Navigation.

What Can It Show Me?

Course Grade Chart

Shows the average course grade over time.
Can be filtered by individual students, section, or assignment group.

Weekly Online Activity

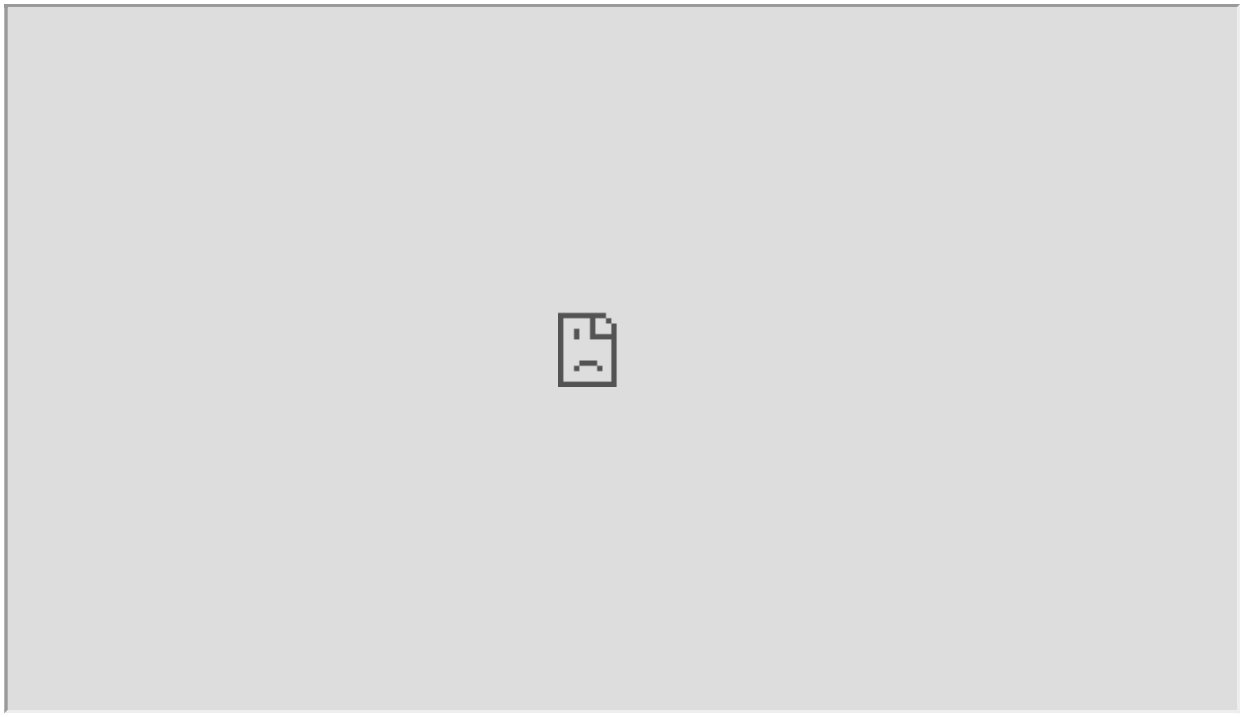
Displays page views and participations (e.g., submitting assignments, posting to discussions).
Helps you track when students are active and how they're engaging.

Missing and Late Assignments

View which students have missing or late submissions.

Messaging

Can track the number of messages you've sent to your students and they've sent to you



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Zoom

Hosting Meetings through Canvas

TechConnect Zoom is an integration that brings Zoom's virtual meeting tools directly into your Canvas course. It allows you to schedule, manage, and launch Zoom meetings from within Canvas, making it easy for you and your students to access live class sessions without juggling multiple platforms.

This tool is especially helpful for courses with virtual office hours, workshops, or optional support sessions.

What does Canvas-integrated Zoom do?

With TechConnect Zoom in Canvas, instructors can:

Schedule Zoom meetings that are automatically linked to the course
Set recurring meetings (e.g., weekly class sessions)
Automatically invite enrolled students
Track student attendance using the post-meeting reports
Record sessions to the cloud, with recordings automatically linked back in Canvas
Manage Zoom settings (e.g., waiting rooms, passcodes, participant permissions)

Because it's connected to your course roster, only enrolled students have access to join and view your meetings and recordings.

Using Zoom in Canvas

To use TechConnect Zoom in your course:

1. In the course navigation, click **"TechConnect Zoom"** (may also appear as "Zoom" or "ConferZoom" at other institutions you teach at)
2. Click the **"Schedule a New Meeting"** button.
3. Fill in the meeting details:
   Topic (e.g., "Weekly Lecture" or "Office Hours")

Date, time, and duration
Recurrence, if applicable
Settings like video, audio, and security options

4. Click **“Save”**—your meeting is now accessible to all students via the TechConnect Zoom tab.

If you record the session to the Cloud, Canvas will automatically place the recording under the **“Cloud Recordings”** tab, making it available for students to review.

The Student Experience

For students, TechConnect Zoom creates a centralized, hassle-free experience. When they click the TechConnect Zoom link in the course menu, they can:

View a list of upcoming scheduled meetings
Join live sessions/office hours
Access past recordings under the Cloud Recordings tab
See meeting details like date, time, and description in advance

There’s no need to email Zoom links, set passwords manually, or worry about students losing access — everything they need is already in Canvas.

Best Practice Tip:

Add a reminder in your weekly Announcement to direct students to the TechConnect Zoom tab for your Office Hours or any live study sessions you plan to host. This reinforces their use of Canvas as the course hub and reduces confusion, while guidance students toward places and times to access you (which is RSI!)

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Customizing the Course Navigation Menu

Why Customize the Course Navigation Menu?

The Canvas Course Navigation Menu is what your students use to move through your course. By default, it includes a *lot* of links, and not all of them are relevant to every course, and even less of them are relevant to students. Leaving unnecessary links visible can lead to confusion, misdirection, and frustration for students who get lost thinking they are meant to click through them.

When we're deciding what should be included really anywhere in our course, our goal should be to create clear defined pathways for students to access their learning materials and assessments in the ways we intend. Usually, we want students to engage with our learning material, lectures, discussions, and assessments in a particular order. We don't want them starting with the Midterm, for example, before they've learned anything that's on it!

One of the ways we put guardrails on the pathways they're on is by customizing the links they can see on the Course Navigation Menu.

What Should be Visible?

Only the tools and pages your students will *actively use* in your course should appear in the menu. These might include:

Home
Modules
Announcements
Assignments (Don't include this if you plan to route student to their Assignments via Modules!)
Discussions (If students will get to their Discussions by progressing through a module, don't include that link in the Course Nav menu.)
Grades

Syllabus (if you use the Canvas Syllabus tool instead of a content page)
People (only if students need to contact classmates or form groups)

You may want to hide:

Pages, Files, Quizzes, Assignments (if accessed only through Modules)
Outcomes, Conferences, Collaborations, Chat (if not used)

How to Customize the Course Navigation Menu

1. Navigate to your Canvas course.
2. Click Settings at the bottom of the Course Navigation Menu.
3. Select the Navigation tab at the top.
4. Drag and drop items:
- Move items you use into the top section or select "+ Enable" to make them visible to students.
- Move unused items into the bottom section or select "+ Disable" to hide them from students.
5. Click Save at the bottom of the page.

Tip

Ask yourself:

> "If a student clicks this link, will they find something useful, or will they be confused?" If it's the latter, hide it.
>
> "If a student clicks this link, will be be able to start an assignment without being exposed to the related learning material?" If it's a yes, hide it.

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More about Canvas is not currently supported

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Rich Content Editor (RCE)

Building Course Content in the RCE

The **Rich Content Editor (RCE)** is the primary tool you'll use in Canvas to build content for Pages, Assignments, Discussions, Quizzes, Announcements, and more. It's a familiar word-processor-style interface that allows you to add and format text, embed media, insert links, and structure your content for readability and accessibility without needing to write code.

What does the RCE do?

Using the RCE, you can:

Write and format text with **bold**, *italics*, underline, lists, and colors
Add links to course items or external websites
Embed images, audio, video, and other media
Create accessible tables for organizing content
Use HTML (</>) view for custom styling (if you know some coding and want to get into some more design-y stuff)

This editor is early everywhere you add content in Canvas, so it's worth getting adept at using its features.

Using Headings styles in the RCE (*more to come on this in Module 5! Don't despair!*)

One of the most important tools for clarity and accessibility is the use of Headings:

Use the **Paragraph dropdown** in the toolbar to apply heading levels (Heading 2, Heading 3, etc.).
Heading 2 should be used for major sections.
Heading 1 is pre-set in Canvas as the Page Title, so we always want to start with Heading 2. In this course, **all of our Heading 2-level**

text has a navy blue background, to get you used to visually identifying Headings and their organization on a content Page.
Heading 3 and lower can be used for sub-sections.
In this course, **all of our Heading 3-level text has an orange background**, and our Heading 4-level text is navy blue with a green background, and **sometimes bold and navy.**

> Proper use of headings improves readability and allows screen reader users to navigate your content easily.

Emebedding Images and Videos

> The RCE makes it simple to add visual and multimedia elements:

Images: Click the “Image” icon and choose to upload from your computer, course files, or an external URL. Always include **alt text** for accessibility.
Alt text is short for "alternative text," and should concisely describe what is in the image for those with visual impairments.
Videos: Use the “Media” or “Apps” icon to embed videos from YouTube, Studio, or uploaded files. You can also paste embed codes in HTML view if needed.

> **Tip:** Keep visuals purposeful—use them to support the content and break up dense text.

A word on Accessibility

> Creating content that works for all learners is essential (and required by law.) The Rich Content Editor helps you build accessible content by:

Including an **Accessibility Checker** (human figure icon in the bottom right) that flags issues like missing alt text, heading structure, or color contrast
Supporting keyboard navigation and screen reader compatibility
Encouraging structured formatting through Headings and lists.

> As you build your content, use the Accessibility Checker regularly to ensure it meets basic standards and is usable by all students.

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Student View

Ever wonder what the course looks like to a student?

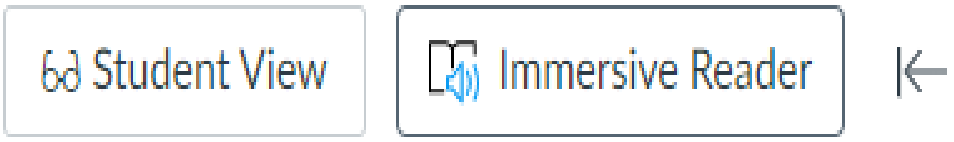
Student View is a feature in Canvas that allows instructors to see the course exactly as a student would. It's a powerful tool for previewing what students can access, how content is displayed, and whether navigation and assignments are set up correctly.

When you enter Student View, you are logged in as a test student. You can:

Submit assignments
Test out your own quizzes
View pages and modules as a student would

This helps you catch visibility issues, broken links, or confusing instructions *before* your students do. T

To activate Student View, click the "Student View" button in the top right corner of your course home page or settings.



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Immersive Reader

Some Students Listen to their Content

The Canvas Immersive Reader is an accessibility tool built into many Canvas pages that helps students engage with written content in a way that supports diverse learning needs. When enabled, it allows users to:

Hear the text read aloud, with adjustable voice speed and language

Change font size, spacing, and background color for easier reading

Highlight parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives)

Translate text into multiple languages

Break words into syllables to support literacy and language learners

It's especially helpful for students with visual impairments, reading difficulties like dyslexia, English language learners, and anyone who benefits from multi-sensory learning.

The Immersive Reader is available on most Canvas Pages, but not Assignments or Discussions. It is accessed by clicking the "Immersive Reader" link in the top-right corner of the page next to "Student View."

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Copying a Canvas Course

Bringing Content Across Course shells (and semesters!)

Copying content from a previous course into a new, empty course shell is a fast and efficient way to reuse your course design, assignments, and materials, especially if you're teaching the same class again.

What does copying a course do for me?

Saves time by reusing an existing course setup
Maintains consistency across sections or semesters
Preserves modules, assignments, quizzes, pages, and more
Allows you to revise or adapt a prior course without starting from scratch

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How to Copy a Course

1. Go to the blank course shell (the destination).
2. Click “Settings” in the course menu (bottom left).
3. Click “Import Course Content” on the right side.
4. Select “Copy a Canvas Course” under Content Type.
5. Search for and select the course you want to copy from.
6. Choose All Content or Select Specific Content.
7. Optional: Use “Adjust Events and Due Dates” to shift dates from one semester's schedule to the next.
8. Click *Import* to begin the process.

Proceed with Caution

Be careful when importing content multiple times into the same course. Canvas does not automatically warn you if content will be duplicated or overwritten. If you import the same quiz, assignment, or page more than once, you may end up with duplicates, or in worst cases will unintentionally overwrite edits you've made in the new course shell, undoing all your work.

Tip: If you need to re-import specific items, use the *"Select Specific Content"* option instead of "All Content," and double-check before confirming the import.

Canvas Guides

How do I copy content from another Canvas course using the Course Import tool?
How do I import content from Blackboard 6/7/8/9 into Canvas?
How do I export a Canvas course?
How do I select specific content as part of a course import?
How do I adjust events and due dates in a course import?

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Additional Resources and Support is not currently supported

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Canvas Basics Q&A

Canvas Basics-Related Questions?

Click the "Reply" button to ask Canvas, tool, or "how do I do this?" type of questions.



Any participant is welcome and encouraged to respond to discussion posts! We have so much Canvas knowledge in this cohort, so if you know an answer or have a resource to contribute, jump in and help out a friend!

If you have a time-sensitive question or concern you'd like to speak with me about, please Canvas message me directly.

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Canvas Basics Quiz - Self Assessment

Instructions

This ungraded quiz reviews some of the key points from the Canvas basics module. After you have looked through all the pages of the module, you can use this quiz to check your recall on some important points. Use it as a self-assessment!

Points: 12.0

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What else would you like to learn about Canvas? - Discussion

We've learned a lot about Canvas this week, but Canvas can sometimes feel like a rabbit hole of features...



So what else would you like to know?

You are encouraged to respond to the discussion in one of the following ways:

ask a question about Canvas or
share a problem you run into on Canvas

Then, respond to one or more of your peers with:

advice or a solution to their problem
"like" posts you agree with, have also wondered about ,or those that provide solutions that are helpful to you.
a link to the page in Canvas Community that has the answer they need.

This is an optional discussion. It does not count toward your overall grade in OCTA.

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Looking for deeper Canvas training?

Introducing CVC @ONE

The **California Virtual Campus (CVC) Online Network of Educators (@ONE)** offers free, self-paced, and facilitated courses designed to support faculty in effective online teaching. Their courses offer foundational skills in Canvas for beginners, and advanced strategies in accessibility, equity, and course design for the more experienced.

Here are two courses you might consider taking to develop your Canvas expertise beyond this module.

Browse the CVC @ONE course catalog.

Introduction to Teaching with Canvas

This 4-week asynchronous course will introduce you to the beauties of using Canvas in online, hybrid, and face-to-face classes. These simple, hands-on lessons give you the chance to master Canvas in your own practice course to build a home page, content page, discussion, and quiz, while also exploring how to use Canvas communication tools.

If you're new to Canvas, or just want a powerful refresher on the basics, this course is a great starting point, and you get to keep your sandbox to play in, experiment, and build your online material!

Outcomes:

Customize your Canvas profile and notification preferences to fit your needs
Create and archive announcements to keep your students engaged and updated
Develop modules to organize your content most effectively
Design a welcoming, impactful home page
Set up a discussion, quiz, and/or assignment exactly the way you want
Use a variety of communication tools to streamline contact with students
Use the SpeedGrader tool to make grading fast and easy

Advanced Techniques with Canvas

This 4-week course builds on your experience with Canvas and helps you make more sophisticated use of the Canvas environment to enhance student success. We will explore strategies for using Canvas tools to support effective course design, from making the most out of Modules to using CSS to add visual flair in the Rich Content Editor. You will learn effective practices in assessment, from Quizzes to the Assignments page. By the end of the course, you will be ready to take your Canvas course design to the next level of expertise.

Outcomes:

Guide students along a structured learning path using advanced Module techniques
Give students individualized opportunities for success using advanced Quiz techniques
Add meaning to assessment using Outcomes, Rubrics, and Assignment Groups
Bring visual spice to the Rich Content Editor using advanced HTML techniques

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Module 1: Distance Ed Foundations and Backward Design (Aug. 25-31)

1. Unit 1 Overview
2. Foundations of Distance Ed
3. What counts as "distance education"
4. Principles for Quality Online Teaching
5. Student Success at-a-glance
6. Backward Design
7. Introduction to Backward Design
8. From Course Outcomes to Unit Objectives
9. ★ Share Your COR With Me - Find and Submit
10. Units = Modules (in Canvas)
11. Writing Good Unit Objectives
12. ★ Creating a Course Road Map - Course-building Activity
13. Additional Resources and Support
14. Foundations of DE / Backward Design Q&A
15. End of Module 1 - Recap

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Unit 1 Overview

What to Expect in this Unit

This is a Unit Overview page!

You'll be making your own for each unit in your course as we progress over the next 8 weeks.

We are going to cover some foundations of DE, and end with creating unit-level objectives from our own course outcomes.

We will start by examining the definition of "Distance Education" and the various DE modalities offered at COS. We'll look at how success is divided along lines of instructional modality, and then begin using the principles of ***backward design*** to build and revise our online classes. (It is just as it sounds - designing backwards! We're going to start from the end goal (what students will need to be able to do/demonstrate) and move backwards to create the assessments that allow us to measure that, and then to the content that prepares them to do it! Here are the simplified steps:

1. Identify what your end course goals are. Use your Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) to guide this (more on what these are and how to find those included in the module!).
2. From there, chunk your content into pieces that are almost like mini-courses themselves - each chunk should focus in on a

specific skill or mastery. These chunks become the units (or modules) that make up your course.

To get us there, we will start with readings about effective online course navigation, and designing units and modules.

First, you will have the opportunity to see a few samples. You may choose to adapt your current teaching materials, or start from scratch - either way is fine!

Then, you will read about what a unit-level objective is, how to write good objectives, and how to make sure they are *student-centered* in their language and phrasing. These are going to be much more narrow in scope than our student learning outcomes and end-course goals, which are usually written for the faculty member versus the student.

Finally, you will create a course road map with unit-level objectives for *all* units in your course. This might sound like a lot of work, and it is. But this is a foundational task in this course, from which we will build everything else. **You cannot move to the next part of the course until your road map and objectives are submitted and graded.**

Unit Objectives

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

Differentiate between the DE modalities offered at COS.

Infer about the causes for the success rates divided along lines of modality.
Use backward design principles to build a course plan.
Plan online learning units with measurable outcomes.
Write outcomes in student-centered language.

Click Next to move to the next page

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Foundations of Distance Ed is not currently supported

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What counts as "distance education"

Understanding Distance Education and Instructional Modalities at COS

Let's start with some legalese (sorry)...

CA Code of Regulations - Title 5

§ 55200. Definition and Application

(a) "Distance education" means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor(s) and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor(s) either synchronously or asynchronously.

Technologies that may be used to offer distance education include:

(1)The internet;

(2)One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;

(3)(Audio conference; or

(4) Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3)

of this subdivision.

(b)The definition of "distance education" does not include correspondence courses.

(c) "Accessible" means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The person with a disability must be able to obtain the information as fully, equally, and independently as a person without a disability. Although this might not result in identical ease of use compared to that of persons without disabilities, it still must ensure equal opportunity to the educational benefits and opportunities afforded by the technology and equal treatment in the use of such technology.

What does this mean for colleges and faculty?

Though districts may interpret this definition differently, this regulation is broadly used to divide classes into three categories:

1. traditional classrooms taught 100% through face-to-face instruction;
2. hybrid classes, which combine face-to-face instruction with online instruction; and
3. fully online courses, where 100% of the instruction is done online.

Thus, "distance education" (DE) is an umbrella term, with various formats under the umbrella, but all DE courses include some online aspect (like hybrids or HyFlex). Differing interpretations of "online" lead to problems and confusion, including questions about

whether students can be required to come to campus for orientations or exams. Clarification on this requirement will be discussed later.

By defining distance education as different from traditional face-to-face courses, this regulation sets the foundation for several other subsections of Title 5, including course quality standards, publication of course standards, instructor contact, faculty selection and workload, separate course approval, and credit hours.

By the way, there are no state or federal definitions regarding hybrid classes. If a class is a hybrid, it falls under distance education regulations. Even if you are teaching "only hybrid" courses, you are still required to take an online teaching certification course.

DE Modalities at COS

Click through the five tabs below to familiarize yourself with the different DE modalities offered at COS.

Online
Online with Orientation
Online - synchronous - live
Hybrid
Hybrid Flex

ONLINE

These are courses in which there are no scheduled meetings. The course includes regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and the student, and

students are required to complete class activities and assignments as detailed in the course syllabus by logging into an online system, completing assignments and submitting them to the instructor electronically within timelines specified in the syllabus.

ONLINE with ORIENTATION

These are courses in which there is one scheduled meeting identified in the schedule. The course includes regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and the student, and students are required to complete class activities and assignments as detailed in the course syllabus by logging into an online system, completing assignments and submitting them to the instructor electronically within timelines specified in the syllabus. your other search terms and hit Search. That will show you courses in your area that are offered online or in hybrid formats.

Online - Synchronous - Live

These are courses in which class meetings take place on a predetermined schedule, which include regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and the student, and all students are required to attend class meetings and interact with the instructor and other students through the use of live, interactive technology.

HYBRID

These courses include any combination of in-person, synchronous online, and/or asynchronous online instruction including regular and substantive interaction between the

instructor and the student. The class schedule specifies how students participate in each class session.

HYBRID FLEX

These courses include any combination of in-person, synchronous online, and/or asynchronous online instruction including regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and the student. Each student determines which modality to participate in for each class session.

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Instruction

COVID required many faculty to quickly pivot to teaching remotely. In that time of rapid adjustment, many faculty made the choice to use Zoom to meet with their students at a set time, *synchronously*. In that circumstance, it felt natural to continue same-time-same-place meetings in order to minimize disruption to the routine we'd all established in our classes.

★ Asynchronous Design as "The Gold Standard"

> For distance education (DE) courses, *asynchronous* online teaching and learning is the golden standard. This is because, historically, students who take online courses in any equitable access-oriented institution (like COS), do so because it allows them to meet their work and family responsibilities while also advancing towards their academic goals. When faculty teach DE courses and coordinate dates/times to meet synchronously in Zoom, they often learn that very few students are available at the same time.

In short, synchronicity is a barrier that asynchronous online teaching and learning eliminates! However, just because you teach asynchronously *does not mean* you can't be present for your students. In fact, asynchronous online learning opens *more* opportunities to interact with more of your learners and see evidence of their learning!

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Principles for Quality Online Teaching

The more than 2.1 million students who attend California's community colleges are not only racially, physically, and cognitively diverse, but also face social and emotional barriers which may impact their success. Part of the California Community College mission is to serve *all* of these students.

Effective online teaching combines awareness of course design principles with strategies for supporting learners. The five principles detailed below articulate teaching strategies and behaviors which work hand-in-hand with the course design elements outlined in the OEI Course Design Rubric to support student success. Underpinning the principles is a focus on continuous professional development to support growth, adapt to technological innovation, and develop teaching strategies that support California community college students.

Underpinning the principles is a focus on continuous professional development to support growth, adapt to technological innovation, and develop teaching strategies that support California community college students. Thus, the principles focus on the **interconnections between our students' success and our teaching.**

Please be sure to view all five tabs before clicking *Next.*

PRINCIPLE 1

PRINCIPLE 2
PRINCIPLE 3
PRINCIPLE 4
PRINCIPLE 5

#1: Effective online teachers

are present within their course.

Community college students are more likely to come from underserved populations and are inclined to feelings of self-doubt in academic settings. When learning online, our students need to know they have an instructor who cares and is there to support them, and that they are part of a vibrant learning community. Effective online teachers mindfully cultivate their presence at the course level and one-on-one with students. These interactions foster a relationship based on trust, which is the foundation of a learning community.

This principle underscores:

Evaluating and incorporating digital tools to support the development of a learning community;
Providing a supportive environment for all learners;
Incorporating tools and activities to support student-to-student interaction and presence;
Using multiple tools to support instructor-to-student interaction.

#2: Effective online teachers...

apply equitable methods to promote student access and success while acknowledging institutional obstacles.

Students find purpose in their learning process when they can connect with the instructor, and when learning objectives and the

course content connect with their personal experiences. Applying equitable methods promotes student access and success while acknowledging institutional obstacles. This principle addresses learning barriers in the online learning environment and introduces effective practices to improve equitable outcomes across disciplines, moving us toward equity-minded online classrooms that are welcoming, supportive, and student-centered.

This principle enables:

Developing culturally aware course content and assessments, and inclusive pedagogies;
Supporting students as they navigate institutional expectations while enhancing their digital literacy;
Improving students' sense of belonging and increasing engagement;
Building capacity for creating equity-minded institutions;
Aligning online teaching and learning to college success plans

#3: Effective online teachers...

respond to student needs and use data for continuous course improvement.

Effective teaching is inherently dynamic. Each time we teach a course, present a lecture, or engage our students in a learning activity, we teach when we respond to student questions and feedback "in the moment." Effective teachers use experience to modify a lesson from semester to semester. Great online courses are not simply copied from semester to semester without significant changes, or allowed to run on autopilot, but rather are taught dynamically and improved with each iteration.

This principle supports:

Applying student self-assessment to guide learning opportunities;

Using formative and summative assessment and course analytics to monitor student interaction and learning and responding appropriately;
Leveraging communication tools to support student success;
Developing plans for improving courses each time they are taught.

#4: Effective online teachers...

teach and model ethical online interaction, while helping students develop digital literacy that will poise them for success.

In the connected era, students will be most successful after college if they have a digital presence that promotes their unique abilities and strengths. Online instructors are poised to play a powerful role in the development of our students' digital footprint. Students aspire to be like their instructors who actively model safe and professional use of digital tools and resources. Effective online teachers understand that engaging students in the web is an important part of becoming digitally literate and, as such, learning is not tied to a textbook.

This principle emphasizes:

Developing one's own professional digital presence;
Using and remixing digital Open Educational Resources (OER) to facilitate active learning;
Establishing a learning culture that promotes curiosity and critical examination of online resources while fostering digital literacy and media fluency;
Providing opportunities for students to create content that can be shared outside of a learning management system;
Fostering a learning environment that encourages students to connect with and learn from a global audience.

#5: Effective online teachers...

recognize ongoing professional development is a central component of their success.

Because technology is dynamic, our understanding of the most effective and responsive means to connect with students must be as dynamic. Ongoing professional development, then, is a central component to effective online teaching. Within the CCC ecosystem, some ways faculty can meet this principle are by:

Participating in the CCC community of practice, including, but not limited to, CCC sponsored webinars, blogs, newsletters, and social media;
Attending conferences focused on online teaching, including the Online Teaching Conference and other in person events;
Engaging in ongoing professional development for online instructors;
Sharing in discipline-specific conversations about online teaching.

Click on the link below to download a PDF copy for your records.

@ONE Principles for Quality Online Teaching

▶ References

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Student Success at-a-glance

The differences between face-to-face delivery and online delivery are interesting to think about. In many ways, great teaching is great teaching, but in other ways, online instruction is fundamentally different than a traditional classroom.

Completion and Success

As you begin digging into the content of this course, here is some data about online courses in the California Community Colleges (CCCs) to consider:

Completion and success rates for online courses is considerably lower than for the same courses taught face-to-face;
Black and Latinx students have lower online completion and success rates than their white and Asian peers;
Newer online courses are more successful than older courses. (hm... why would that be?)

This data suggests that modality *does* matter, and that there is something really different between online courses and in-person ones. And while online completion and success rates are troubling, the latest research from the schools participating in the Online Education Initiative's consortium indicates that a renewed focus on course design combined with providing robust student services has reduced the achievement gap.

Focus on COS

COS offers roughly ¼ of total sections in distance education modalities, and ¾ of total sections in person at our three physical

campuses. The data here reflects course success rates at COS by instructional modality—Face-to-Face, Online, and Hybrid—over five academic years.

Looking for Patterns in the Data

What do you notice in examining this data?

In 2021–2022, there was a sharp drop in success across *all* modalities, especially in Hybrid courses (from 82.4% to 64.8% - ouch) and Online courses (74.9% to 64.9%). This suggests that we all faced some transitional challenges as students and faculty adapted to more normalized grading policies and shifting instructional practices post-pandemic.

More recently however, a steady recovery is visible *especially* for Online courses, which rose from 66.6% success to 71.9% in just a few years! Face-to-Face success rates also rebounded a bit (from 73.8% to 74.3%), while the Hybrid mode shows some modest improvement but always seems to trail the other modalities slightly... Hmmm. Why, do you think?

Course Planning

Online courses have a lot of moving parts. While our traditional classrooms stay pretty much the same from year to year, technology changes relatively rapidly, making the virtual space far more complex and dynamic than a traditional classroom. In addition, our students have years of experience in traditional classrooms (we do, too!), but many of them have very little experience in online classes.

To have a successful class, we need to design the course so that the technology fades into the background, and our materials and activities are easy to navigate, allowing the learner to focus on learning the content versus finding it.

▶ **References**

Course Offerings and Success Rates, 2020-2025

Academic Year	Face-to-Face	Online	Hybrid
2020–2021	Success: 82.0% 46.5% of courses (1,221 sections)	Success: 74.9% 40.2% of courses (1,055 sections)	Success: 82.4% 13.2% of courses (346 sections)
2021–2022	Success: 73.3% 54.0% of courses (1,323 sections)	Success: 64.9% 35.7% of courses (878 sections)	Success: 64.8% 10.3% of courses (252 sections)
2022–2023	Success: 73.8% 69.0% of courses (1,738 sections)	Success: 66.6% 21.5% of courses (542 sections)	Success: 66.8% 9.5% of courses (238 sections)
2023–2024	Success: 74.0% 73.2% of courses (1,931 sections)	Success: 70.2% 18.8% of courses (497 sections)	Success: 69.0% 7.9% of courses (209 sections)
2024–2025 (FA only)	Success: 74.3% 73.7% of courses (2,043 sections)	Success: 71.9% 16.8% of courses (490 sections)	Success: 69.7% 9.4% of courses (202 sections)

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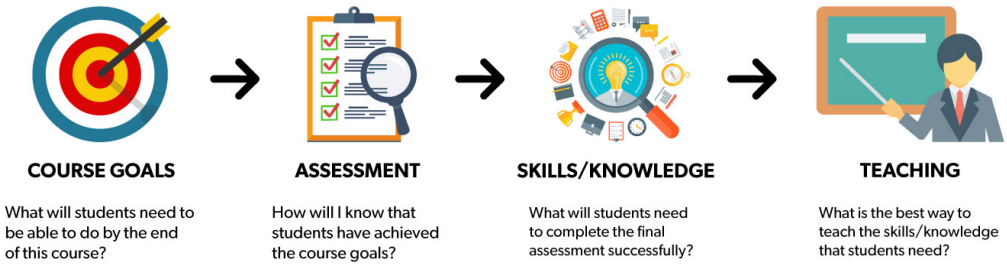
Backward Design is not currently supported

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Introduction to Backward Design

Designing... Backwards?



▶ **Infographic Text Description**

1. **Course Goals**: What will learners need to be able to do by the end of this course?
2. **Assessment**: How will I know that learners have achieved the course goals?
3. **Skills/Knowledge**: What will learners need to complete the final assessment successfully?
4. **Teaching**: What is the best way to teach the skills/knowledge that learners need?

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From Course Outcomes to Unit Objectives

How It Works

What do Course Outcomes measure?

Your Course Outcomes measure what behaviors, skills, etc. you want your students to be able to do once they've completed the *whole* course.

When reviewing the outcomes for your course, consider this: What skills or behaviors will you need to see from your students to determine whether or not they've met that outcome? How will you know they can "do" what your outcome is?

In this course, one of our course outcomes is to ***Design a variety of valid and authentic formative and summative assessments aligned to the Course Outcomes.***

There are a lot of pieces to break down in that - for me, I will know that you've met this Outcome because you will have:

identified your course outcomes
identified how your course outcomes are measured (doing this now!)
created and/or revised low-stakes practice *(formative)* assignments that help students get good at the thing you are measuring
created and/or revised an assessment (*summative*) that allows the student to do the thing you are measuring

Do this for all of your course outcomes - it doesn't need to be formal or written, just think about and reflect on each one.

Creating Your Course Units

The next step is to think about the individual components (like lectures, activities, readings, discussions) that will allow students to work their way up to those skills. These components, pulled together, will become your course units!

The next few pages will focus on "chunking" your course into units (the formal part of the brainstorm you did earlier), and writing unit-level objectives that scaffold up to the course outcomes. You will finish this module by submitting a course road map with unit objectives.

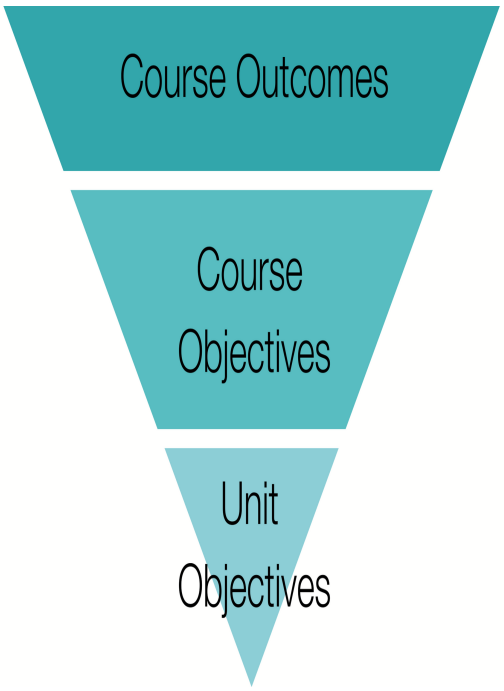
You'll need your COR nearby, so make sure you have it!

Click Next to move to the next page

From Outcomes to Objectives

Course Outcomes are much broader in scope than Course Objectives, which are broader than Unit-level Objectives.

Your Course Outcomes will focus on overarching student understanding and higher-level thinking skills, while your Unit-Level Objectives will break down



skills and knowledge into specific, discrete skills.

Unit-level Objectives are skills based, not assignment-focused. Your objective isn't for students to "Take the Exam." Instead, your objective should focus on the skills or behaviors you want them to develop in that unit.

Unit-level Objectives should support the Course Outcomes.

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★ Share Your COR With Me - Find and Submit

Identify the course you would like to build out as a DE course for the next 7 weeks, and find the Course Outline of Record COR for that course. These are located on the Curriculum Committee webpage.

Make sure the course lists *Distance Education* under *Methods of Instruction.* If it does not, the course is *not* currently approved to be offered as a Distance Education (online or hybrid) course. You *can* still choose to build the course in this case, but be aware that it cannot be offered online or hybrid until it is approved for Distance Education through the requisite Curriculum processes. There are often specific reasons a course cannot be taught DE. I *strongly r*ecommend designing a course that is approved to be offered in the distance education modality.

This "quiz" is going to ask that you share pieces of your COR with me so I can confirm you've found it, and so I can learn a little bit about the class you're planning to work on for this certification.

Due at: Sep 1 at 12am

Points: 5.0

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Units = Modules (in Canvas)

Creating Course Units

Now you are going to "chunk" your course content and develop a roadmap for your course. You might find it helpful to use the COR you downloaded from earlier in the unit and look through the Course Topics.

Spend some time identifying if there are any logical breaks in the course content. If so, begin to break the content down into chunks to make it more manageable for you to teach and for students to learn. Ideally, these chunks allow students to ***learn small amounts of new information*** and then ***practice applying*** what they've learned in no-risk or low-risk activities (called *formative* assessments) ***before*** they have to engage in high-stakes tests or projects (called *summative* assessments).

> ***The cadence of our units/modules should allow students to learn a little, practice a little, learn a little, practice a little, show their learning, and move on to the next skills or competency.***

You also need to begin to identify how much ***time*** will be spent on each chunk of content. The more consistent the amount of time is, the

better the experience is for the students. You may decide to use an assignment as the end point of your units - for example, think about breaking your course up by smaller exams. Students interact with units of content, have meaningful discussions, practice skills, get feedback, and then "test out" of that unit and into the next.

Remember: learn a little, practice a little, learn a little, practice a little.

Units are called "Modules" in Canvas

The units you create will end up being your course *Modules*. Modules are like empty folders that we fill with materials we want our students to access and engage with - you can include links to readings, discussion boards, practice quizzes, assignments, exams - everything covered in the unit.

Like a folder, we want to organize the contents in the order that you want your students to work through them. In an online class, a module might include the following:

a unit overview page, which includes weekly objectives and unit description written in student-friendly language ***(this is a requirement for every module in this course)***
content page(s)
assessment(s), both formative and summative (both for practice and evaluation)
some sort of interactive activity, where students are collaborating (like a discussion, group activity, peer review, etc)
a unit conclusion page, with a recap and option to start/preview of the next unit.

You do *not* have to have all of these things listed above right *now* - we are just working through what our module structure might

look like!

By placing all your instructional content, assignments, quizzes/tests, discussions, etc. in Modules, you can then hide the Assignments, Quizzes, Discussions, Pages, and Files tools in the left navigation list from student view (more on this to come soon!). This gives students just one place/one link/one click to look for everything they need - in the Modules.

That means fewer "where is ____?" questions for you and less frustration for your students. That means fewer "broken pathways" where students get lost looking for something. A lack of "findability" in your course can impact student self-efficacy, motivation, and learning (Simunich, Robins, and Kelly, 2015)

Click Next to move to the next page

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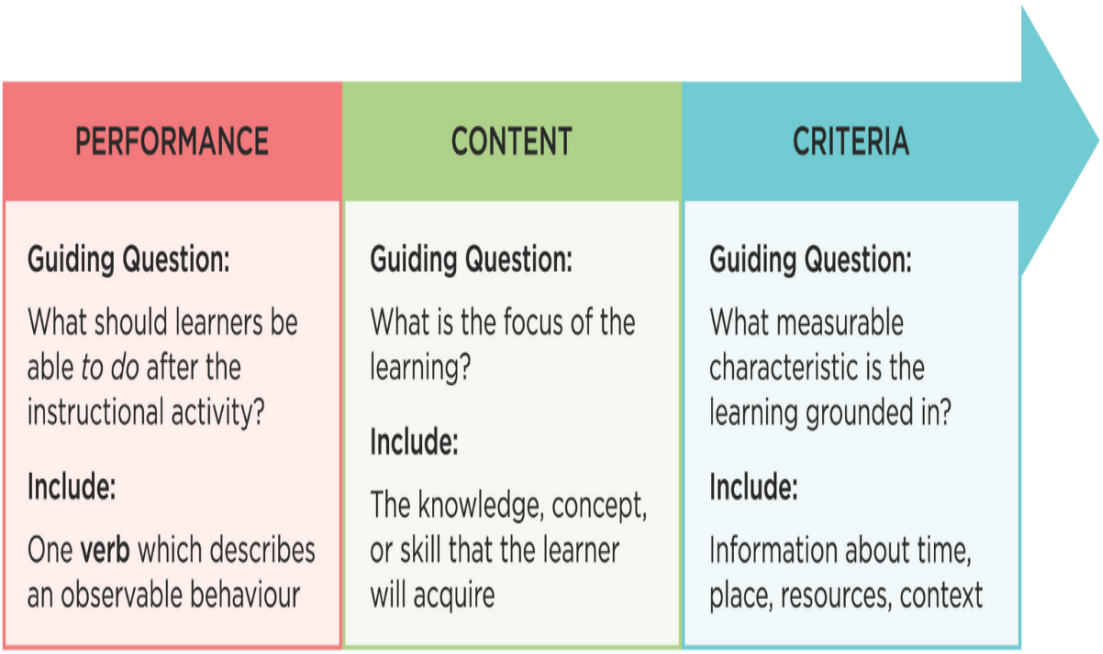
Writing Good Unit Objectives

We will be drafting objectives for each of the units / modules in your online course.

As a reminder, the Course Outcomes and Course Objectives from your COR cannot be rewritten without working with the full-time faculty in your department and Curriculum Committee. Instead, use them as inspiration to think about your unit-level objectives.

Remember - *Unit-level* objectives work toward mastering *Course* objectives, which work toward mastering overall Course *Outcomes.* Depending on your course, you will probably have an average of 2-4 objectives for each unit.

Writing Good Objectives



A good learning objective has the following characteristics:

contains an action verb (like "list," "differentiate," "draw," "identify," "discuss," "articulate," "calculate," etc...)
is measurable (avoid terms like "learn," "understand," or "know." More on this below...)
reflects the learning activity and content of the learning unit
is in student-centered language (objectives tell students what they are going to have to do at the end of the unit. It needs to be simple enough for them to get it.)
conforms well to an assessment

In their basic form, learning objectives are typically structured as:

By the end of the unit, students will be able to...[verb] + [knowledge] + [criteria].

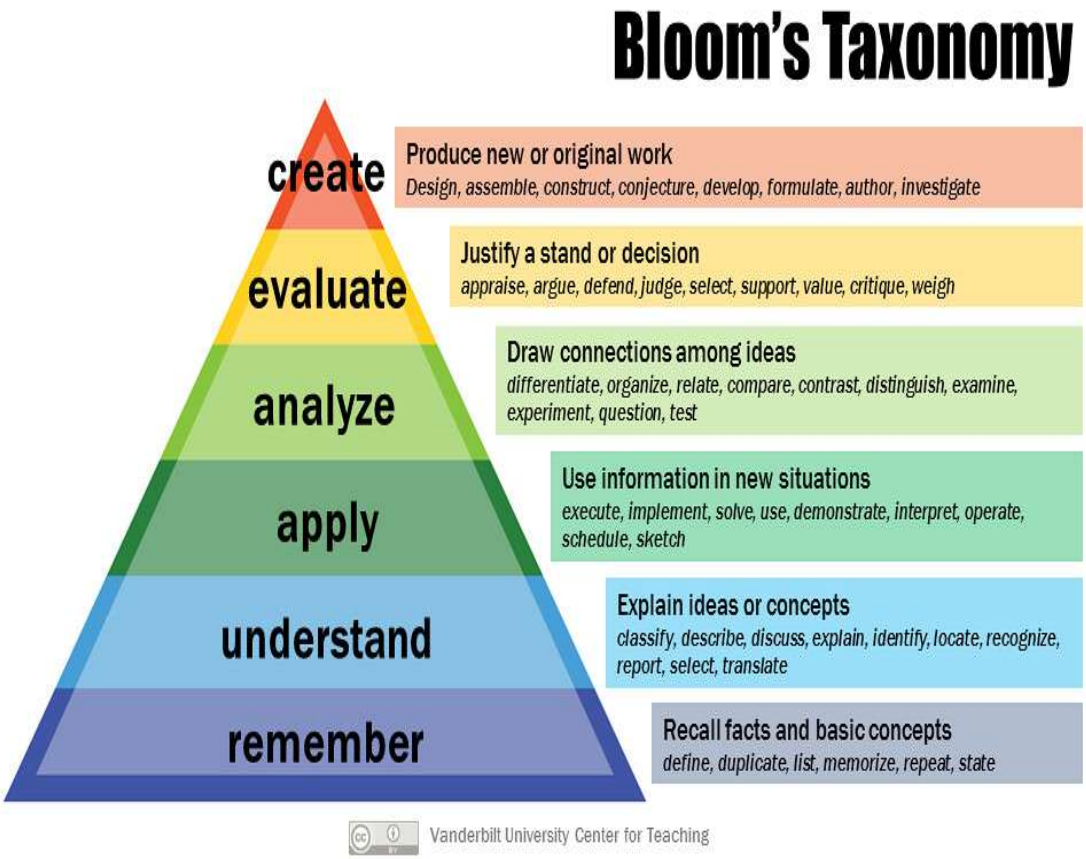
The place where learning objectives often fall short is in the verb - *the action that students will do* to demonstrate their learning. Terms such as *know, understand, learn,* and *appreciate* are very difficult to measure. Instead, consider verbs that *can* measure knowledge and understanding. Ask yourself: what the students **doing** to show you the have learned that material. Choose an action verb, the performance of which will indicate to you that a student has learned, understands, or knows the thing.

For example - will students write, identify, or analyze something? Is it enough for students to be able to list the steps of a cycle or should they be able to describe the steps of a cycle? The next module in this course will focus on creating / revising assessments, which will come what level of knowledge or skills you think students should have in each unit.

Arizona Global University created a nifty tool that can be used to write objectives: A Learning Outcome Generator

You're welcome to give it a try if you are struggling with the wording or format while creating unit-level objectives!

A word on Bloom's Taxonomy



▶ ***Infographic Text Description***

1. ***Remember:*** *Recall facts and basic concepts. Use action verbs like define, duplicate, list, memorize, repeat, state, recite.*
2. ***Understand:*** *Explain ideas or concepts. Uses action verbs like classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, locate, recognize, report, select, translate.*
3. ***Apply****: Use information in new situations. Uses action verbs like execute, implement, solve, use, demonstrate, interpret, operate, schedule, sketch.*
4. ***Analyze:*** *Draw connections among ideas. Uses action verbs like differentiate, organize, relate, compare, contrast, distinguish, examine, experience, question, test.*
5. ***Evaluate:*** *Justify a stance or decision. Uses action verbs like appraise, argue, defend, judge, select, support, value, critique weigh.*
6. ***Create: Produce new or original work. Uses action verbs like design, assemble, construct, conjecture, develop, formulate, author, investigate.***

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★ Creating a Course Road Map - Course-building Activity

*Note: This structure (Purpose-Task-Criteria for Success) is called a **Transparent Assignment**. You will read more about how to create your own in the next module.*

Purpose

Creating a course road map combines all of the things we have covered in this module: 1) reflecting on your course outcomes, 2) identifying the behaviors and skills students will need to show you that they've met those outcomes, 3) creating unit "chunks" to support students as they get there, and 4) writing focused Unit-level Objectives for those units/chunks of content.

This is one of the hardest assignments in this course, but completing this assignment gives you the framework upon which to build the rest of your capstone DE Course Shell.

By completing this assignment, you will:

Use backward design principles to start a course plan; and
Plan online learning units with measurable outcomes

By now, you should have identified the course you'd like to work on during this certification class, downloaded the COR from the Curriculum Committee webpage, and read through the Outcomes, Objective, Methods of Evaluation/Assessment, and the list of Course Topics.

Task

This assignment is one of only TWO hard deadlines in this course: The Roadmap assignment must be submitted and scored with 100% by the end of Week 3. *If you do not submit it by then, or it is has not received full credit by then, you will be dropped from the course.*

Please read all directions carefully. This assignment asks for a very specific product.

You will submit a document (sample below) identifying:

A title for each unit
Duration of each unit
An overview for each of your units (introduce the topic to them - this is written for your students, not a subject expert)
Objectives for each of your units that utilize an action verb.

You do not need to include information about which assignments, lectures, etc you will do in each unit. We are only working on unit structure, overview narrative, and objectives right now.

Sample Course Outline

Unit Title	Unit Duration	Overview	Objectives

Unit Title	Unit Duration	Overview	Objectives
Welcome to Math 103 and Introduction to Linear Functions	Welcome portion: 3 days Whole unit: 1 week	Welcome to Math 103! During this week, we will become comfortable moving around in Canvas to find what you are looking for. We will also read about mistakes to start to shift your ideas about who can learn mathematics, and how people learn mathematics. Lastly, we will begin exploring linear functions and how the parts of the equation affect their graphs.	1. Navigate Canvas to find learning materials, activities and assessments, and participate in the first discussion board. 2. Describe what the slope of a line or the slope between two points is. 3. Identify the slope and y-intercept for a linear function from an equation or a graph.

Unit Title	Unit Duration	Overview	Objectives
Parallel and perpendicular lines and introduction to functions	1 week	Welcome back to Week 2! During this week, we are going to continue looking at linear functions, and also examine a bit deeper what a function is. We've already been using the word function, and chances are you've heard it before too, but now we will discuss a definition, and how to tell from a graph if it is a function or not. We will also look at the relationship between the slopes of lines that are parallel or perpendicular to a given line.	1. Identify from a graph or a table if a relationship is a function or not. 2. Describe the relationship between the slope of a given linear function, and the slope of a line that is parallel or perpendicular to that function. 3. Construct the equation of a line that is parallel or perpendicular to a given line, and may pass through a particular point.

Unit Title	Unit Duration	Overview	Objectives
Piece-wise functions and introduction to inequalities	1 week	During this week, we are going to look at a kind of function called piece-wise functions. These are functions where the outputs go through different processes depending on the inputs. Piece-wise functions are used in many applications in biology, in particular. Then we will start to look at inequalities and examine how to find the set of numbers that make a given inequality true.	1. Construct a graph of a piece-wise function given the equation. 2. Describe the difference in inequalities between “or” and “and”. 3. Identify the set of numbers that make a given compound inequality true, and write the solution in set notation, and on a graph.

The above sample only shows three weeks, you will submit a roadmap that reflects the entire semester. For this project, you can choose to design a course in any term length that you are likely to offer it.

A word of caution: *Designing a short-term course is not necessarily easier.* I recommend designing the course in a term length in which you will likely teach it, so you have a useful product at the end of this course.

Criteria for Success

Review the rubric below this assignment description for an overview of requirements.

For this assignment only, you will not be able to move on in the course until I have graded it - I will be responding to your submissions in SpeedGrader and may ask you to revise and/or resubmit before moving on. We will continue building on this during this certification course.

Additional Resources

File Course Outline Template - OCTA.docx could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

Open this chart as a Google Doc.

Canvas Support:

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I upload a file as an assignment submission in Canvas?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Sep 8 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online Upload

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Additional Resources and Support is not currently supported

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Foundations of DE / Backward Design Q&A

Questions about DE Foundations, Backward Design, or OCTA so far?

Click the "Reply" button to ask course-related or "how do I do this?" questions.



Along your journey, you may want to ask me or your colleagues about a topic, get some additional thoughts about an online teaching strategy or challenge, or you may just need some clarification about an aspect of the class. If so, jump in and ask it here! If it is a question about one of the content pages and/or assignments, please be sure to identify the location of the page as thoroughly as possible so we may troubleshoot promptly (providing a URL is ideal!)

Successful teaching and learning require a village in any modality Any participant is welcome and encouraged to respond to discussion posts. If you know an answer or have a resource to contribute, jump in and help out a friend!

If you have a personal question or concern about the class that you'd like to speak with me about, please Canvas message me directly.

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End of Module 1 - Recap

Unit Objectives (...did we make it?!)

By now, you should be able to:

Use backward design principles to start a course plan;
Plan online learning units with measurable outcomes.

In the next module, we will add a few assessments to your plan!

If you have questions about the content of this module, please don't hesitate to reach out to me via the Canvas Inbox. If you have a question that might benefit the cohort as a whole, please drop it on the Module 1 Q&A Discussion Board on the following page.

Accessing your DE Course Shell

You should have received an invitation to your DE Course Shell (called Your *Name-DE Shell*). This is where we will be building your online content for the certification. No students will be enrolled in this course, and you will be able to keep it forever as a "sandbox" to play in, test in, and build in. You can also copy any of the content into a future online course, so feel free to start adding to it and using it as a draft of your future online course!

If you have NOT received in invitation to your DE Course Shell yet, please send me a message via Canvas inbox.

Go back to the Modules, or click Next to move to Unit 2.

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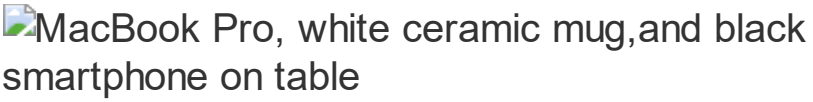
Module 2: Creating Aligned Assessments (Sept. 1-7)

1. Unit 2 Overview
2. Creating and Revising Assessments
3. Deeper into Backward Design: Aligning Assessments to Unit Objectives
4. Formative and Summative Assessments
5. Creating Authentic Assessments
6. Using the TILT Framework
7. Befriending AI: Your Personal TILT Assistant
8. ★ TILT a Summative Assessment with AI - Discussion/Course-building Activity
9. Developing Rubrics and Providing Feedback
10. Developing Assessment Criteria and Rubrics
11. Giving Feedback for Formative and Summative Assessments
12. ★ Design a Formative Assessment - Course-building Activity
13. Additional Resources and Support
14. COS Course Design Rubric, Section C: Assessment
15. Aligned, Authentic, Transparent Assessments Q&A
16. End of Module 2 - Recap

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Unit 2 Overview

What to Expect in this Unit


MacBook Pro, white ceramic mug,and black smartphone on table

We are now going to further explore Backward Design by beginning to identify what types of of assessments will allow students to show that they've met our unit objectives.

That is the second step in Backward Design: *determining assessment evidence.* We spent some time in the last module reflecting on what the "end" would look like, and how students could show us that they've met our course outcomes. As we move through this unit, we'll look at the following practices and ideas. They make be familiar to you already, or perhaps not.

Formative and Summative Assessments: *Formative* assessments help students build skills with low-stakes or no-stakes activities; *summative* assessments measure students' mastery of course or unit objectives *after* the building and practicing phase.

Aligned Assessments: Aligned assessments directly support learning goals. When assessments are aligned, they lead to students developing skills and showing mastery of the learning goals for the unit or course. When misaligned, students end up practicing skills that are unrelated to unit or course objectives.

Transparent Assessments: Using the Transparency in Learning and Teaching framework (referring to as TILT), helps clarify assignments' purpose, task, and criteria for success—making expectations clearer for students, and helping you ensure your assessments are aligned!

Authentic Assessments: These types of assessments ask students to demonstrate skills in ways they would actually use them in a real-world or professional context.

You likely already have assignments you use in your course - some that you created yourself, and maybe some that are revised from another instructor or course. Whether you think they're great, misaligned, or you're just bored of the same assignments, this course is an opportunity to review your course objectives and revise, or reate some new assessments.

Unit Objectives

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

Write transparent and detailed assessment instructions;
Design valid and authentic formative and summative assessments aligned to the course outcomes;
Create descriptive rubrics that support achievement and assessment of the desired outcomes.

Click Next to move to the next page

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Creating and Revising Assessments is not currently supported

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Deeper into Backward Design: Aligning Assessments to Unit Objectives

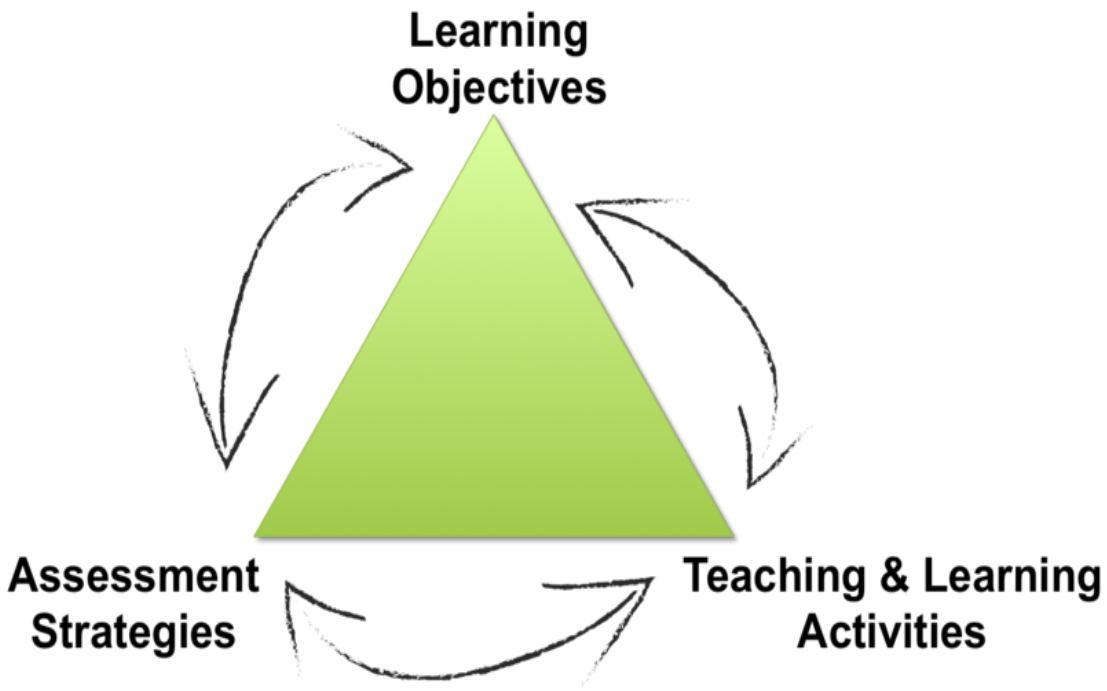
Measuring Student Understanding and Mastery

In the last module, we focused on the first step of backward design: identifying the overarching learning goals of the course. This module is going to focus on the second step: designing assessments that can actually measure whether or not students have met those course goals.

A big first step is figuring out which types of assessments are most appropriate for each objective. This is called *alignment.*

Aligning Assessments

Learning assessments (just "assessments," usually) are by nature meant to reveal how well students have learned what we want them to learn. For this to occur, assessments, learning objectives, and the instructions need to work together and reinforce one another.



To align your assessments, think about what kinds of task(s) would show you whether or not a student has achieved the objective you've identified. If your assessments are misaligned, your students will demonstrate skills unrelated to the objective, and would not be able to show mastery of the objective you're trying to evaluate.

Look at one of our own course outcomes for OCTA:

Design formative and summative assessments to support and measure student learning

Let's imagine that using this outcome as a guide, I design an assessment using the Quizzes tool in Canvas, and ask you the following question:

> **"Please write a 1-2 paragraph response describing the differences between formative and summative**

assessments. How do both assessment types support and measure student learning?"

This assessment would be *misaligned.* Even if you answered the question perfectly, I would really only know that you know what the differences are, and the importance of each type of assessment. This assessment would offer *no evidence that you are able to design* each type of assessments, and ***design is the outcome!***

Now, if one of my more focused *unit* objectives is to be able to describe the differences between the two types of assessment, then having a quiz question on what the differences are would be well-aligned to that unit objective. The quiz would be a great *formative* assessment (a building block, a check for understanding) on the way to the *summative* assessment, which would be to design something.

Samples

This table adapted from Carnegie Mellon includes a variety of objectives alongside activities that could be used to assess them. This is just a sampling of potential objectives and aligned activities. Please feel free to find inspiration from it (or create your own!).

"Why should assessments, learning objectives, and instructional strategies be aligned? (Links to an external site.)" by Carnegie Mellon University (Links to an external site.) is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

The next few pages will go deeper into writing or revising your current assignments, thinking about how to make assignments more authentic and transparent. Make sure you have your unit objectives nearby - it will help as you're thinking about what types of skills/behaviors will show that your students have mastered your objective.

Click Next to move to the next page

Table: Examples of Aligned Assessments

Type of Objective	Examples of Appropriate Assessments
Recall **Recognize** **Identify**	**Test questions like fill-in-the-blank, matching, labeling, or multiple-choice questions that require students to:** recall or recognize terms, facts, and concepts

Type of Objective	Examples of Appropriate Assessments
Interpret **Exemplify** **Classify** **Summarize** **Infer** **Compare** **Explain**	**Assignments and activities such as papers, exams, problem sets, class discussions, or concept maps that require students to:** summarize readings, films, or speeches compare and contrast two or more theories, events, or processes classify or categorize cases, elements, or events using established criteria paraphrase documents or speeches find or identify examples or illustrations of a concept or principle
Apply **Execute** **Implement**	**Activities such as problem sets, performances, labs, prototyping, or simulations that require students to:** use procedures to solve or complete familiar or unfamiliar tasks determine which procedure(s) are most appropriate for a given task

Type of Objective	Examples of Appropriate Assessments
Analyze **Differentiate** **Organize** **Attribute**	**Activities such as case studies, critiques, labs, papers, projects, debates, or concept maps that require students to:** discriminate or select relevant and irrelevant parts determine how elements function together determine bias, values, or underlying intent in presented material
Evaluate **Check** **Critique** **Assess**	**Activities such as journals, diaries, critiques, problem sets, product reviews, or studies that require students to:** test, monitor, judge, or critique readings, performances, or products against established criteria or standards
Create **Generate** **Plan** **Produce** **Design**	**Activities such as research projects, artistic/musical compositions, performances, essays, business plans, website or set designs that require students to:** make, build, design or generate something new

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Formative and Summative Assessments

Formative Assessments

Formative assessment is a low-stakes, feedback-driven way of checking student understanding *during the teaching and learning process*. The goal is to help students improve while they're still developing their knowledge and skills, by identifying their strong and weak areas of understanding before a major assignment or exam will require those skills to be mastered. For this reason, formative assessments should be low-stakes or no-stakes (meaning they contribute little to the overall grade in the class.)

For instructors, formative assessments provide valuable insight into how well students are grasping key concepts, allowing us to adjust or supplement instruction, clarify misunderstandings, or offer targeted support. For students, these assessments serve as practice opportunities and self-assessment checkpoints, building confidence, deepening comprehension, and highlighting areas that need more attention before the high-stakes stuff comes due.

Formative assessments can take many forms depending on the discipline.

Formative Assessment Examples

Discipline	**Possible Formative Assessment**
English	Drafting just a thesis statement for feedback; A peer-review of a draft before the final paper is due.
Science	A hypothesis-generation exercise for feedback; Submit a lab plan for early feedback.
Communication	Submit a persuasive speech topic and specific purpose statement before writing the entire speech.
Nursing	Skill checklists, scenario walk-throughs, or safety

	drills.
History	A brief document analysis or discussion board reflection to gauge critical thinking before a formal essay due date.
Graphic Design	A narrative describing the design plan based on a client brief.
Math	A short practice quiz; A problem-solving worksheet providing feedback on reasoning steps before the exam date.

Formative assessments are low-stakes discussions, quizzes, and activities that provide an opportunity to work through new knowledge and practice new skills, and should be sprinkled throughout the course. Generally speaking, there should rarely or never be a summative assessment without offering students some chances to practice and receive feedback first. But all feedback doesn't have to fall to you! An online course can provide rich feedback through a variety of channels and sources, such as feedback in rubrics, from peers, and meaningful self-assessment. Other examples of formative assessments include:

a written summary of a lecture, or a discussion board post
a doodle or image that shows understanding, like a Venn diagram
a self-graded or auto-graded quiz that can be taken multiple times
practice problems or case-studies
free writes

They let us *monitor* and be responsive to student learning in real-time - *File ACCJC-Quality-Continuum-Rubric-for-Distance-Education-November-2024.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.* Formative assessments should receive the most feedback in your course - this is when students have the opportunity to get better.

Most importantly, formative assessments must be aligned with summative assessments.

They are designed to allow students to learn the knowledge and skills they will need to perform well in the summative assessment. This includes practicing the learning material and technology tools used for the final assessment.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is a higher-stakes evaluation that occurs *at the end of your learning unit, module, or course*. Its primary purpose is to measure how well students have achieved specific learning outcomes or mastered key skills. While formative assessments support learning along the way, summative assessments provide evidence of what students have learned.

For instructors, summative assessments can indicate whether our teaching goals have been met, and can inform future course design and pacing, program review, or curriculum development. For students, summative assessments are opportunities to demonstrate what they know in a comprehensive way.

Summative assessments also vary across disciplines, and typically involve more polished, cumulative work.

Summative Assessment Examples

Discipline	Possible Formative Assessment
English	The final-draft essay or research paper.
Science	A formal lab report or comprehensive test.
Communication	A final speech or presentation to a live audience.
Nursing	A clinical skills demonstration or timed practical exam.
History	A final exam, policy analysis, or historical argument paper.
Graphic Design	A final comprehensive brand kit based on a client brief.
Math	A midterm, Final, or capstone problem set.

Summative assessments are closely tied to course-level learning objectives and outcomes — they must align with these objectives and outcomes to be valid measures of student achievement in a course.

Many instructors rely on traditional testing tools in online courses, like multiple-choice tests. Though multiple choice exams have their purpose and can include critical thinking, creating a rich and robust multiple-choice test is time-consuming, and doesn't always provide evidence that a student can *use* their new knowledge. If you design projects or other authentic assessment forms to test student learning, you will be far more successful in truly measuring learning, and the learning will more easily transfer to future endeavors. Read more about authentic assessment on the next page. Some classic examples of summative assessments are:

a final project or essay
a research project
a skils demonstration
a recital or presentation

an exam

What's the right ratio?

There is no magic formula for the amount of summative versus formative assessments, but a commonly recommended balance is around 70–80% formative assessment, and 20–30% summative assessment.

Formative assessments support learning, give students regular feedback, and allow instructors to adjust instruction as needed, so they should be a frequent part of instruction. Summative assessments evaluate final mastery, so they should come more infrequently, but contribute more points to the final grade in the course.

Weekly check-ins, practice quizzes, drafts, reflections, discussions = formative (low point values, frequent and predictably offered)

Midterm project, final paper, unit exam, capstone presentation = summative (high point values, fewer of them in the course)

Ultimately, the best ratio is one that aligns with your course outcomes, supports student growth, and *reflects your own teaching philosophy.*

Equity-minded Assessment

Equity-minded course design tends to favors more frequent, lower-stakes assessments to reduce anxiety and better support diverse learners. In his book *Grading for Equity*, Joe Feldman

has the following things to say about formative and summative assessments.

> *"Our priority should be to validly assess and correctly describe a student's level of content mastery..... That is why equitable grading marries the emphasis of summative assessments with offering retake opportunities. "*
>
> *" A grade should reflect only a student's level of mastery in a subject, which means that all formative work (homework, classwork) and behavior (class attendance, participation, grade deductions for late work) would be excluded, leaving only a students performance on summative assessments. This compels us to think more broadly about summative assessment design and the evidence of student knowledge to ensure that students have the means to demonstrate their knowledge. "*

Continue to the next page to learn about how we can make our assessments more authentic to the world waiting for our students "out there."

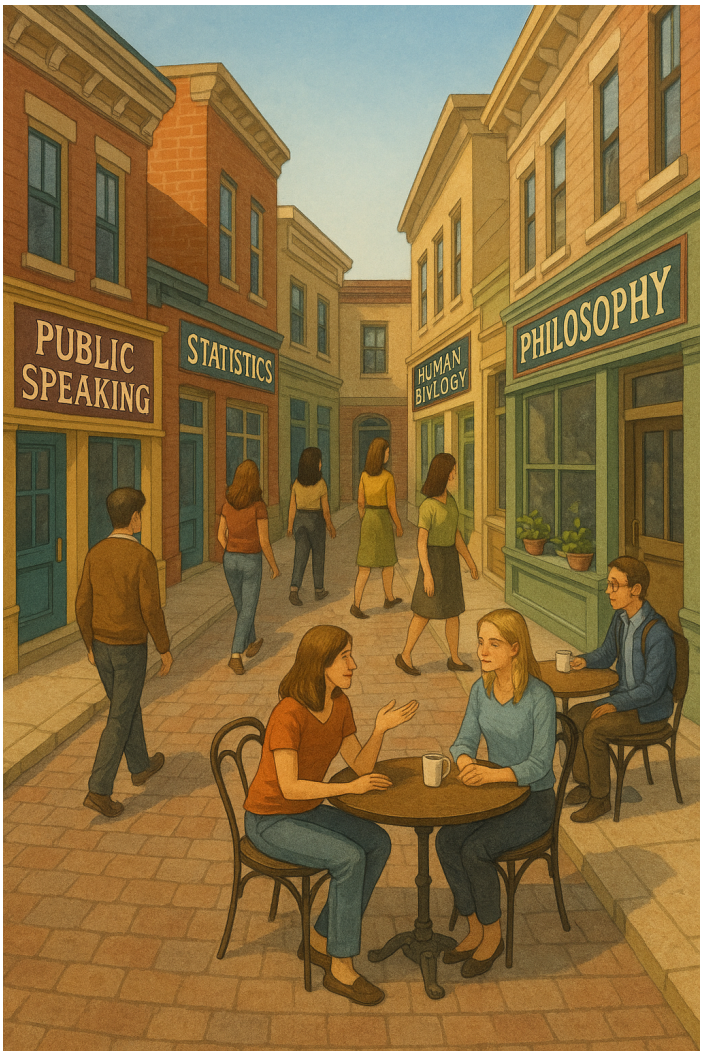
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Creating Authentic Assessments

What makes an assessment "authentic?"

Walk down memory lane for a moment, past some of the courses you took as an undergraduate student. Even in the humanities, many of them were probably attend lecture-and-take the exam structured.



Fink (2006) would call these "content-centered" courses. He describes *learner*-centered courses as having "forward-looking" assessments, as opposed to "backward-looking" assessments, which simply measure facts that a student has memorized. Creating learner-centered assessments requires you, the instructor, to look at the road ahead of your students, beyond your course, and prepare them for real-world situations they'll face that will call upon the skill you are teaching them. Using that vision of the futures beyond our classroom, we can then work to create assessments that mirror those situations (as best as we can).

Assessments are authentic if they:

are realistic
require judgement and innovation from the students
ask the students to "do" the behavior they are being evaluated on
replicate or simulate contexts in which the behavior or skill would be called upon outside the classroom (at the workplace, in the community, or in the students' personal lives) and ***allow students to access resources that would be available to them*** in the "real-world" context.
allow revision by requiring the student to reflect on or justify their answer and the process they took to get to the answer (Wiggins, 1990).

More advantages

Though creating an authentic assessment can be more time consuming than writing a traditional exam, they have several advantages:

First, they are likely to be more *valid* than traditional exams, particularly for learning outcomes that require higher-order thinking skills. This means the more authentic the assessment, the more likely it directly measures the objectives for your course. This can also help you, as the instructor, have a better idea of what your students have learned and what they still need to work on.

Second, because they involve doing or simulating real-world tasks, they are also more likely to be interesting for your students (which can be more motivating!). This can also make it a lot more interesting to grade, since the submissions will be based on a real-world task.

Finally, they can be more equitable for the diverse students in your course. Because authentic assessments can be more transparent, often don't have a single right answer and/or require your students to justify their process and their answer, every student has an opportunity to ask questions, identify and use resources, and "make their case" as to how their answer demonstrates their learning.

Examples of Authentic Assessments

Here are a few examples:

Table: Assessment Ideas by Discipline

Business	Develop a business/marketing/sales plan for an imaginary (or real) company in a student's area of interest.

Computer Science	Troubleshoot a problematic piece of code; Develop a website/app to solve a particular problem and/or meet a set of criteria
Psychology	Examine/critique a case study from multiple theoretical positions;
Biology/Chemistry	Draw a diagram of how a process works, indicating what happens if X occurs
Nursing	Ask students to assess and create a plan of care for a given diagnosis or set of symptoms
History	Engage in a role play of a particular event in history; Describe what might have happened if one element of a historical event had changed.
Communication	Critically analyze a political candidate's campaign speech, checking for accuracy of sources, logical fallacies, and manipulative rhetorical devices; Prepare a presentation for a given timeframe
Graphic Design	Prepare a brand kit based on a brief or statement of client vision.

"Authentic Assessment" by Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON is licensed under CC BY 4.0

While going through the next few pages, reflect on the "backward-looking" or "forward-looking" orientation of your current assignments. Which ones might you be able to make more authentic? You'll be submitting one of your summative assessments in this module.

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Using the TILT Framework

Transparency in Learning and Teaching Framework (aka TILT)

On the previous page, we talked about creating and revising assignments to be more authentic to the experiences our students will have in the "real world" that awaits them after college. The TILT framework helps us develop our assignment instructions to be transparent and clear about why we are doing the assignment, the task itself, and the expectations. Applying the TILT framework can help us determine if each assignment is aligned, valid, and authentic.

TILT stands for *Transparency in Learning and Teaching,* and expects that we explain to students why and how each assessment or assignment fits into their overall learning and success.

There are three main components to the TILT framework - **Purpose, Task,** and **Criteria for Success.**

Writing more transparent guidelines and instructions can:

give students a more clear understanding of the expectations of the assignment (and help you articulate them for yourself too!)
increase relevance, metacognition (learning how to be a better learner), self-awareness, and help students better monitor their own progress
help you (as the faculty) reflect on your assessments and how they meet the outcomes of the course.

The TILT framework also helps us create more *equitable* assessments. The goal is to frame assignments so that all students can begin their work with a shared understanding of what "good work" looks like.

Research shows that transparent assignment design that clearly communicates the purpose, task, and criteria for success into assignment guidelines can *demonstrably* enhance students' success, particularly for students from systemically non-dominant populations (review articles and videos here: TILT Higher Ed Examples And Resources).

How to TILT

Transparently designed assignments state the ***purpose*** of the activity in terms of knowledge and skills, list the ***tasks*** or steps students will have to undertake to complete the assignment, and explain the ***criteria*** for successful completion (Bose, Dalrymple, and Shadle, 2020).

Purpose

Start by communicating to students what knowledge or skills they will gain from completing the assignment, and how that knowledge or skill will be valuable to them (in their life, career, or as the class progresses).

Knowledge - here are some prompts for *you* to consider.

What knowledge will students gain from completing the assignment?
How does that knowledge relate to other topics in your course or other courses?
How will the knowledge be relevant for students in their lives beyond your course or beyond college?

Skills - here are some prompts for *you* to consider.

What skills will students practice while doing the assignment?
How do those skills relate to other contexts or examples where these skills were important, within your course or beyond?
How will these skills be valuable to students in their lives beyond your course or beyond college?

Task

Next, communicate the steps that students should take to complete the assignment. What is the process they should be going through to do this correctly?

Are all of the steps needed to complete the assignment laid out clearly? If any steps are implied, consider making them more explicit.
What are the common pitfalls that students encounter with this assignment? How can you help them avoid those pitfalls?
Are there opportunities for students to get feedback on parts of the assignment before the larger assignment is due? If not, consider providing some.

Criteria for Successful Completion

At the point of assigning the work, share the rubric or checklist with students - the same one you will use to evaluate their work.

Would a rubric or a checklist be most appropriate for evaluating your assignment?
If you use a rubric on this assignment, is it written in a way that is clear to a student?

Are there opportunities for students to evaluate their own work or other student work using the rubric or checklist that you have provided? If not, consider providing such opportunities.

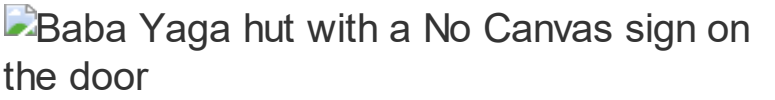
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Befriending AI: Your Personal TILT Assistant

AI: Your Sometimes Instructional Assistant



Designing a course is rewarding, meaningful work, *and* it will, on occasion, make you want to flip your desk, break your laptop in half, and stalk off into the woods to become Sequoia National Park's very own Baba Yaga (or is that just a personal fantasy?) Stay with me here....

But then enters Artificial Intelligence, your endlessly patient chat buddy that never needs coffee, doesn't get offended when you "thumbs down" or delete their ideas, and can crank out a first draft of a TILT-aligned assignment faster than... well faster than you can, trust me.

Let me be clear: AI will *never* replace thoughtful pedagogy or your subject matter expertise, but it *can* give you a solid starting point. On this page, we'll explore how you can use AI to apply the TILT framework to both your existing and new assignments, so your students know what they're doing, why they're doing it, and how to do it well, and it won't take you all night.

LLMs-in-Brief

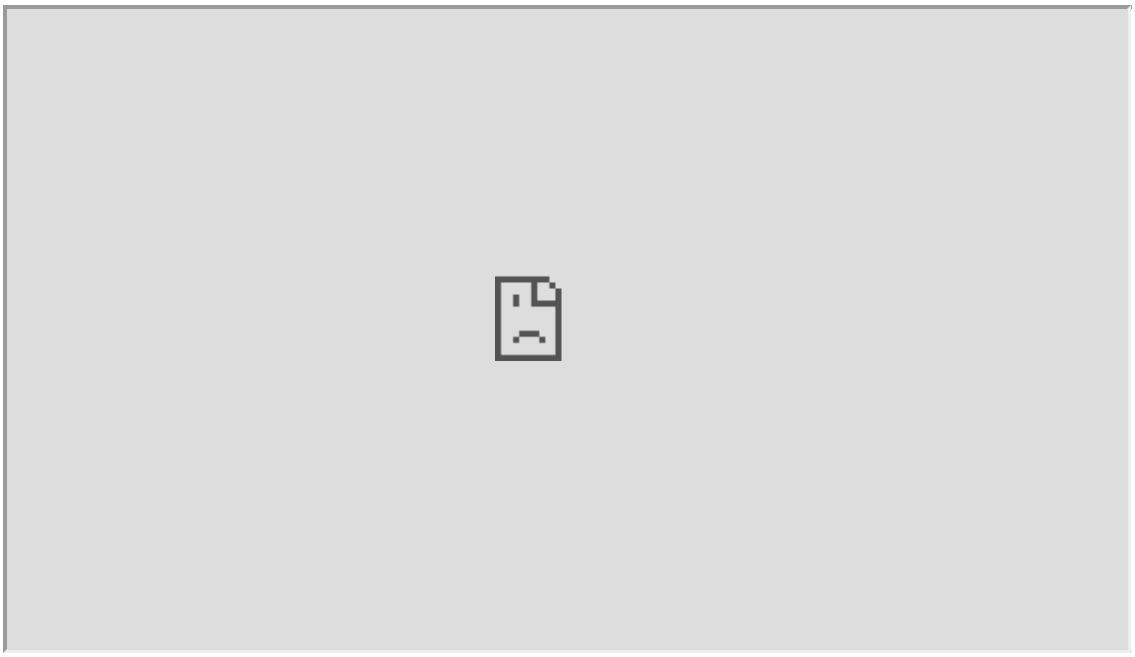
LLMs are a type of AI that can understand, analyze, and generate text. They are trained on massive amounts of data to learn how language works, and are much more accurate that traditional machine learning algorithms because they can grasp the complexities of natural language. Some LLMs you are probably familiar with include ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, LLaMa, and Perplexity.

LLMs use this understanding of how humans speak and write to performs tasks like:

translation
question-answering
text generation
summarization
sentiment analysis
conversation

All LLMs are generative AI, but not all generative AI are LLMs.

TILTing with AI: A Demonstration



Guidelines:

1. **Describe a clear goal.** What do you want to improve about the assignment? Accessibility? Relevance? Engagement?
2. **Share the original assignment guidelines.** Paste it right in or summarize it.
3. **Describe your students.** Who are they? Community college, multilingual, adult learners?
4. **Mention constraints or flexibility.** What must be in the prompt/guidelines? What can change?
5. **Ask a for TILTed version.** LLMs know the TILT framework, and are lighting fast at applying it. Consider challenging them by requesting a creative, scaffolded, or culturally relevant version.

Tips:

Think of AI as a collaborator, not a replacer. You're the expert. AI just sparks ideas, organizes content, and saves time.

Follow-up for better outputs. Refine outputs by asking "Make this more playful, " or "Create a scoring rubric that emphasizes _____" or "Rework this to ensure this student population is represented."
Stay student-centered. Check that the TILT actually helps students understand expectations.
Remember the flaws. It's not a perfect tool, it's not a teacher like you are it. It makes mistakes and needs you to check its work.

Ready to try it out?

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★ TILT a Summative Assessment with AI - Discussion/Course-building Activity

Check it out...

I'm applying the TILT Framework here in these guidelines, asking *you* to apply the TILT Framework to some guidelines from *your* course! How meta of me.

Purpose

This activity gives you hands-on experience using a large language model (LLM) like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or Perplexity as an assistant to support transparent assignment design. You'll use AI to help you rewrite or draft assignment instructions using the TILT (Transparency in Learning and Teaching) framework to improve clarity, reduce inequities, and promote student success on an online assignment in your course.

After completing this assignment, you will be able to:

Apply the three components of the TILT framework (Purpose, Task, Criteria for Success) to new or existing assignment guidelines

Use Generative AI to streamline instructional design efficiency

Reflect on the benefits and limitations of AI-assisted assignment development

Task

Follow these steps to complete this assignment.

Initial Post by Wednesday at 11:59 PM:

1. **Choose an assignment** from one of your online courses. It can be small (e.g., discussion post) or large (e.g., project or paper).

2. **Use an LLM of your choice** (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity) to help rewrite the assignment instructions using the TILT framework. You might paste your original assignment prompt into the tool and ask it something like: "Rework these assignment guidelines using the TILT framework. My typical students are first-generation CA community college students. Equitable design and representation of my students are important." You're encouraged to modify or refine the prompt based on your students and your priorities. Your voice should be in the output, not mine!

   Read through the LLM's output, and ask it to make any changes you'd like to see in tone, content, structure, etc. You can even ask it to generate the output in a Canvas-friendly HTML format that you can paste right into the Rich Content Editor in Canvas. I also like to ask it for a starter rubric...

Once you're happy with the output, submit a response to this Discussion Board by clicking "Reply" below. In your response, include:

A brief description of your original assignment (2-3 sentences) - you may post this part as a text reply or as a captioned video response.

The LLM-enhanced rewrite of the assignment using the TILT framework

A short reflection covering the following two topics: 1) what the AI did well, what you had to adjust, and how this process might impact your future course design - even if you'll never use it again, tell us why; and 2) what formative assessments you use/will use to prepare students for this summative assessment - you may post this part as a text reply or as a captioned video response.

Peer Responses by Sunday 11:59 PM:

Choose at least **two** posts written by your peers and respond to each one in a way that moves the conversation forward. That means going beyond “I like this," "I agree," or “Great idea!”—instead, consider how you might:

Ask a clarifying or exploratory question

Suggest a variation or extension on their TILTed guidelines (to offer more representation, clarity, reasoning, etc.)

Connect it to a teaching challenge or strategy you've experienced

Offer an example or resource that supports or builds on their idea or assignment

Your goal is to engage as a thoughtful collaborator—just like we hope students will do in our courses. Your replies should be specific, constructive, and collegial. Aim for responses of at least 3–5 sentences that offer real insight or support.

🎣 Tip for Future You:

These guidelines will need to appear in the final version of your DE Course Shell. You may want to just create and place this assignment now to get it out of the way!

Criteria for Success

Your submission will be considered successful if it includes the following elements:

Simple Rubric

Element	Description
Original Assignment Description	A short description of the original version of the assignment
TILT-based Rewrite	Assignment rewritten using the TILT framework with the help of an LLM
Reflection	Thoughtful reflection on the process, including benefits and limitations of using AI, and what formative assessments would prepare students for success on this summative one.
Peer Responses	There are high quality responses to at least two colleagues' posts. A high-quality response advances versus cycles the discussion.

Helpful Resources

TILT Higher Ed Examples And Resources.

This is an awesome resource that includes very brief (less than a minute!) videos and example TILT assignment prompts across many of our most highly-enrolled disciplines.

Canvas Help

How do I post a text reply to a Discussion Board as a student?
How do I attach a file to a Discussion Board reply as a student?
How do I post a video reply to a Discussion Board as a student?

Due at: Sep 8 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 5.0

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Developing Rubrics and Providing Feedback is not currently supported

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Developing Assessment Criteria and Rubrics

Communicating Criteria Clearly

Grading criteria is a way to indicate the expectations for a student's performance on an assignment. Establishing grading criteria and sharing it with students helps them to perform better, and makes grading much more efficient and fair for you. As you consider what your grading criteria might be for a given assignment, think about the most important parts of the assessment (content? style? clarity? creativity?), and if those are in fact *aligned* with the course- or unit-level objectives.

Rubrics are incredibly useful to keep grading efficient and consistent, because they explicitly identify where a student's score is coming from. Rubrics can:

help clarify vague, fuzzy goals and help students understand expectations
help students self-improve and increase performance
make scoring easier, faster, and more consistent
improve feedback to students and can reduce arguments with students

Creating a Rubric

To build your rubric, determine the various skills/behaviors that students wil have to demonstrate to show mastery of the objectives relevant to the assignment. Each of the criteria should focus on a different skill/behavior and include a short explanation of what successful demonstration looks like.

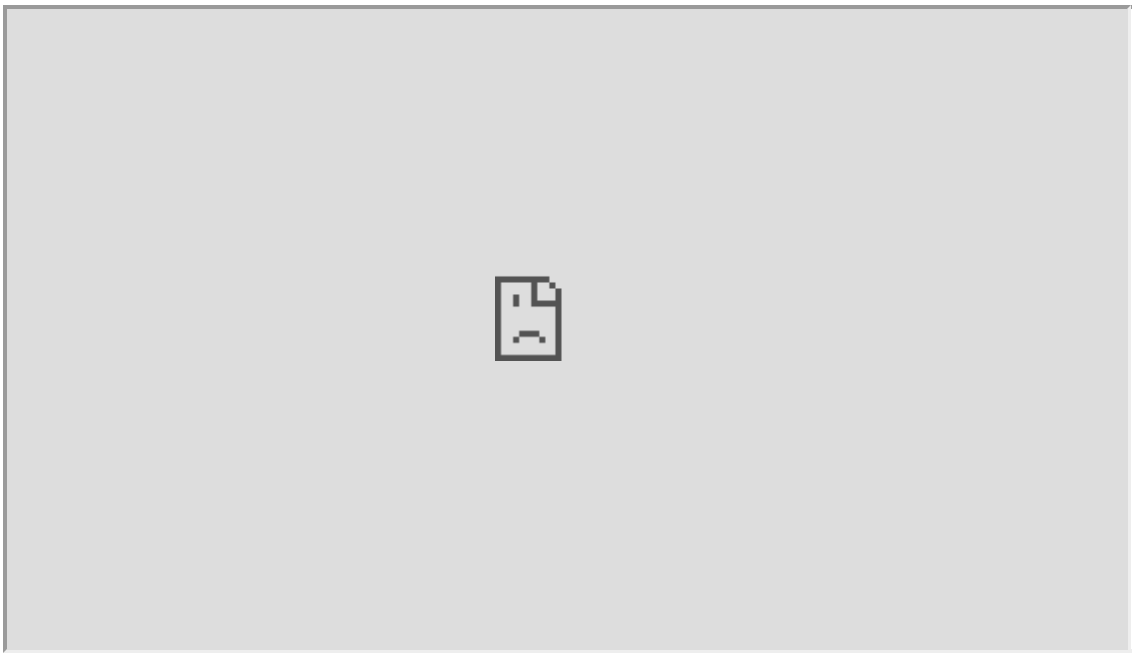
Avoid having scoring criteria that isn't relevant to the course-related skills.

For example, "Turned it on time" shouldn't typically be included as an evaluative criteria. If you want to deduct points for late submissions, consider having a policy in your *syllabus* that indicates how many points will be lost for late assignments (i.e. "5% per day," or "5 points total." You can even set Canvas up to do this for you automatically.

That way, your scoring remains about the work itself, and any deductions are indicated separately.

Next, determine the levels of achievement possible for each criterion. The levels might be numerical categories (1-5) or descriptions of quality (Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, Requires Improvement). Provide some information about what the work would need to include to achieve each level.

Watch the video below for information on how to build and deploy a rubric within Canvas:



Sample Rubrics

Feel free to browse / adopt / adapt some of these sample rubrics from Carnegie Mellon:

Example 1: Philosophy Paper. This rubric was designed for student papers in a range of courses in philosophy.
Example 2: Psychology Assignment. Short, concept application homework assignment in cognitive psychology.
Example 3: Anthropology Writing Assignments. This rubric was designed for a series of short writing assignments in anthropology.
Example 4: History Research Paper. This rubric was designed for essays and research papers in history.
Example 5: History Oral Exam. This rubric describes a set of components and standards for assessing performance on an oral exam in an upper-division course in history.
Example 6: Discussions (In-Class) This rubric assesses the quality of student contributions to class discussions. This is appropriate for an undergraduate-level course.

Bonus, for your consideration: *Un*grading

> Jesse Stommel writes, "When I lead workshops on ungrading and radical assessment, I often start with the question, "why do we grade?" The most common answer from the teachers I work with is, "because we have to." Grades are the bureaucratic ouroboros of education. They are baked into our practices and reinforced by all our (technological and administrative) systems. Teachers continue to grade because so much of education is built around grades."
>
> Ungrading is not a new concept, but it gained traction through the pandemic. It's not just not assigning grades, but also reimagining your assessment strategies. Here are some alternative forms of assessment:

Minimal Grading: Using scales with fewer gradations to make grading “simpler, fairer, clearer” (Elbow)
Contract Grading: Conveys expectations about what is required for each potential grade, so work toward the grade they want to achieve, and goalposts don’t unexpectedly shift.
Process Letters: Asking students to reflect on their work and offer feedback on those reflections. Students help guide the grading of their own work.
Iterative Self-Grading: Ask students to *score their own work* using a rubric of your creation. You review their work and self-assigned scores and provide feedback. If you agree with their score, enter it into the Gradebook. If not, provide specific feedback about what changes need to be made to earn the score they assigned themselves, and allow them to make those changes. Re-review, and repeat.
A note on Self-Grading: it is time consuming for everyone, but the learning is deep and the quality of work is often much higher, since students are *required* to review and use the rubric. They often self-

identify things their work lacks or needs development in, before ever turning it in!

More information on Ungrading

Ungrading looks very different between instructors and disciplines. Here are some resources if you're interested in learning more:

Ungrading: an FAQ (Links to an external site.)
Ungrading: an Introduction (Links to an external site.)
Ungrading for More/Better Feedback
Podcast: Ungrading Podcast

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Giving Feedback for Formative and Summative Assessments

Feedback vs. Evaluation

Imagine a student is painting a portrait: **Feedback** is the teacher walking by during the process and saying, *"Try adding more contrast to the background—it'll help the subject stand out,"* or *"The proportions are looking great; keep going!"* It's formative, supportive, and aimed at improving the work before it's finished. **Evaluation** is a judge at the end of a competitive exhibition saying, *"This work meets all the criteria and earns a final score of 90."* It's summative, final, and used to measure the overall quality of the completed work.

Thus, feedback and evaluation are not the same. Feedback is what lets students know how they'd doing, while providing support, information, and advice as they work to improve. Evaluation is the grade and/or itemized rubric that accompany a summative assessment. We should give feedback on a summative assessment as well, but think of it more as an explanation of the grade and how it was determined/scored.

Feedback is how students get better, and a lack of meaningful feedback can be one of the biggest challenges our learners face. File ACCJC-Quality-Continuum-Rubric-for-Distance-Education-November-2024.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

High quality feedback will have the characteristics of "**FID**e**L**ity" (Fink, 2006)

Frequent: Daily, weekly, or as frequently as possible.
Immediate: Provide feedback to students as soon as possible.

Discriminating: Make clear what the difference is between poor, acceptable, and exceptional work.
Loving: Be empathetic in the way you deliver your feedback. There is a real person reading it, trying to grow and learn something you're already an expert in!

Feedback is unhelpful when:

it's just advice or praise (ex. "Keep it up.")
it's not clear and descriptive enough about what did and didn't happen (ex. "This isn't what I was looking for")
it doesn't make sense in the context of the assessment criteria
it's too late to make changes

Characteristics of Good Feedback

Good Feedback is Goal Focused

When working toward a specific skill outcome, feedback can tell the student to continue doing what they've been doing or that they should reach out for help. Note: feedback should also be given here when students are doing well - if they don't know they're doing a specific thing well, they might not keep doing it.

Good Feedback Provides Actionable Information

Things like *Good Job!*, *B+*, and *75/100* are not feedback and do not have any actionable information. Your students shouldn't be wondering what they should do more of or less of next time - your feedback should address that in specifics. Reflect on the differences between these statements:

“Nice job, Milton."
“Nice job, Milton. You answered the essential question in great depth, with lots of examples, and your oral presentation was polished and informative.”

> Good feedback should also be written in language *for your students*. You may think about asking your students to respond to your feedback (at least in the first assignment or two) to make sure they're finding it and understanding it.

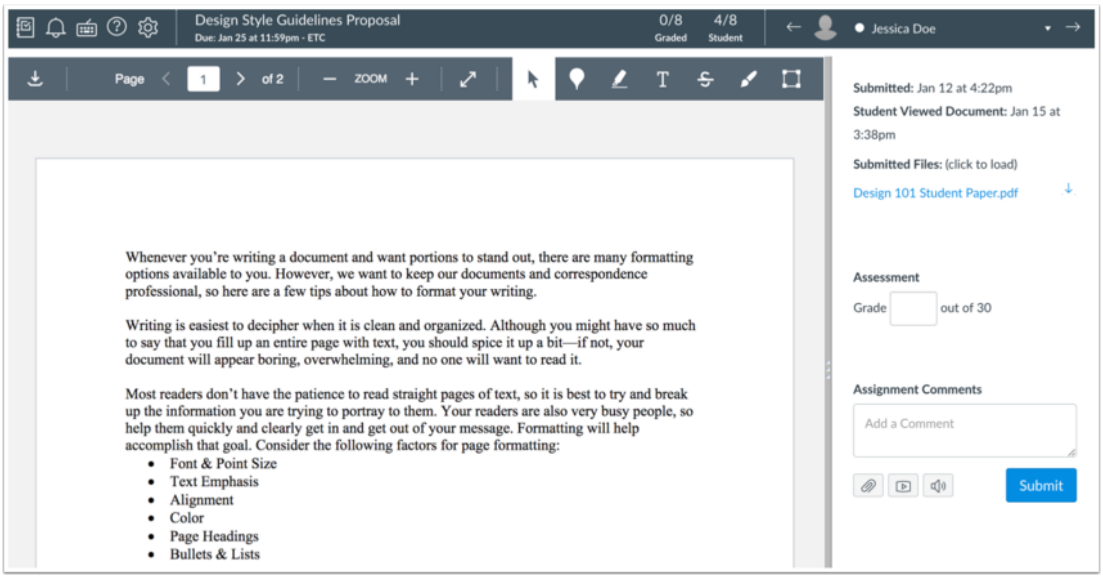
Good Feedback is Timely, Ongoing, and Consistent

> We give feedback because we want our students to be able to use it to improve in time for the next activity. The sooner the students are given feedback, the better. Don't overload yourself though! There are other ways of giving timely feedback, including peer review.

Seven Keys to Effective Feedback by ASCD is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND

Feedback in Canvas

Graded assignments in Canvas open in a tool called SpeedGrader.



SpeedGrader has a variety of tools for you to give feedback. You can use the gray row of DocViewer tools to annotate the document (highlight, add comment, add text, strikethrough) and/or you can use the Assignment Comments box to add feedback. If you're using a rubric, the rubric would also show on this page. Visit the Canvas Community page covering SpeedGrader for more specifics uses and instruction.

Your Feedback "Policy"

Towards the end of this certification course, you will be asked to submit a list of your online course policies and procedures. One of the ones you can include is your feedback "policy," which is a response to these questions:

How soon can students can expect feedback on their assignments? What type of feedback should students expect from you on their assignments?

Where will you provide that feedback/How do you want them to access that feedback?

Think about incorporating the components of feedback FIDeLity as much as you can.

Click Next to move to the next page

Back to Module 2: Creating Aligned Assessments (Sept. 1-7)

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★ Design a Formative Assessment - Course-building Activity

This is another example of TILTed assignment guidelines.

Purpose

Formative assessments are low-stakes learning checks that help students reflect on their understanding, apply concepts, and receive feedback while there is still time to improve before the summative assessment. They also give you insight into what your students are learning (or not learning).

By completing this assignment, you will be working toward the following course outcome:

Design a variety of valid and authentic formative and summative assessments aligned to the course outcomes that support and measure student learning.

Task

Create a formative assessment activity in you DE Course Shell that prepares students for the summative assessment you TILTed earlier in this module.

This can take any form that allows students to practice, reflect, or check their understanding without penalty to their overall grade in the course. Examples include:

A short ungraded quiz or self-check
A low-stakes writing assignment
A discussion prompt focused on authentic application
A peer review or draft submission
A reflection journal
A practice attempt at an exam or assessment

The assessment should be tied to a specific learning outcome or concept in your course and should include clear instructions and feedback mechanisms, even if feedback is automated or general.

To Submit:

Submit a URL that links directly to your formative assessment within your DE Course Shell.

Criteria for Success

The activity is clearly formative (not high-stakes or summative)
Instructions are clear and student-centered
It aligns with a course concept or outcome
There is a method for feedback (e.g., comments, automatic scoring, discussion replies, etc.)
The URL submitted links directly to the assessment in your course

Need Canvas Help?

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I submit a link as an assignment submission?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Sep 8 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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Additional Resources and Support is not currently supported

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COS Course Design Rubric, Section C: Assessment

This page is an example of how we can share a file alongside context! Rather than just adding the file to the Module so it opens on it's own, I'm embedding it here instead, so I can write a message that lets you know how to use it, why it's important, what to do with it moving forward, etc.

Review the Rubric: Assessment

Your DE Course Shell will be evaluated at the end of OCTA using the full version of the COS Course Design Rubric. I've extracted the section below from the full rubric so you can focus in on some of the areas related to the content we covered in this module. You might also notice some things that we've covered in other modules and things we haven't covered too thoroughly just yet. Don't worry, by the time your course is ready to submit, you will have had exposure and practice with everything on this rubric.

I recommend getting familiar with this rubric and referencing it frequently as you build out your Shell to ensure you are Aligning with all of the areas. **Your course must be fully Aligned to receive DE Certification at the end of OCTA.**

Have questions or concerns? Send me a Canvas message to visit me in my office hours Mondays from 3-4 PM and Thursdays from 11-12 PM!

File COS POCR-Course Design Rubric-Section C.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

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Aligned, Authentic, Transparent Assessments Q&A

Questions about Assessments, or about OCTA so far?

Click the "Reply" button to ask course-related or "how do I do this?" questions.



Along your journey, you may want to ask me or your colleagues about a topic, get some additional thoughts about an online teaching strategy or challenge, or you may just need some clarification about an aspect of the class. If so, jump in and ask it here! If it is a question about one of the content pages and/or assignments, please be sure to identify the location of the page as thoroughly as possible so we may troubleshoot promptly (providing a URL is ideal!)

Successful teaching and learning require a village in any modality Any participant is welcome and encouraged to respond to discussion posts. If you know an answer or have a resource to contribute, jump in and help out a friend!

If you have a personal question or concern about the class that you'd like to speak with me about, please Canvas message me directly.

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End of Module 2 - Recap

Unit Objectives (...did we make it?!)

By now, you should be able to:

Design valid and authentic formative and summative assessments aligned to the course outcomes;
Write transparent and detailed assessment instructions;
Create descriptive rubrics that support achievement and assessment of the desired outcomes.

How's that DE Course Shell looking?

By now, you have should have added a TILTed summative assessment and student self-assessment to your DE Course Shell. If you haven't yet, do so before you move to the next module. Don't forget to add your summative assignment rubric!

The next module is going to continue with assessments, but focusing on *interaction* and assessments/content related to that.

Go back to the Modules, or click Next to move to Unit 3

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Module 3: Community and Communication (Sept. 8-14)

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2. Humanizing Online Interaction
3. Humanizing Online Learning (Theory)
4. ★ Write a Welcome Letter - Course-building Activity
5. Title 5, § 55204: Regular, Substantive Interaction
6. What's Regular? What's Substantive? What's Interaction?
7. More RSI...
8. Standards for RSI
9. Bite #1: Have a Communication Policy, and Follow it!
10. ★ Write Your Communication Policy - Course-building Activity
11. Bite #2: Provide Meaningful Feedback on Assignments (AKA not just a grade)
12. Bite #3: Using Announcements
13. ★ Scheduling Announcements - Course-building Activity
14. Bite #4: Facilitating Discussion
15. ★ Adding a Discussion and Participation Expectations - Course-building Activity
16. Bite #5: Creating and Curating Instructional Content (aka Teaching the Class!)
17. Bite #6: Monitoring Student Engagement and Success
18. Bite #7: Using Third-Party Software to Teach Your Class
19. Bite #8: Interaction Should be Obvious
20. ★ RSI - Lil' Quiz
21. Additional Resources and Support
22. COS Course Design Rubric, Section B: Interaction
23. Community and Communication Q&A
24. End of Module 3 - Recap

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Unit 3 Overview

What to Expect in this Unit



This module takes a bit of a detour from *Backward Design* to focus on interaction in our courses. There are a few ideas you'll come across in this module that may be unfamiliar or wholly new. Here's a glossary to help:

Title 5: Title 5 is the section of the California Code of Regulations that focuses on Education. There are a lot of things Title 5 covers, but in this module, we will talk about § Article 55204: Instructor Contact, which governs how we interact, and is a part of our accreditation review.

Presence: specifically *social* and *teaching* presence. These two concepts come from the Community of Inquiry model.
Social presence is the ability of students to identify with the community, communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop interpersonal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities (Garrison, Anderson Archer, 1999).
Teaching presence is defined as the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes for the realization of personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile learning outcomes (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, and Archer, 2001).

Humanizing Online Learning: “Humanizing” is a pedagogical strategy that seeks to close equity gaps by acknowledging that learning environments are not neutral zones; in fact, they often operate to reinforce a worldview that disadvantages and "others" some students (Pacansky-Brock, Smedshammer, Vincent-Layton, 2020).

Unit Objectives

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

Explain how your course will achieve the regular substantive interaction requirement as per Title 5;
Create course assessments, activities, and touchpoints that encourage student participation and contact;
Use a variety of communication tools, both within and external to Canvas, to support student success;

The activities for this module are to write a Welcome Letter (designed for pre-course contact), to draft and schedule several

Announcements, and to create a Discussion Board with guidelines for student participation.

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Humanizing Online Interaction is not currently supported

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Humanizing Online Learning (Theory)

> ***"Why do students struggle more in fully online courses?***
>
> ***Practitioners and scholars increasingly acknowledge two crucial challenges to successful learning in an online environment: requirement of higher-level self-directed learning skills, and greater difficulties in enabling effective human interactions." (Xu Xu, 2019, p. 26)***

What is "humanizing?"

At its core, *humanizing* your online course means seeing your students as humans and allowing them to see you as a human.

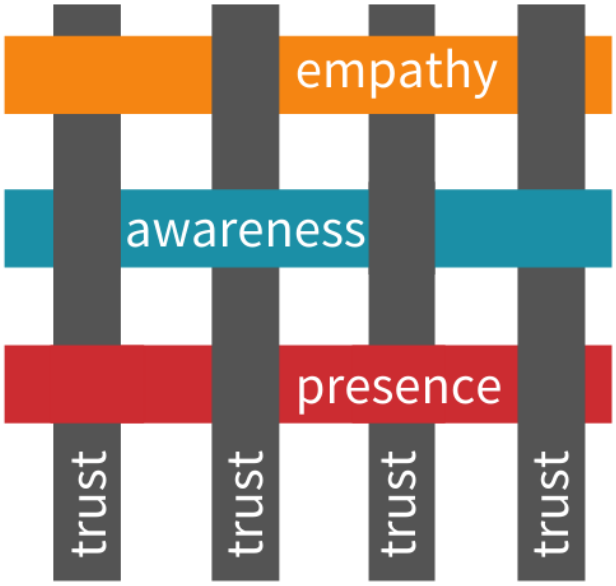
When you teach online, it is easy to start seeing your students as just names on a screen. You rarely if ever will meet them in person, hear their voices, or exchange real energy with them, so it takes effort to stay connected to the real, complex humans that each name on your roster represents. They are capable, unique, and resilient people who bring an array of perspectives and knowledge to your class. They also bring life experiences shaped by privilege and familial support, and others by racism, poverty, and social marginalization.

In humanized online courses, positive instructor-student relationships are prioritized and serve “as the connective tissue between students,

engagement, and rigor" (Pacansky-Brock et al., 2020, p. 2). In any learning modality, **human connection is the antidote for the emotional disruption that prevents many students from performing to their full potential,** so we must be deeply intentional about creating that connection in online learning spaces.

The Principles

Humanized online teaching is supported by four interwoven principles:



Trust: As an instructor, it is our responsibility to intentionally cultivate student trust, and one way to do it is by practicing "selective vulnerability" (Hammond, 2014) in the online community we build with our learners. Choose to share aspects of your life that portray you as a real person – tell a story about a personal struggle you worked through or record a video while cooking dinner or walking your dog.

Presence involves intentional efforts to construct your authentic self through brief, imperfect "pop-ins" to ensure your students know you are in this journey with them (Costa, 2020). These can be videos or quick notes. Verbal and nonverbal cues add context to your communications, which is important to support culturally diverse students.
Awareness is achieved by learning about who your students are and how you can support them.
Empathy requires you to slow down, see things through your students' eyes without judgment, be flexible, and support them as they pursue their goals.

The Pedagogy

> ***Students who often feel invisible and unimportant" – they need to be 'seen' and valued by educators. (Wood Harris III, 2017, p. 41)***

Humanizing pedagogy applies the science of learning and culturally responsive teaching to the design of asynchronous online courses, aiming to create an inclusive, equitable class climate for diverse students.

Research on men of color and first-generation students in community colleges has emphasized that "relationships before pedagogy" is a tenet of effective teaching (Palacios Wood, 2015; Rendón, 1994; Wood Harris III, 2015). Yet, when community college students learn online, they are far less likely to experience rapport with their instructor, and more likely to report needing to teach themselves (Jaggars Xu, 2016). Ouch...

Can you recall having a teacher that you knew cared about you?

One that would notice if you missed class, or would check in if you did a less-than-your-potential job on an assignment?

Can you recall ever "showing up" for that teacher (in class, in work quality) so as not to disappoint them? ...and in so doing, showing up for yourself?

The lack of instructor-student relationships in many online courses exacerbates some pretty problematic equity gaps. Humanizing intentionally invites students to engage with us just as they are, through cultivating trust, mutual respect, and authentic care (Wood Harris III, 2015). This comes before moving on to course content. Positive instructor-student relationships can then be leveraged to hold students to high standards, validate their effort and abilities, and support them with achieving their goals.

Students are more likely to lean in and apply themselves at a higher level when they know their instructor believes in them (Gay, 2000; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1994), and as it turns out, the same principles hold true in online courses (Glazier, 2016).

Adapted and expanded from How to humanize your online class, version 2.0 [Infographic] by Michelle Pacansky-Brock, created with funds from the California Education Learning Lab, is licensed under CC

BY-NC

The next few pages will focus on applying humanizing theory to your own online classes.

As you move through them, think about the moments in your face-to-face courses when you feel especially connected to your students - those are the moments we'll try to replicate in your online class.

Click Next to move to the next page

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★ Write a Welcome Letter - Course-building Activity

Purpose

Preparing students for a successful start in an online course is very important. For many students, your class will be their first online learning experience and they will not know what to expect or what you expect of them. For some, learning about resources or policies in the first week or two of class may be too late – students have more opportunities to succeed if they are informed before the class starts.

Your welcome letter is an opportunity to give students answers to questions they may not even have yet. Sending out a Welcome Letter also helps you, the instructor, by placing resources directly into students' hands so you receive fewer questions.

By completing this assignment, you will make progress toward the following objective:

Use a variety of communication tools, both within and external to Canvas, to support student success.

Task

For this activity, you will write a Welcome Letter that includes an explanation of the "Course Basics" including ALL of the following:

the name of your course
the date it begins
the duration of the course

anything do they need to do on the first day/several days to avoid being dropped
a direct link to our Canvas log-in page (where they will gain access to your course)
a description of how to access Canvas from the COS website
your preferred method of contact

You are also encouraged to include items to support your students' success as the semester begins. This might include:

the estimated number of hours each student should expect to commit to this course (find this on your COR!)
if there are any campus visits required, where, and when (for hybrid or synchronous courses only)
if there are any times you'd like the students to meet synchronously (*note: you cannot require synchronous meetings if the course is designated asynchronous in the schedule, but if you are going to have live lectures or office hours, share the dates/times.)*
where students should go or who they should contact if they have trouble logging into the your course or don't understand how to log in
a link to student services that would help students be successful in your course

The letter should be written in a welcoming and supportive tone. Punctuation and phrasing can go a long way in a text-based first impression.

Consider the difference between "Don't go showing up to my office hours in the last 5 minutes," and "When you visit office hours, please arrive in time to fully explore your question or concern."
Consider the difference between "Most of you will drop before the midterm, and I've come to expect that," and "Review course materials and expectations thoroughly this week. It is challenging course, but those that prepare can succeed."
Consider the difference between "No late work is accepted, regardless of circumstance," and "We will stick to our course policies

strictly, so make sure to meet deadlines to receive credit."
Consider the difference between "I'm your professor, and I've seen it all, don't try me," and "I've been teaching this course for many years and have truly seen it all - not much gets past me!"

To submit:

Create a Announcement in your DE Course Shell to send out your Welcome Letter.
Share the URL to the Announcement page where it can be found.

Criteria for Success

Review the rubric below this assignment description for an overview of requirements - I will be using this while grading.

You can expect feedback in the submission comments box.

Canvas Help

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I submit a URL as an assignment submission in Canvas?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Sep 15 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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Title 5, § 55204: Regular, Substantive Interaction

§ 55204. Instructor Contact

In addition to the requirements of section 55002 and any locally established requirements applicable to all courses, district governing boards shall ensure that:

(a) Any portion of a course conducted through distance education includes regular and substantive interaction between the instructor(s) and students, (and among students if described in the course outline of record or distance education addendum), either synchronously or asynchronously, through group or individual meetings, orientation and review sessions, supplemental seminar or study sessions, field trips, library workshops, telephone contact, voice mail, e-mail, or other activities

"Substantive interaction" means engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

(1)Providing direct instruction;

(2)Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;

(3)Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;

(4)Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or

(5) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

(a)Regular interaction between a student and instructor(s) is ensured by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency:

Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

Regular and substantive interaction is an academic and professional matter pursuant to sections 53200 et seq.

(a)For purposes of calculating instructional time in the context of asynchronous distance education, a week of instructional time is any week in which:

(1)The institution makes available the instructional materials, other resources, and instructor support necessary for academic engagement and completion of course objectives; and

(2)The institution expects enrolled students to perform educational activities demonstrating academic engagement during the week.

So what?

Section 55204, which focuses on instructor contact, is supported by research indicating that most students do better when they interact with their instructor (we all know this, right?) Thus, by law, online instructors must build in opportunities for interaction between students and between the instructor and the students.

Does this apply to hybrid courses?

No, it doesn't. The assumption is that if you are meeting in person with your students on a scheduled basis, you are interacting with them in those meetings. Is it still good practice to interact with your students in the online portion of the course as well? Of course it is! Students want feedback on their work, they want to be able to email you and get a response, and they benefit from announcements and instructor presence in all parts of the course. But the government/accrediting agencies are not going to be checking for this in hybrid courses.

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What's Regular? What's Substantive? What's Interaction?

What's RSI?

RSI stands for **R**egular and **S**ubstantive **I**nteraction, and refers to the frequency and quality of instructor-student interactions in fully-online courses. It is the responsibility of every online instructor to meet RSI requirements for each online course that you teach.

Remind me why we have to do this?

1. It's the law.

RSI is a federal law (34 CFR Part 600), a state law (5 CA ADC § 55204) and an Accreditation requirement (ACCJC Policy on Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education.) When colleges go through Accreditation, reviewers evaluate online courses to evaluate the frequency and quality of the instructor-student interaction happening in the course.

RSI is not optional, nor is it an issue of academic freedom. Faculty who teach online are required by law to interact regularly with their students about the content of the course they are teaching, and colleges are required to ensure RSI is occuring by monitoring online instruction. How that occurs is left up to colleges.

2. Decades of research positively connect it to student success.

RSI is nothing new - it is simply a new name for a set of pedagogical best practices that are widely accepted across every teaching modality. Decades of research have shown that student engagement and interaction in online courses are essential to student success. RSI has *always* been a key component of online certifications.

Though it may be tempting to think of RSI as an additional burden imposed on an already full faculty workload, ensuring that regular and substantive interaction occurs in all online courses aligns with our vision of ensuring students achieve their full education potential regardless of learning modality.

3. It enables us to receive financial aid.

Regular, substantive interaction is what sets *distance education* apart from *correspondence education.* Correspondence education is characterized by student submissions and assignment of grades, while distance education is characterized by the rich interaction students and teachers have in the online space. Students cannot receive financial aid for correspondence courses.

There have been cases where the Department of Education has sought hundreds of millions of dollars in financial aid reimbursements from colleges and universities when it was discovered that courses designated as distance education were actuall being taught in a correspondence format.



▶ **Infographic Text Description**

Examples of Distance Education:

1. graded assignments with feedback
2. video lectures
3. weekly announcements with course content
4. office hours
5. outreach based on progress monitoring
6. participating in discussions

Examples of Correspondence Education:

1. assigning a grade without feedback
2. weekly announcements about due dates
3. external instructional content not created or mediated by the instrucotr-of-record
4. auto-graded exams and quizzes

RSI By-the-Letter

REGULAR	SUBSTANTIVE	INTERACTION
means *FREQUENTLY AND CONSISTENTLY THROUGHOUT THE COURSE*	**means *ACADEMIC IN NATURE, AND RELEVANT TO THE CONTENT OF THE COURSE***	**means *COMMUNICATION WITH AND BETWEEN STUDENTS, INITIATED BY THE INSTRUCTOR***
PROMPT PREDICTABLE PROACTIVE POLICIES	SYNCHRONOUS PRESENCE FORMATIVE NON-AUTOMATED FEEDBACK INSTRUCTOR-CREATED/MEDIATED CONTENT RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS FACILITATING DISCUSSION “OTHER”	FACULTY-TO-STUDENT STUDENT-TO-STUDENT

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More RSI... is not currently supported

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Standards for RSI

Standards for RSI

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has created The Quality Continuum Rubric for Distance Education to provide a simple rubric of how RSI should be evident in online course to ensure legal compliance. It details four categories of Substantive interaction and two categories of Regular interaction, providing insight into how RSI can be implemented in ways that support both our students and our accreditation.

...in bite-size pieces.

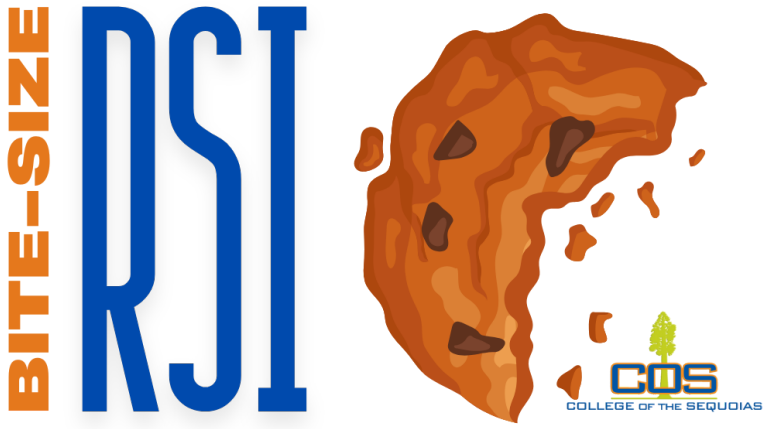
To prepare for our 2025 accreditation visit, we broke the (somewhat intimidating) ACCJC rubric into little pieces, with ideas for implementing each of them into online courses. If you incorporate the ideas and suggestions in the following pages and videos, you will have be doing RSI in multiple, meaningful ways throughout your course!

Click Next to take the first "bite."

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Bite #1: Have a Communication Policy, and Follow it!



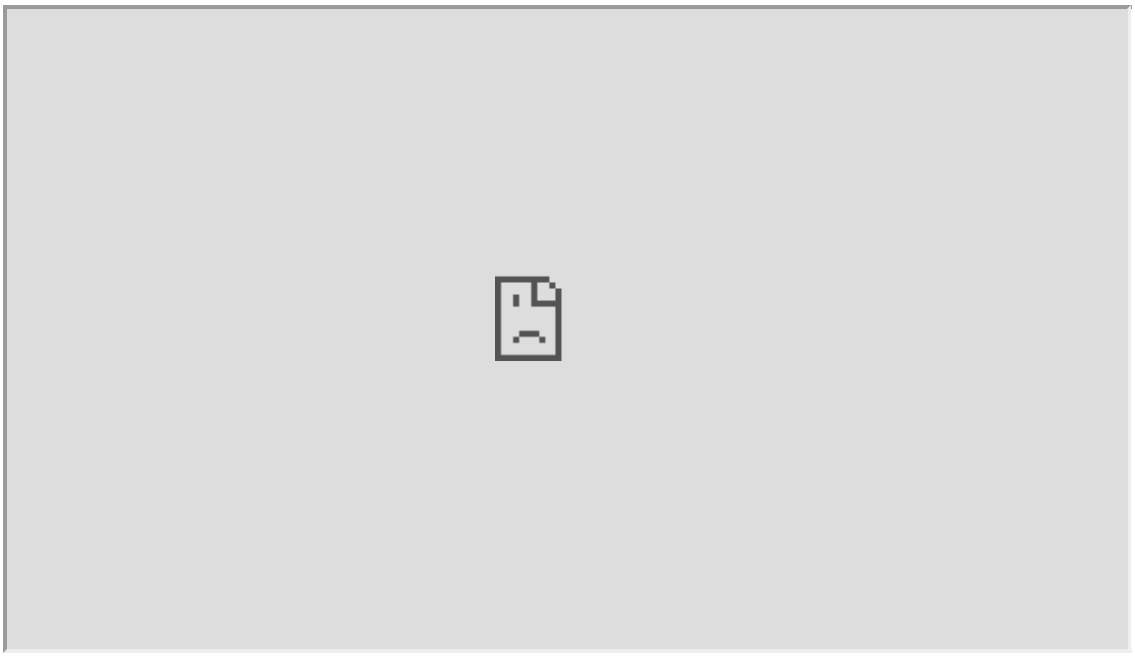
One of the pieces comprising "**R**egular" in **R**egular and **S**ubstantive **I**nteraction is the presence of clear policies and procedures pertaining to communication. A good communication policy should share three things: 1) How students will access and contact their instructor, 2) How the instructor will contact students, and 3) If and how students should contact each other. This policy can exist in an orientation module or in the syllabus, and will ideally appear in multiple places throughout the course.

1. ***How students will access and contact their instructor*.** This section of the policy would make clear things like Office Hours, your preferred method of communication (Canvas, email, or something else?), and your turnaround times for messages received during the week and over the weekend. I give myself 24-48 hours to respond to student emails during the week, and let students know that if they email me after 5:00 on a Friday, they can expect a response on Monday. Determine what your system is, make sure it's clear, and then stick to it. If you're traveling or sick and won't be able to stick to the policy, post an Announcement and let students know. This kind of consistency

and predictability is a huge part of the review criteria for DE courses.

2. ***How the instructor will contact students.*** Do you post weekly Announcements? Write comments on Assignments? Fill in grading rubrics with individualized feedback? Will you email or Canvas message if the schedule changes, or there is an issue with a student's work? Be clear about where students should look to hear from you, and with what frequency.
3. ***If and how students should contact each other.*** In many online courses student-to-student contact is a requirement, and even where it is not it is recommended to give students spaces to interact and talk about the course. Let students know where those interactions will occur and how to get in touch with one another.

More of a visual/auditory learner? Watch this 15-minute video on incorporating a Communication Policy into your course.



Template

How you can contact me

Preferred Name and Pronouns: Elise Baker, she/her

Preferred Contact Method: Canvas inbox or at eliseb@cos.edu

Office Hours: provide a schedule, location, and a link for any online office hours

Turnaround Time: M-F, you can expect a response within 24-48 hours. Usually I can respond the same day. If you don't hear back from me within 48 hours (I'm sorry), please send me a follow-up message. If you email me on the weekend, you may get a response, but you also may be waiting until Monday morning. This is a good reason not to procrastinate and to ask questions during the week.

How I will contact you (this is example content. Replace with your own procedures.)

I will be an active participant in this course. You can expect me to reach out several times a week using one of the following methods:

1. **Announcements.** I typically post announcements on Monday mornings, and sometimes a second announcement during the week. Keep an eye out and make sure you have notifications set up on Canvas.

1. **Canvas Inbox/Messages**: I will sometimes reach out to you via Inbox to check in with you about work you've submitted, missed,

or done exceptionally well on.

1. **Contextualized Assignments:** I will provide written or video instructions for various tasks in each module.

1. **Discussion Boards:** I will frequently pop into discussions to summarize key points, prompt a new line of thought, redirect misunderstandings, or just because I think you've said something interesting and I want to encourage you to develop the idea more!

1. **Graded Assignments:** Always open the grading rubric attached to an assignment for my specific feedback. Sometimes I will write feedback, and sometimes I'll leave audio or video feedback for you.

1. **Anything else you use…**

How you will interact with your classmates

1. **Discussion Boards.** We will use discussions to build community and talk about the central concepts and ideas in the course. There will also be an open discussion board all semester called "24/7 Study Room" where you can post questions, share notes, events you're interested in on campus, and engage with one another.

1. **Feedback on Assignments:** Some assignments will call for peer feedback.

1. **Groups.** We will do several group assignments this semester. More details to come.

1. **Canvas Inbox/Messages.** You can message other students in the course using the same Messaging tool you use to

communicate with your teachers.

1. **Other Apps:** (if relevant)

If you don't already have this in your "live" courses, don't wait until next semester to incorporate it! You can (and need to) add it to your orientation or syllabus now, and even post an Announcement letting students know that some questions have arisen about communication, and there's now a policy that they can refer to.

When you submit your DE Course Shell in Week 8, there will need to be a communication policy in the orientation module and syllabus.

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★ Write Your Communication Policy - Course-building Activity

Purpose

Clear communication expectations are essential for building student trust, maintaining engagement, and meeting federal and accreditation standards for regular and substantive interaction (RSI). They demystify the sometimes scary prospect of contacting your teacher, who you may never have met in person!

Writing a communication policy helps you set clear boundaries and expectations for both students and yourself, provide transparency and consistency in instructor-student and peer-to-peer interactions, fulfill distance education accreditation requirements, and support student success.

This policy will be placed in your course orientation materials or syllabus and serve as a reference point for students throughout the term.

Task

Draft a Communication Policy that clearly explains expectations for how communication will happen in your course. Your policy should include the following:

Instructor-to-Student Communication

How will you reach out to students (e.g., Announcements, Inbox, email)?

How often will they hear from you? (e.g., weekly, after each major assignment)
Where can they expect to find course-wide updates?

Student-to-Instructor Communication

What is the best way for students to reach you? (Canvas Inbox, email, office hours, messaging tools)
What is your typical **response time** (e.g., within 24–48 hours on weekdays)?
Do you have virtual office hours or drop-in sessions?

Student-to-Student Interaction

How are students expected to engage with one another? (e.g., Discussions, peer review, group projects)
What norms or expectations should they follow in peer communication?

You may use bullet points, paragraphs, or a combination of both. The tone should be student-friendly.

To submit:

Submit your completed communication policy as a Canvas text entry or file upload, or a link to a published page in your DE Shell where the policy is located (e.g., in the syllabus or orientation module).

Criteria for Success

A successful submission will:

Include clear details for all three types of communication (instructor-to-student, student-to-instructor, student-to-student)
Set specific expectations for tools, frequency, and response times
Use accessible, student-friendly language
Be formatted in a way that can be easily shared with students in your course (syllabus, orientation page, etc.)

Due at: Sep 15 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

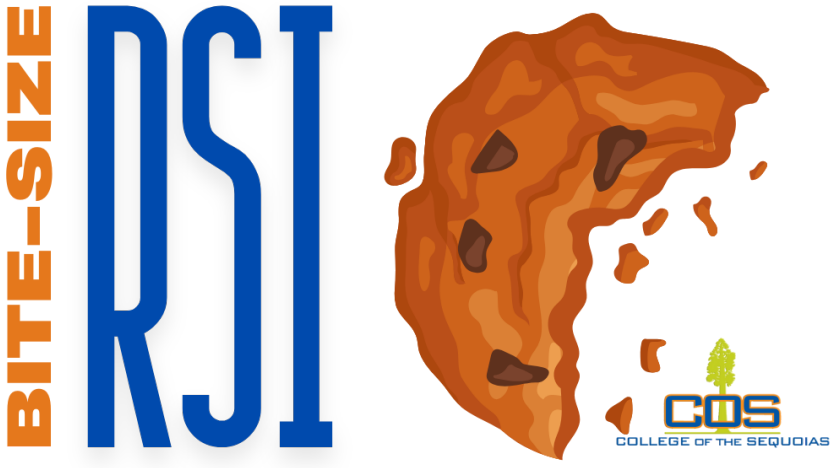
Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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Bite #2: Provide Meaningful Feedback on Assignments (AKA not just a grade)

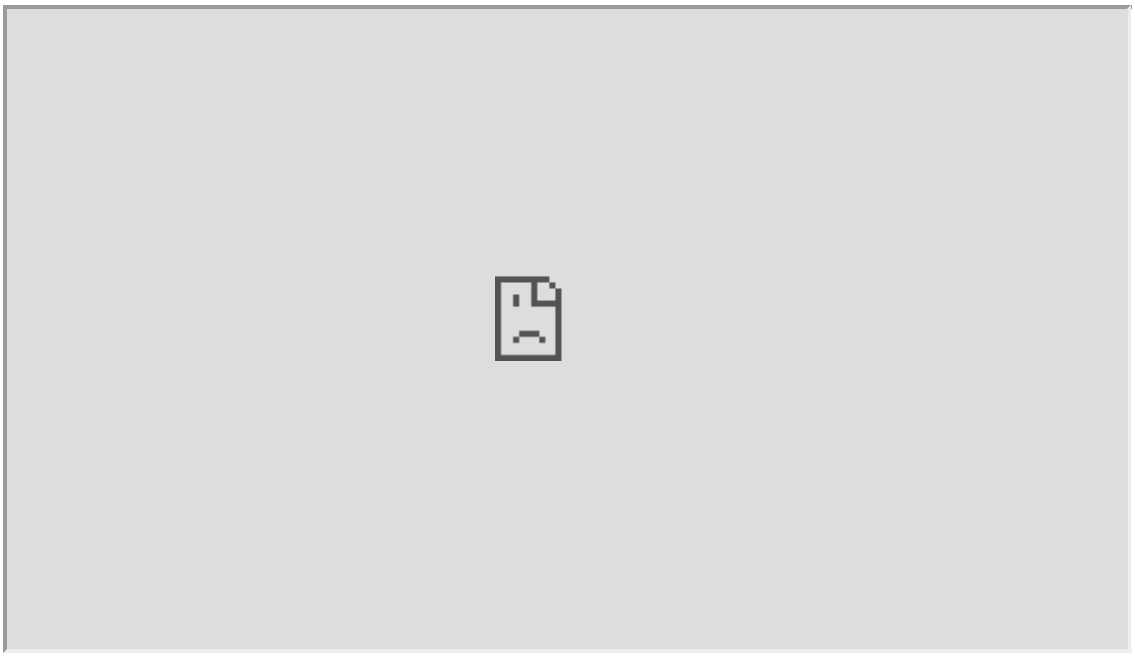


We likely all remember the frustration of getting “just a grade” back on an assignment when we were in college. I don’t know what was more frustrating, working my tail off on an assignment and getting a full credit score posted with NO positive feedback from my teacher at all, or failing an assignment and seeing only a score entered, with no idea where I went wrong, where to improve, or even a word of encouragement. We cannot simply enter or automate grades or we really aren’t teaching, we’re just scoring… and a computer can do that these days. In order to be considered a teacher, I think we can all agree that we must interact with our students “substantively.” In other words, we have to interact with them in meaningful and formative ways *about the content of the course*.

One of the ways we do this is by **providing feedback in addition to numerical scores**. Canvas has a lot of ways to facilitate this kind of feedback. My favorite method is to create scoring rubrics and leave personalized comments on the various criteria to inform students of the ways they aligned with or deviated from expectations. We can also provide grading comments directly within the Gradebook as written notes, voice memos, or video recordings.

This kind of grading feedback and interaction comes into play in *both* the “**R**egular” and “**S**ubstantive” sections of File ACCJC-Quality-Continuum-Rubric-for-Distance-Education-November-2024.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access. For a college to be considered “Developed” in this area, an instructor must “frequently engage with students throughout the term to provide formative feedback and information based on monitoring student engagement and success” and “consistently provide meaningful comments on most coursework and assignments, including constructive feedback and improvements needed to increase content mastery. To be considered “Highly Developed” we must be providing this kind of feedback on *all* student work in an online course using a mix of the tools available to do so.

Want more on this? Watch this short video from our RSI webpage.



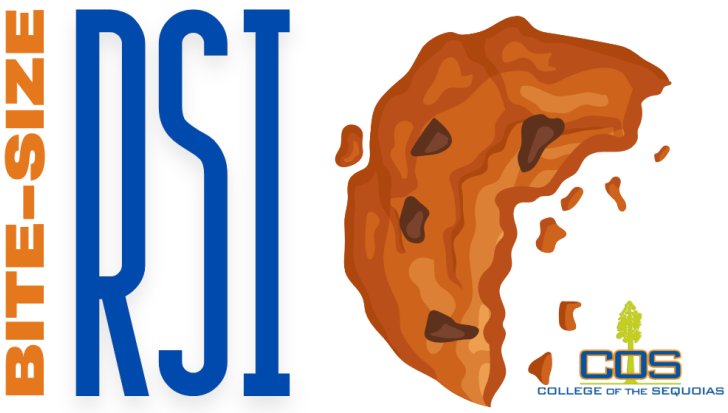
If you are not already providing feedback to accompany grades, please begin doing so now. Without feedback from their instructors, students struggle to improve in their classes and competencies. RSI and the provision of ongoing, formative feedback are the instructor

behaviors that differentiate Distance Education from correspondence courses, which are *not* eligible for financial aid or institutional accreditation.

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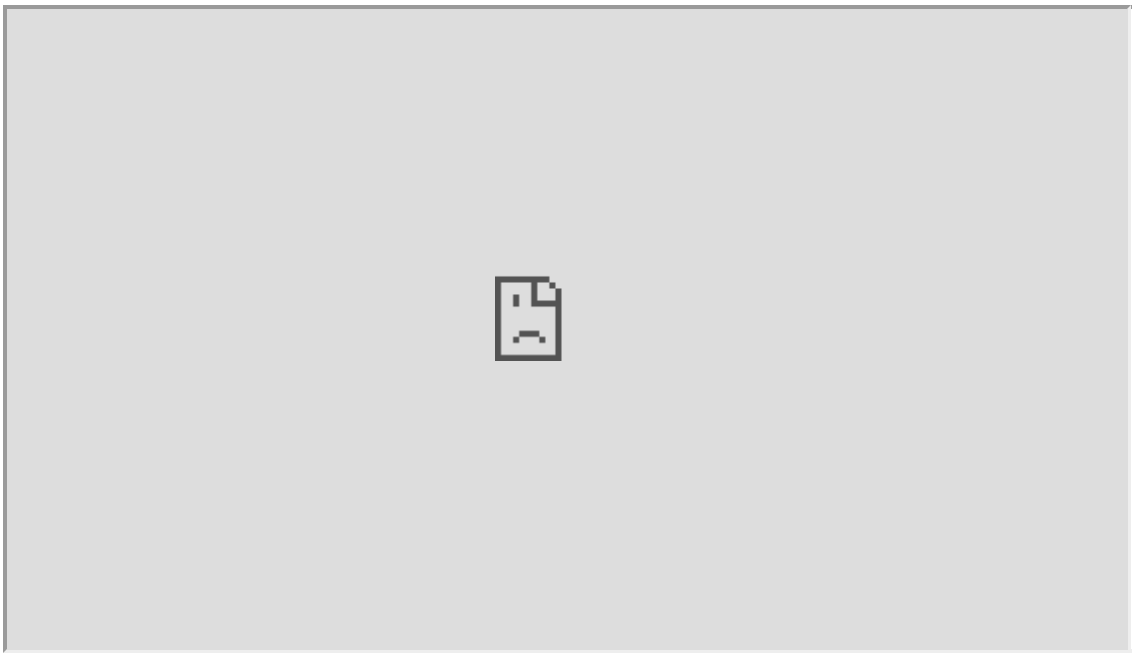
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Bite #3: Using Announcements



Announcements are one of my favorite ways of **R**egularly interacting with students in an online course. They provide a class-wide blast of information, and if you check the box to “Allow Participants to Comment” in the settings, it can also provide an additional space for discussion. We can make Announcements for schedule changes, to correct misunderstandings, share supplementary information, offer encouragement, remind students of campus events, drop deadlines, tutorial services, and student services of all kinds. If we use Announcements on a predictable basis, it ensures that students are hearing meaningful and directed information from us regularly while also holding ourselves accountable to check in with the class *at least once a week.*

Prefer to watch-and-learn? Watch this video from our RSI webpage.



In my own online courses, I pre-schedule an Announcement to post every Monday at 8:00 AM. I follow a template (shared below if you want it!) to ensure I'm not *just* talking about the schedule or offering housekeeping information. Weekly Announcements, when done well, should also be **S**ubstantive. Canvas allows you to schedule your Announcements in advance, so I usually write Monday's announcement a couple days in advance, once I've had time to monitor engagement and learning for the week, so I can include targeted information in the Announcement. Using Announcements in this way hits both section A and B on the ACCJC Rubric, which expects that an "Instructor frequently engages with students through the term to provide formative feedback and information based on monitoring student engagement and success," and that "Interactions are predictable and occur in accordance with the length and course content." By leaving the "Allow Comments" box checked and responding to student comments, we can also "promptly and proactively respond to students … to provide necessary support."

FAQ about Announcements

Q: How often should I be making Announcements?

A*:* Once or twice a week, and any time you have something important to say to the class. If you're posting Announcements every single day, rein it in or risk losing your students' attention. If you're posting less than once a week, you're not interacting with your students enough. In an in-person course, we interact *at least* once if not three times a week. We often start an in-person class by sharing information about what's going on in the course and taking questions, so our DE courses should look the same.

Q: Doesn't the Canvas Inbox serve the same purpose?

A: Somewhat, but Announcements stay on your Announcement page forever where students can revisit them, post questions and get responses from you and their classmates (well *hello*, "providing an opportunity for interaction…"), and quite frankly, it won't hurt this semester in particular to have a thorough log of instructor-initiated contact, organized by date, all in once place.

Q: Can I use Announcements for class-wide feedback instead of providing individual feedback?

A: Sometimes. In some circumstances, it doesn't make sense to provide individual feedback. If more than half of the class missed #6 on the test, it's totally reasonable to post an Announcement sharing where that answer can be found, rather than writing it out 45 times in SpeedGrader. You don't want to *only* post Announcements-as-feedback though, or you risk never providing anything personalized, and *personalized feedback is a required component of RSI*. Announcements are just one tool in the RSI toolbox, and when settled alongside SpeedGrader feedback, a clear communication policy, original content, and timely answers to questions, we start to build

really rich and connected online learning experiences for our students.

Announcement Template

Announcement Template

Announcement Template ***Italicized text is adapted from the ACCJC Rubric***	**Announcement Example using the Template**
Subject: Week X Check-in Greeting, 1. Observations from the past week – good and bad; *(shows monitoring*) 2. Any corrections and references/links to resources needed to master last week's content; (*promptly engaging when needed based on that monitoring)* 3. If possible, connect the current work to	**Week 3 Check-in** Good morning COMM 1 students, (1) I was impressed with your comments on the Speech of the Week discussion board last week – it looks like that was a good one to start us off! All of you participated in last week's Speech of the Week discussion (!!!), so everyone has a grade in the Gradebook by now, and a response from me in the discussion board. (2) Wherever points were lost, they were lost for not providing enough detail in the prompted areas. Make sure to leave 4-6 sentences of feedback (more is fine, but not less!) and talk about the word choices the speaker made, their body language like movement, gestures,

SLOs or a capstone project; (*providing information related to the course content/competencies and learning outcomes*) 4. Preview upcoming deadlines and the week ahead; (*just good practice*) 5. Remind students of where to find you (*encourage students to participate in interaction opportunities*)	facial expressions, vocal tone and inflection, pace, pauses, volume... (3) We're using these Speech of the Week discussions to build up to a larger speech evaluation assignment toward the end of the semester, so develop a good practice now and that assignment will feel very familiar. (4) This week we're moving onto some basics about delivering your thoughts to an audience. Don't forget that your My Name Speech is due on Sunday by 11:59 PM. This is a super simple speech that most students get full credit on, provided you prepare your remarks in advance and *stand up to present!* This week, complete the following. 1. Check in: Roll Call 1. Read: Chapter 12 - Delivering Your Speech 1. Watch: 2-part video lecture on Delivery 1. Critique: the Speech of the Week - Phil Davison 1. Record and submit: My Name Speech (5) Message me on Canvas with questions or concerns this week, and I'll see you in the module!

	Elise

One of your assignments in this module is to draft and pre-schedule three announcements for your online course.

We'll do that when you click Next.

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★ Scheduling Announcements - Course-building Activity

Purpose

Regular, timely announcements help students stay engaged, informed, and connected in an online course. By pre-scheduling announcements, you can maintain a consistent presence even during busy weeks, holidays, or travel. This assignment helps you practice using Canvas **Announcements** to connect, reduce confusion, and reinforce weekly routines.

After completing this assignment, you will be able to:

Create course assessments, activities, and touchpoints that encourage student participation and contact;
Use a variety of communication tools, both within and external to Canvas, to support student success;

Task

In your DE Course Shell, create and pre-schedule at least three announcements. One of these might be the pre-course Welcome Letter. The other two can be course reminders, check-ins, or weekly overviews.

Once your announcements are scheduled, **submit a URL** to the Announcements page in your DE Shell.

How to Schedule an Announcement

1. Go to your course and click **“Announcements”** in the course navigation menu.
2. Click **“+ Announcement.”**
3. Add a **Title** and write your message in the Rich Content Editor.
4. Scroll down and check the box for **“Delay posting.”**
5. Select your desired **date and time** for the announcement to post.
6. Click **“Save.”** The announcement will appear as “Delayed Posting” until it goes live.

Need Ideas?

Here are examples of announcements that work well when pre-scheduled:

A **Welcome Letter** before the course begins
A reminder about an **upcoming drop** or **withdrawal deadline**
A **Week 1 Wrap-Up** that summarizes key takeaways and encourages students as the course gets underway
A **Week 2 Preview on Monday morning** to build momentum and outline upcoming tasks
A message about **instructor travel** alerting students to limited availability and responsiveness
A friendly **check-in** or **motivation boost** during what you know will be a stressful point in the semester
A **Finals Week** check-in reminding students of the last thing(s) that need to be done to finish the course

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Criteria for Success

Scoring Rubric for Scheduling Announcements

Element	Description
3 Scheduled Announcements	Includes at least three announcements scheduled using the “Delay posting” option
Clear Intentions	Each announcement has a brief explanation of its purpose and timing
Practical Use	Announcements are student-focused and support communication, guidance, or connection

Canvas Help

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I submit a link as an assignment submission?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Sep 15 at 12am

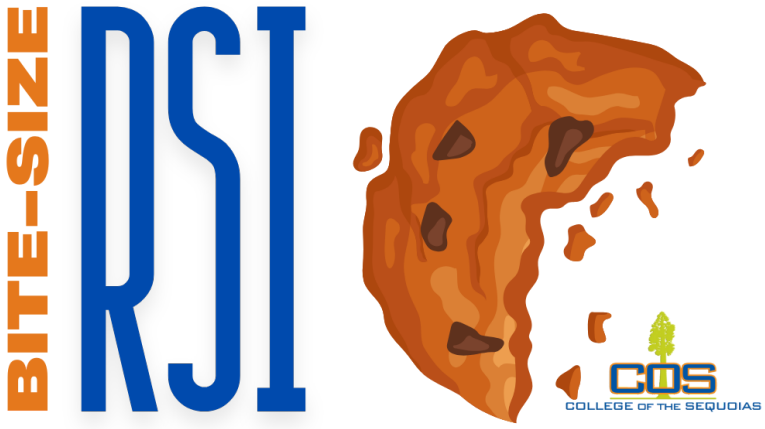
Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

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Bite #4: Facilitating Discussion



In face-to-face courses, discussion often happens naturally - we introduce a concept or make a comment about a related topic or event, and a student raises their hand with a question or remark of their own. We might ask a thought-provoking question about the topic of the day, or “think-pair-share” to get them collaborating and actively participating in their learning. Online courses should be equal in interaction to face-to-face courses in as many ways as possible, and one of the ways facilitate that is by **creating spaces for discussion.**

The standards for RSI indicate that we are responsible for “Facilitating group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency.” At the Initial level, this means that we must provide “prompts, questions, or topics to engage students.” We seek to exceed the Initial level of compliance however, and to even be considered "Emerging" in our online teaching practices, **we must also participate in the discussions** occurring in our class.

Anyone who has come to a DE workshop has had me paint the silly picture of what non-participation in a discussion would look like in a

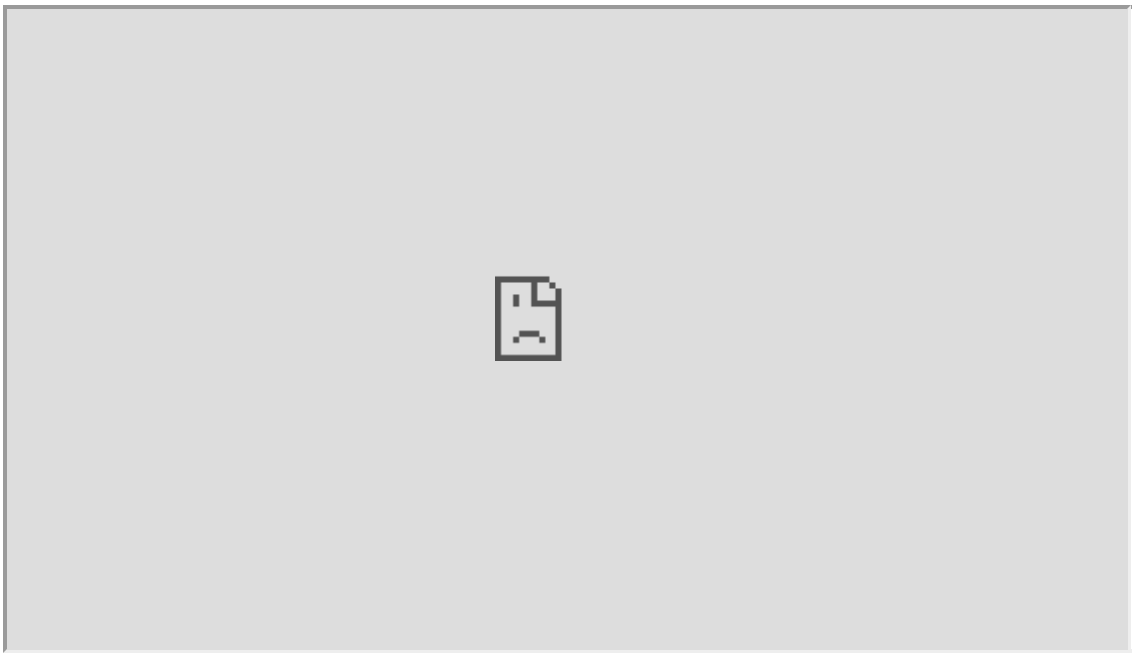
face-to-face class: You pose a question to your students, and immediately turn and leav the room, not to return for the remainder of the session. Students finally dismiss themselves, not sure if they talked enough or about the right things. How bizarre would that be?

No, in order to really facilitate a discussion, **we must be present for it.** This definitely doesn't mean that we need to respond to every comment that every student makes - we wouldn't do that in person either or we would very likely stymie conversation. Instead, we might:

occasionally jump in to correct a misunderstanding before it proliferates,
encourage an interesting line of thought,
remind students to use appropriate and respectful language,
nudge students toward making important connections in the content
provide examples of ourselves engaging with the question
give feedback to students privately in comments before the reply due date

We need to sit and observe a discussion while it is happening and contribute in ways that ensure the discussion is productive.

Want more? Watch this video.



FAQ about Discussions

Q: How often should we have discussions?

A*:* The ACCJC says that we should provide "the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency." So there isn't really a specific number of discussions they're looking for, but it's safe to say that two is not enough, and many instructional designers agree that 18 might cause student burnout, especially for students enrolled in more than one online course. I suggest having discussions every two or three weeks, or when the content naturally lends itself to discussion. This will probably result in 7-9 discussions spaced predictably throughout the course, which will be sufficient for the ACCJC to see that we are meeting this area of the rubric both for substance and regularity.

Q: My discipline doesn't really require discussion. How can I meet this requirement without it just being busywork?

A: There are a lot of ways that we can make discussion boards work for us. We don't need to necessarily pose a question – we can instead provide a prompt or assign a task for students to complete and share with one another. I often use discussion boards as the submission spot for assignments so that students can view one another's work and discuss. You might also ask students to find and share a YouTube video or TedTalk that further develops a concept from the week, chapter, or module. Challenging math concept? Send students to find a video or other resource that makes more sense to them and share it with the class.

These kinds of prompts require that they engage with a ton more content than we alone provide, and they'll likely look at more than one video or resource before choosing one, thus increasing their exposure to the concept. Students who struggled with the concept now have a bank of resources to engage with that might reach their learning style, and BONUS: You get an incredible repository of videos covering concepts in your course. Embed them, show them in in-person classes, use them to flesh out your OER content.

For more ideas on discussion boards and how to make them work for you, watch the November 2023 Death to Dry Discussions! workshop or check out the Discussion Boards quick-reference guide that workshop participants took to-go.

The next assignment in this module is to create a Discussion Board with clear participation expectations.

Click Next to get started.

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★ Adding a Discussion and Participation Expectations - Course-building Activity

Purpose

As you read in the previous page, discussion boards are a great way to increase contact and build community among your students in an online class. This assignment gives you an opportunity to craft a prompt and participation expectations.

By completing this assignment, you will:

explain how your course will achieve RSI as per Title V
create course assessments and activities that encourage student participation and contact

Task

You will **submit a URL** to the place this Discussion Board is found within your DE Course Shell. The discussion board should include:

the initial content-related question, topic, or prompt
guidelines for interaction
how many peer replies do you expect?
do you have an expectation for length and quality of peer replies?
expectations of source citation/integration? language use? comments that expand the discussion versus cycle it?
deadlines for initial reply to the prompt, deadlines for peer responses?

acceptable formats? (i.e. videos, text posts, pictures, audio recordings)
criteria for success (in the form of a rubric, accessible chart, or bullet list.

Criteria for Success

Criteria for Success for Discussion Board Build Activity

Element	Description
Content-Driven Prompt	The discussion board includes a clear, content-related question or topic that invites critical thinking, reflection, or analysis.
Interaction Guidelines	Expectations for student interaction are clearly stated, including the number of peer replies and expectations for quality (e.g., length, tone, citation, depth). Students are informed whether responses may include text, video, audio, images, etc.
Timing and Deadlines	Clear deadlines are provided for both the initial post and peer replies to promote consistent engagement.
Criteria for Success	The discussion includes a rubric, checklist, or bulleted criteria to help students understand how their work will be evaluated.
Working URL	A working Canvas course URL is submitted that links directly to the discussion board in the DE Course Shell

Canvas Help

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I submit a link as an assignment submission?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Sep 15 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

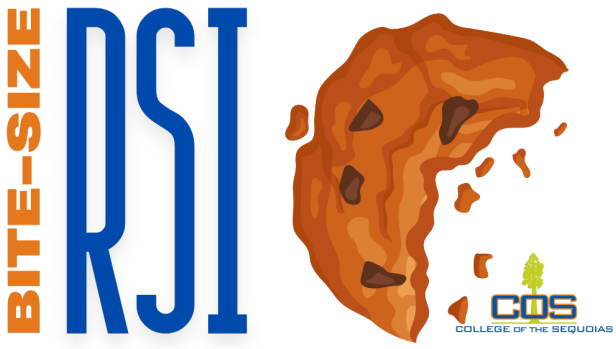
Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL, Online Upload

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Bite #5: Creating and Curating Instructional Content (aka Teaching the Class!)



As college instructors, we are counselors, graders, curators, cheerleaders, tech support, debate moderators, AI detectors, and Expo marker artists - and all of those roles fall under the big umbrella of Teacher. In all of these roles, we must ttake our expertise on our subject and find meaningful ways of imparting that knowledge to students and to help them achieve the desired outcomes. It is through our ability to **provide our knowledge in the form of lessons** that we are able to do this job at all, and wear any of the hats we wear.

Unsurprisingly, in order to be accredited to offer online courses, there is an expectation that we are “Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency.” At the Initial, or minimum level of compliance, it must be apparent that instructors are providing “instructional content such as video, audio, or recorded presentations or interactive lessons *visibly created or mediated by the instructor* [emphasis added]." We must also “respond to questions pertaining to the course content.” In your class, this might look like:

Instructor-created lecture videos and/or audio voiceovers

Use of video-building software (like PlayPosit) to organize videos, materials, and assessments into interactive lessons

Walkthrough videos of challenging concepts, skills, or areas of common struggle

Contextualization of teaching materials, like:

An explanation of how an outside video connects to an SLO or upcoming assignment

An explanation of how to engage with the content or key points to pay attention to

Providing a spot for QA about the content and checking it regularly

Your other instructional activities in which you are providing original content and/or mediating outside content.

In order to be considered "Emerging" in our online teaching practices, we must also not only accept but encourage questions, use Announcements substantively**,** and provide occasional “extras” related to course content like making connections to current events or providing of additional learning resources.

FAQ about Providing Instructional Content

Q: I don’t create or contextualize the lesson content, typically. I provide great instructional videos from external/publisher sources, and I’m always responsive to questions. Does that qualify?

A: On its own, no. If we create our own interactive instructional content (i.e. lecture videos) *and* regularly and promptly answering student questions, we're meeting the standard. If we choose to curate content from an external source like YouTube or a publisher

video collection. we have to provide some context alongside that content as well.

Consider how you would contextualize or frame a video you are playing in a face-to-face class. You likely wouldn't hit "play" and just stand there, right? Whatever you'd say to student before or after playing the video, provide that online as well. If you're doing this, *and* regularly and promptly answering student questions, you're meeting the standard.

Q: I create my own PowerPoint slides and post them for students to read at their own pace. Does that qualify?

A: No, accreditation standards specify that the content should have some additional instructor presence to it in the form of video or voice recording or interactivity. Again, consider how your slides are delivered in a face-to-face format. We wouldn't silently click through them and then dismiss class. We'd provide expansion and additional information about each slide.

Q: I share links/access to outside readings and videos, and I create all my own assessments about them. Does that qualify?

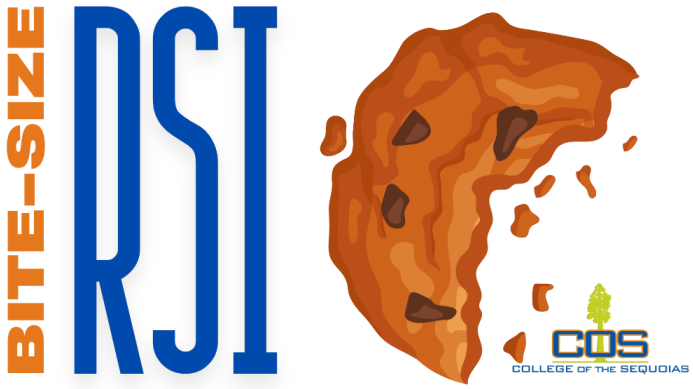
A*:* No, providing instructional content is different than assessment. We must create or mediate the learning experience of our students by providing the content they will use to prepare for our assessments.

Later in this course, you will submit a link to a place within your DE Canvas shell where an original or mediated lesson exists, so begin considering what content you might include, and/or how you'll mediate your high-quality external instructional content.

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Bite #6: Monitoring Student Engagement and Success



In any instructional modality, instructors are expected to be aware of their students' attendance, engagement, and performance in the course, and to reach out to support our students wherever we can. This is as true of distance education courses as it is of face-to-face courses, and this responsibility is addressed in our online course accreditation requirements. The standards demand that faculty are "Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student."

So what does that actually mean in practice? At a minimum, we must be providing "minimal interaction throughout the term in the course section or with individual students based on monitoring student engagement and success," AND "Policies and/or procedures [that] create expectations for monitoring student academic engagement and success." It's important to note that our engagement with students should be *substantive* (about the content or competency of the course), so messaging a student to say something to the effect of "Hey, you're falling behind, you should probably do something about that" isn't really sufficient for this area. We need to provide them with

information and resources related to the course to help them out. In your class, this might look like:

Announcements or Inbox messages that correct content misunderstandings, offer reminders, share tutoring information, or otherwise engage and support students based on your observations of the class and/or work being submitted.

Responding to student questions or requests for support within the timeframe established in your communication policy

Providing grading feedback that shares resources and information on where they went wrong and how they can improve.

Using the “Message Students Who” function in the Canvas Gradebook to get in touch with students who haven’t submitted something, scored low, or another filter.

Remember this? Here's that 4-min video for a quick tutorial on the Message Students Who tool one more time.

A syllabus/orientation policy that states where students can find their grades and feedback and what they can expect from you as far as engagement about their success.

Talking to students in office hours to help walk them through challenging concepts or feedback on their work

Being an active participant in a QA discussion board to answer questions, offer guidance, etc.

Other activities that show investment in student success *and* provide information and support to that end.

FAQ about Monitoring Student Engagement and Success

Q: Contacting student who are struggling/failing/disappearing does not align with my teaching philosophy. Will that be held against me?

A: *Well… yes. We are required to interact with students in the form of announcements, instruction, grading feedback, and providing information, all based on our monitoring of their engagement and success. If a student performs poorly on many assignments resulting in a negative outcome and their instructor never notices or offers any kind of support, resources, feedback, or correction, are we doing our job? The standards we must meet to remain accredited say NO.*

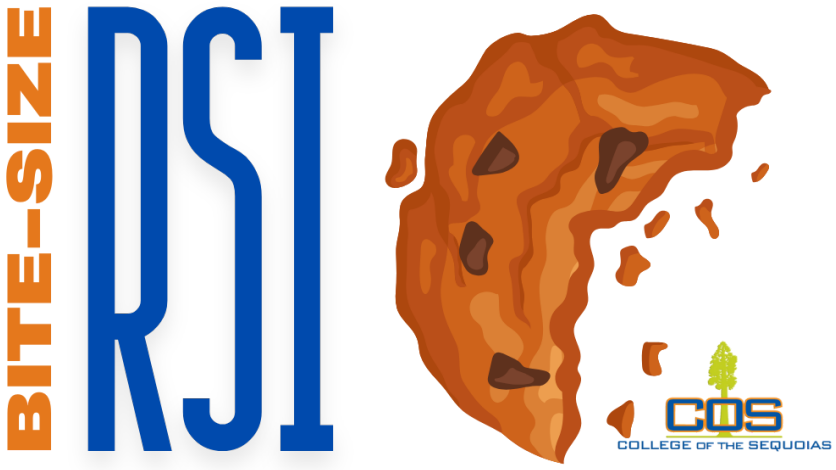
Q: Do I have to reach out to every struggling student? Or notice every missing assignment? That's overwhelming…

A: I agree, and no, you don't need to contact every student about every missed assignment or suboptimal score. The baseline expectation is that you do this minimally, and the more frequently you do so the better. A student should not fail a class or struggle for 18 weeks without ever getting noticed, or getting help from their teacher. Occasional engagement with them is required, and frequent engagement is better. We know that it often takes a lot to ask for help, so it's our job to respond when they ask for it, but also to offer it proactively. We should *always* be responding to students who contact us directly for help.

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Bite #7: Using Third-Party Software to Teach Your Class



Teachers use all kinds of fun instructional tools, apps, and software that simplify or enhance our online teaching. Some of us create social media accounts to take questions and stay connected to students, some have adopted apps like Discord to host live discussions, and some use publisher-managed systems that match up with our adopted textbook. These kinds of tools and off-Canvas apps can be awesome!

The only caveat is that we need to be able to visibly demonstrate our interaction with our students, and not all external tools allow for that. There isn't an easy answer here. No one wants to constrain what kinds of tools faculty use for communication if the tools are working, just for the sake of observability by an accreditation team. Since these pilot rubrics *are* being used for our review however, we have to talk about how we navigate this expectation...

Since there isn't a single institutional tool that we all use, here's your DE Coordinator's best advice: If you use a third party software like Connect4Education, MyLab, SIMnet, CISCO, or any other platform that takes teaching and learning *off* of Canvas, your interaction might not be accessible to the accreditation team, especially if a username

and password are needed to access the platform. If the only way to access your interactions with your students is through a username and password, explore whether or not the platform or learning management system (LMS) you use offers observer/admin/reviewer access, and see about setting that up if so. Many platforms offer this feature now for this reason!

If you use a third-party platform or LMS for a majority of your interaction, consider including in the syllabus, orientation materials, and in weekly announcements some kind of information about where RSI is occurring. For example, posting a class-wide announcement that tells students “Visit Platform Name to see the detailed feedback provided on last week’s exam,” or including in the syllabus that “Grades and feedback will be accessed on Platform Name on a weekly basis by going to navigation details. This might serve as kind of proxy for seeing your actual RSI for reviewers, and is probably a good practice anyway.

A common question...

Q: My course section relies on a third-party vendor that automatically grades my students’ quizzes and tests. Does providing these grades count as substantive interaction?

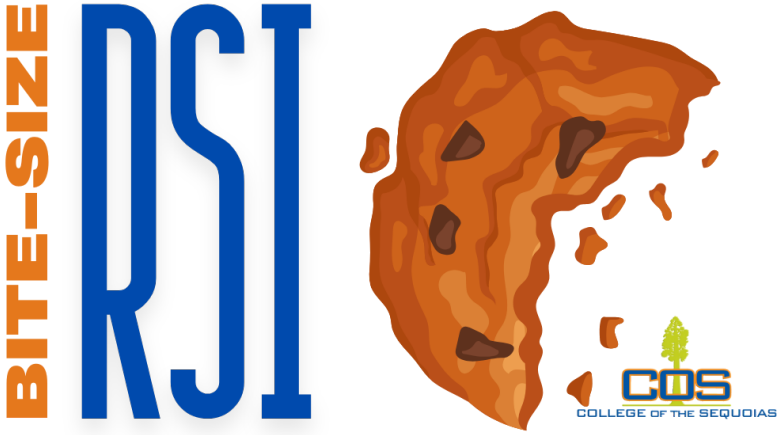
A: No, per the Department of Education, “a grade on an assignment alone does not qualify as substantive interaction” unless the instructor evaluates the student’s work and provides specific feedback to the student about that work. The Department specifically notes, “an automated grading system that provides feedback based on a programmed response to input does not count as ‘substantive’ because it is interaction with a computer, not an instructor."

Remember, Bite #2 said that we must provide non-automated feedback *in addition* to grades. So if your third-party platform auto-grades or provides pre-filled feedback to students, even if that pre-filled feedback is of your own writing, make sure you are also communicating with your students individually.

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Bite #8: Interaction Should be Obvious



The final piece of RSI advice is this: ***make it visible***. A new student entering the course on the first week of the term should have no difficulty finding things like the communication policy and syllabus, feedback on earned grades, weekly instructional videos and/or interactive content, and places for interaction like discussion boards or online office hours. It should be very clear where you make contact with your students throughout the semester to provide substantive support, be that in Announcements, SpeedGrader, Canvas Inbox, or another tool. Even those of us that exclusively use email or another contact method can indicate it clearly within the course like within the communication policy, orientation modules, the "Welcome" announcement, or another place. **It should be very apparent that you were consistently present and ready to engage with students frequently and regularly throughout the duration of the semester.** One should not have to be an expert-level navigator of Canvas to locate evidence of a your presence in your online class.

Now what?

Review your own online course from this perspective – that of a first time visitor looking to find the teacher in the course, and incorporate small improvements wherever it makes sense to do so at this point in the semester. Writing feedback on 8-week old assignments probably won't be useful, but posting an Announcement about things to watch for in the last weeks of the semester is! Creating discussions boards in concluded modules is not useful, but making a note about where you'd like to include them for next time you teach this course would be great.

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★ RSI - Lil' Quiz

Points: 5.0

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Additional Resources and Support is not currently supported

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COS Course Design Rubric, Section B: Interaction

This page is an example of how we can share a file alongside context! Rather than just adding the file to the Module so it opens on it's own, I'm embedding it here instead, so I can write a message that lets you know how to use it, why it's important, what to do with it moving forward, etc.

Review the Rubric: Interaction

Your DE Course Shell will be evaluated at the end of OCTA using the full version of the COS Course Design Rubric. I've extracted the section below from the full rubric so you can focus in on some of the areas related to the content we covered in this module. You might also notice some things that we've covered in other modules and things we haven't covered too thoroughly just yet. Don't worry, by the time your course is ready to submit, you will have had exposure and practice with everything on this rubric.

I recommend getting familiar with this rubric and referencing it frequently as you build out your Shell to ensure you are Aligning with all of the areas. **Your course must be fully Aligned to receive DE Certification at the end of OCTA.**

Have questions or concerns? Send me a Canvas message to visit me in my office hours Mondays from 3-4 PM and Thursdays from 11-12 PM!

File COS POCR-Course Design Rubric-Section B.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

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Community and Communication Q&A

Questions about Humanizing, Interaction, or about OCTA so far?

Click the "Reply" button to ask course-related or "how do I do this?" questions.



Along your journey, you may want to ask me or your colleagues about a topic, get some additional thoughts about an online teaching strategy or challenge, or you may just need some clarification about an aspect of the class. If so, jump in and ask it here! If it is a question about one of the content pages and/or assignments, please be sure to identify the location of the page as thoroughly as possible so we may troubleshoot promptly (providing a URL is ideal!)

Successful teaching and learning require a village in any modality Any participant is welcome and encouraged to respond to discussion posts. If you know an answer or have a resource to contribute, jump in and help out a friend!

If you have a personal question or concern about the class that you'd like to speak with me about, please Canvas message me directly.

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End of Module 3 - Recap

Unit Objectives (...did we make it?!)

By now, you should be able to:

Explain how your course will achieve the regular substantive interaction requirement as per Title 5;
Create course assessments, activities, and touchpoints that encourage student participation and contact;
Use a variety of communication tools, both within and external to Canvas, to support student success;

How's that DE Course Shell looking?

Through completing this unit, you have should have created a Welcome Letter, three pre-scheduled Announcements, and a Discussion Board with clear participation guidelines. If you haven't already, add those to your DE Shell. Consider adding a grading rubric to your Discussion Board to simplify and standardize your grading process!

How do I add a rubric to a graded discussion?

You should also be populating your DE Shell with the planned content (placeholders are OK for now!) that you planned out in your Course Road Map. At the end of OCTA, you will submit a fully-developed online course, and little-by-little is the most pain-free path to completing that!

The next module is going to focus on the creation and curation of instructional content.

Go back to the Modules, or click Next to complete a Mid-Course Check-in.

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Feedback Survey

1. ★ OCTA Feedback Survey

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★ OCTA Feedback Survey

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey.

Your responses will submit anonymously and will be kept confidential. We are early enough in the course that if there is something that is preventing you from being successful, I'd like to change it.

We will make a mid-semester survey for your own online classes in the next module.

In my courses, I like to offer this to my students twice - at Week 6 and Week 12, to allow time for any adjustments to be made to support student success. You can choose to do just one mid-course survey like we are doing in this OCTA course, or more frequently. You might also choose to change which questions you ask at each point.

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Module 4: Creating, Curating, and Organizing Content (Sept. 15-21)

1. Unit 4 Overview
2. Organizing and Directing Traffic
3. Customizing the Course Navigation Menu
4. Estimating Student Workload in an Online Course
5. Using Modules to Organize Instructional Content
6. ★ Naming a Unit - Discussion/Course-building Activity
7. Choosing the Home Page
8. Designing Online Lessons
9. Making Your Own Instructional Videos
10. ★ Create a Video - Course-building Activity
11. Creating Text-based Content
12. Sharing Files? Students Need Context
13. Legally Using the Content of Others
14. Finding Open (Not Copyrighted) Content
15. ★ Using the Content of Others - Lil' Quiz
16. Evaluating External Content
17. Putting the Pieces Together
18. ★ Making Your Course Homepage - Course-building Activity
19. ★ Creating Your Own Course Feedback Survey - Course-building Activity
20. Additional Resources and Support
21. COS Course Design Rubric, Section A: Content Presentation
22. Creating, Curating, and Organizing Content Q&A
23. End of Module 4 - Recap

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Unit 4 Overview



What to Expect in this Unit

The final step in Backward Design is to *Plan Instructional Experiences,* which in our case means to create and share online content. Everything you add to your class should have a purpose and be connected to a unit objective, course objective, or learning outcome.

In this module, we will read about creating original video, including "micro" lectures, and which tools can be used. There is also a page on how to embed content into Canvas, and another on how you can legally use pre-existing content that you didn't make yourself.

Your activities this week are to 1) add a video to your course, 2) create your homepage, 3) create a mid-semester survey for students, and 3) work on creating other online course content.

Unit Objectives

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

choose content that supports the learning outcomes and objectives of your course;
create, caption, and *embed* your own videos in Canvas;
organize instructional content in ways that support student success.

Click Next to move to the next page

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Organizing and Directing Traffic is not currently supported

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Customizing the Course Navigation Menu

Why Customize the Course Navigation Menu?

The Canvas Course Navigation Menu is what your students use to move through your course. By default, it includes a *lot* of links, and not all of them are relevant to every course, and even less of them are relevant to students. Leaving unnecessary links visible can lead to confusion, misdirection, and frustration for students who get lost thinking they are meant to click through them.

When we're deciding what should be included really anywhere in our course, our goal should be to create clear defined pathways for students to access their learning materials and assessments in the ways we intend. Usually, we want students to engage with our learning material, lectures, discussions, and assessments in a particular order. We don't want them starting with the Midterm, for example, before they've learned anything that's on it!

One of the ways we put guardrails on the pathways they're on is by customizing the links they can see on the Course Navigation Menu.

What Should be Visible?

Only the tools and pages your students will *actively use* in your course should appear in the menu. These might include:

Home
Modules
Announcements

Assignments (Don't include this if you plan to route student to their Assignments via Modules!)
Discussions (If students will get to their Discussions by progressing through a module, don't include that link in the Course Nav menu.)
Grades
Syllabus (if you use the Canvas Syllabus tool instead of a content page)
People (only if students need to contact classmates or form groups)

You may want to hide:

Pages, Files, Quizzes, Assignments (if accessed only through Modules)
Outcomes, Conferences, Collaborations, Chat (if not used)

How to Customize the Course Navigation Menu

1. Navigate to your Canvas course.
2. Click Settings at the bottom of the Course Navigation Menu.
3. Select the Navigation tab at the top.
4. Drag and drop items:
   - Move items you use into the top section or select "+ Enable" to make them visible to students.
   - Move unused items into the bottom section or select "+ Disable" to hide them from students.
5. Click Save at the bottom of the page.

Tip

Ask yourself:

"If a student clicks this link, will they find something useful, or will they be confused?" If it's the latter, hide it.

"If a student clicks this link, will be be able to start an assignment without being exposed to the related learning material?" If it's a yes, hide it.

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Estimating Student Workload in an Online Course

How do I know if I'm asking students to do too much/not enough?

In an in-person course, it's pretty easy to figure out how much time students will spend in class and on their homework. But how do we do this online? We don't know how quickly each student reads, or how long they will take to respond to a discussion or complete an exam. Luckily, there is some research out there to help us estimate student workload and time in an online course.

The following model relies on a full-term, 3 unit course at COS requiring 157.5 learning hours to complete. This breaks down to 8-9 hours a week of online work in an 18-week course. This work includes everything students will do and engage with - readings, videos, assignments, discussions, and studying.

Reading (≈20–30% of learning time – ~2 hours)

Students can complete academic reading at ~100–250 words per minute, depending on difficulty and purpose.

Plan for no more than 4,500 words (about 12 pages) of reading if your text is dense and introduces many new concepts. Adjust accordingly if your reading is simpler.

Expect students to spend about 2 hours reading + ~30 min buffer if students are note-taking or re-reading, totaling approximately 2.5 hours a week.



▶ **Infographic Text Description**

This chart shows the estimate time in would take an average college student to complete academic reading.

Students can read anywhere from 65-130 words per minute (wpm) if they are being asked to deeply engage in their reading. The more new concepts they engage with, the slower their reading becomes.

Students can read anywhere from 130-150 wpm if they are being asked to understand it. If they are encountering many new concepts, they will read at about 130 wpm, and if they aren't encountering anything new, they can read at up to 250 wpm.

If students are simply surveying, or speed-reading, they can read anywhere from 250-500 wpm.

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Using Modules to Organize Instructional Content

We've talked about Module briefly in other units in this course. Modules are the foundation for organizing your content and for "directing traffic" so to speak - the path by which you want your students to access their materials and assessments. They allow you to group related materials, assignments, discussions, quizzes, and pages into a logical sequence. For online learners, a well-structured Module layout can make the difference between feeling on top of things or feeling utterly buried.

Why do Modules reign supreme?

Modules are the best way to organize a Canvas course because they provide a structured, student-friendly learning experience that mirrors the logical flow of a well-designed syllabus. Modules basically turn your Canvas course into a guided learning path. Here's why they're considered best practice in online course design:

---

1. Clear Navigation for Students

Modules let students move through content in a predictable, step-by-step order that *you* specify. This helps reduce cognitive overload and confusion—especially for new or first-generation online learners.

Students can easily see what's expected each week and where to find it.

---

2. Centralized Content Delivery

Rather than clicking through multiple tabs (Assignments, Pages, Files, etc.) and checking dates each week to find what they should be looking at, students can access everything — readings, videos, discussions, quizzes, and lectures - in one place, where order of access is specified.

This minimizes the risk of missed instructions or materials.

---

3. Supports Instructional Design

Modules allow you to align content, activities, and assessments around weekly topics, themes, or objectives.

You can organize your course using backward design: start with outcomes, then build a cohesive experience that leads students toward mastery.

---

4. Flexible Control for Faculty

You can:

Set prerequisites so students complete tasks in sequence

Add requirements (e.g., "must submit _____ before accessing this")

Hide future content and release it on a schedule

Easily adjust or update content within the flow of a week or unit

---

5. Streamlines Course Maintenance

Once a module is built, you can copy it, reuse it, or adapt it for future terms. Smarter, not harder... ;)

You can also clearly see what's been published or hidden, making it easy to spot gaps or inconsistencies.

---

6. Students Strongly Prefer It

Feedback from student surveys consistently shows that courses organized by modules are easier to follow, less stressful, and more engaging—especially when each module includes a clear overview and checklist of tasks.

Organizing ...by Week? by Unit? by Season? (jk)

Modules-by-the-Week

Most online instructors choose to organize Modules by week. This structure mirrors the pacing of the semester and makes it easy for students to know what to focus on at any given time. Pssst... *this OCTA course is organized by week.*

A weekly module might include:

A **title** like *"September 15-21: Analyzing Persuasive Techniques"*
An **overview page** describing the week's goals
Assigned **readings** and or **videos**
A **discussion** or **formative assessment/activity**
A **quiz** or other **assignment** (sometimes summative)

Recommended Flow

Within each module, arrange your items in a consistent order. A simple model might look like this:

1. **Overview Page** – outlines learning objectives and tasks
2. **Instructional Content** – readings, videos, or lectures
3. **Interaction** – discussion or collaborative activity
4. **Application** – assignment, quiz, or reflection
5. **Wrap-Up or Summary** – optional review or preview of next week

Modules-by-the-Unit

Another effective strategy is organizing your Modules by unit, theme, or topic. This structure works especially well in courses where the pacing may be flexible or when concepts naturally group together over multiple weeks. Organizing by unit helps emphasize big ideas or course outcomes rather than just time blocks, give students a clear view of the structure of learning (e.g., “Argumentation,” “Critical Thinking,” “Design Principles”), and allow for flexibility in pacing, which is especially useful in late-start or short term courses.

A unit module might cover anywhere from 1-3 weeks of content, and might include:

An **overview page** describing the unit’s purpose and learning outcomes
Readings, videos, and lecture content that introduce and explore the theme
One or more **practice activities** or discussions
A **culminating assessment**—like a project, paper, or quiz—aligned with the unit’s goals
A **wrap-up** page or reflection to transition to the next unit

Just like with weekly modules, arrange your items in a consistent order, allowing plenty of formative assessment and discussion opportunities before a summative assessment is due.

Module Design Tips

Use clear and consistent naming for each item in the module (e.g., “Reading: Article on Equity” instead of “Article #4”)
Use module titles that indicate the content within and the dates students should be accessing it
Add prerequisites or "lock until" dates to control pacing and prevent students from skipping around
How do I add a prerequisite to a module in Canvas?
How do I add requirements to a module?
How do I set a publish date for a Canvas module?
Publish only the content you’re ready to share, and hide or lock future weeks if needed

---

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★ Naming a Unit - Discussion/Course-building Activity

Purpose

Clear, intentional and consistent naming of modules helps students navigate your course more easily, understand what to expect each week, and stay engaged with the content. Rather than using vague labels like "Module 2" or "Week 3," naming your modules with both topic and time frame provides useful context and supports student success, especially in asynchronous online environments.

You will use the naming convention you develop in this exercise to name your modules as you build out your DE Shell.

Prompt

Initial Post by Wednesday 11:59 PM

In your initial post, please do the following:

1. Briefly describe the content of one of your course modules (e.g., what concepts, skills, or assignments it covers). *Consider using this as an opportunity to write your Module Overview in student-centered language.*
2. Create a module name that reflects both the subject and the time frame (e.g., “August 12-19: Argument Strategies in Persuasive Writing” or “Unit 4, Week 4 – Cell Division & Mitosis”). Choose a naming convention that you can stick to with consistency throughout your course. The more predictable our organization

is, the lower the cognitive load on students, and the better students can settle into it and orient themselves each week.
3. Explain why this naming convention supports students in their learning, navigation, or something else.

Peer Response by Sunday 11:59 PM

Then, respond to at least one peer by:

Offering ideas to improve or clarify their module title
Asking clarifying questions to deepen their thinking
Sharing how you handle naming conventions in your own course
Suggesting ways to create more consistency, if needed

Criteria for Success

Your participation in this discussion will be considered successful if the following criteria are met:

1. **Initial Post c**learly describes the content and purpose of one module in the course, proposes a thoughtful module name that includes both topic and time frame, and demonstrates awareness of how naming conventions impact student navigation and engagement
2. **At least one meaningful response to a peer o**ffers constructive feedback or suggestions to clarify or strengthen their module name and contributes to the conversation in a way that deepens shared understanding or supports consistency in naming practices. Uses a tone that is supportive, collegial, and focused on improving practice.

You will need to post your initial reply before you will be able to see your colleague's responses.

Due at: Sep 22 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 5.0

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Choosing the Home Page

Note: this page appears twice in our course.

The Home page is the landing page for your online course.

This is the page students will first see when they open your course. Having a clear and organized Home page is really important as we try to "direct traffic" in the first few weeks of the course. A Home page should be welcoming, clearly organized, visually interesting, clearly indicate a "Start Here" point, and act as a comfortable home base from which to navigate out.

You can select the page that will appear as your Home page from several options.

Home Page Options

"Pages" Front Page (recommended)

Benefits:

Custom Welcome and Orientation. You can provide a *welcome message*, *instructor photo*, *contact info*, and *clear "Start Here" guidance*—critical for online student success. Sets the tone and establishes a human presence from the start.
Centralized Navigation Hub. Include buttons or links to important areas like:
Weekly modules
Syllabus

Tech help
Office hours
Announcements
Prevents students from having to dig through multiple menus.
Supports RSI and Accreditation Best Practices. A thoughtfully designed front page encourages *regular and substantive interaction (RSI)* and demonstrates clear teaching presence—aligned with *Title 5*, *ACCJC*, and *RSI* requirements.
Visual Appeal and Branding. You can include graphics, icons, layout formatting, and school/program branding to make the course feel professional and engaging. Encourages a *consistent and welcoming first impression*.
Tailored to Student Needs. You control *what's emphasized* (not just what's most recent), helping students focus on what's important or urgent.

Drawbacks:

Requires Manual Setup and Maintenance. You have to *create and update* it yourself—this includes changing dates, updating links, and checking for broken buttons. If you copy a course forward, links may break or go out of date.
Not Automatically Updated. New announcements, assignments, or due dates *don't show up unless you link or embed them* manually or guide students to check the appropriate area.
Can Be Overdesigned or Overwhelming. If packed with too many buttons, links, or decorative elements, it can confuse students rather than help them. Needs to be *accessible (WCAG-compliant)* and mobile-friendly for students with varying devices.
Doesn't Show Recent Activity. Unlike the Course Activity Stream, it doesn't provide a quick glance at what's newly posted—students must look elsewhere for updates unless you clearly direct them.
Learning Curve for Faculty. Some instructors may need guidance or templates to create accessible, well-organized pages—particularly those new to Canvas or instructional design.

Best Practices for Using a Pages Front Page

Recommendations

Include:	Keep it:
Welcome message + photo "Start Here" or Week 1 button Clear links to syllabus and modules Office hours/contact info Optional embedded video (captioned!)	Simple Mobile-friendly Updated regularly ADA/WCAG 2.0 compliant

---

Modules as the Front Page

Benefits:

Clear Course Structure. Presents content in *logical, sequential units* (e.g., Week 1, Week 2, Unit 1, Unit 2), helping students stay on track. Reduces confusion about “where to start” and “what to do next.”

One-Click Access to All Key Materials. Students can easily access:

Pages
Assignments
Discussions
Quizzes
External tools (like PlayPosit, Google Docs, or Zoom)

Keeps all related resources in one place without needing to click around.

Supports Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI). Encourages the instructor to build out structured, consistent interaction opportunities (announcements, check-ins, graded discussions, feedback loops) within each module.

Mobile-Friendly and Accessible. Modules are responsive and work well across devices. Canvas' accessibility tools support module navigation for screen readers and assistive tech.
Familiar and Intuitive for Students. Especially helpful for dual enrollment, first-gen, or adult learners who benefit from consistency and clarity. Mirrors the navigation in many other Canvas courses, which reduces cognitive load.
Requires Minimal Orientation. If designed clearly, students can often begin immediately by opening the first module without needing a lengthy tutorial.

Drawbacks

Not Very Welcoming. Lacks a *personalized welcome*, instructor photo, or human touch unless those elements are included inside a "Start Here" module.
No Visual Design or Custom Layout. You can't change fonts, colors, or add visual flair—it's a utilitarian list of links. This may make the course feel sterile or uninviting without additional effort.
Not Ideal for Self-Paced or Open Exploration Courses. If your course is exploratory, non-linear, or student-directed, modules may feel too rigid or restrictive.
Can Be Overwhelming if Not Chunked Thoughtfully. If too much content is dumped into one giant module, or if items are poorly named, students may struggle to find what they need. Effective use requires thoughtful *labeling*, *chunking*, and *naming conventions*.
Assumes Students Understand Canvas Modules. Students new to Canvas may not immediately understand how to use module navigation unless guided.

Best Practices for Using Modules as the Front Page

Recommendations

Include:	Keep it:
“Start Here”, Orientation, or Welcome Module” at the top Overview pages and due date summaries in each module Instructions and regular reminders for interaction (e.g., discussion posts, Zoom links, feedback expectations) Module prerequisites and requirements to guide student progress	Consistent and predictable Organization: Modules should follow a similar structure each week. Naming: Follow a similar naming onvention for each week/unit/module.

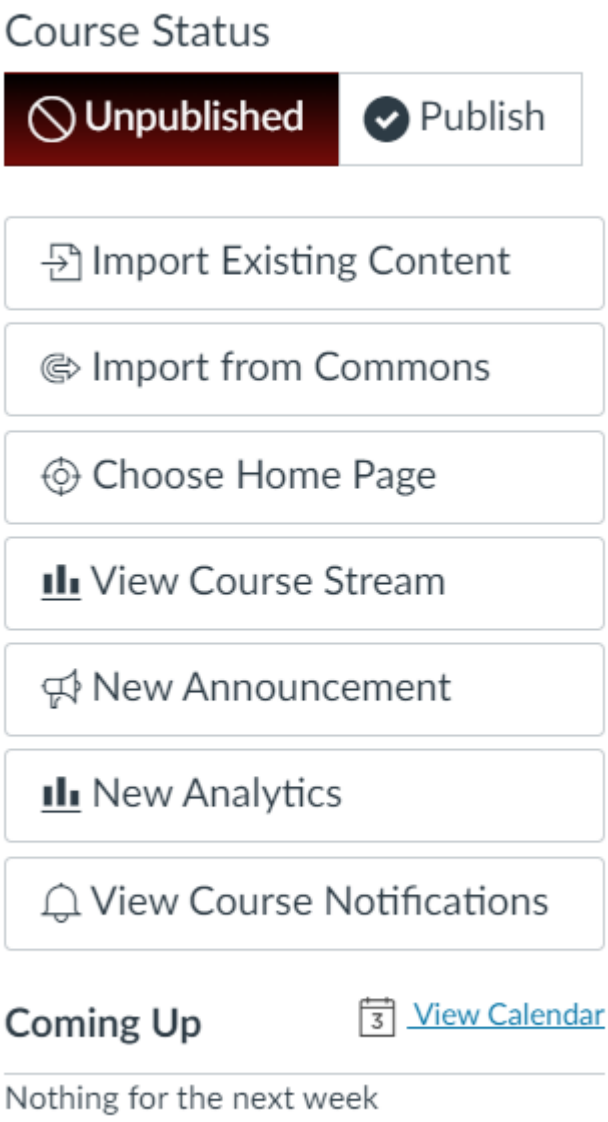
Other Options NOT Recommended

Avoid:

Course Activity Stream	Assignments List	Syllabus Page
Lacks a welcome message or orientation content Doesn’t support structured navigation or a “Start Here” path Not customizable—auto-generated feed only	No welcome message or course orientation Lacks context for assignments (why, when, how) Displays tasks out of instructional sequence	May lack a welcoming, student-centered introduction Often feels formal or static — more policy than guidance Doesn’t provide clear “Start Here” directions

Emphasizes recency over importance or sequence Can overwhelm or confuse students unfamiliar with Canvas Misses opportunities for instructor presence and engagement Doesn't align well with RSI or accreditation best practices	Doesn't guide students through learning activities or content Overemphasizes grading and deadlines over learning process or community Can feel overwhelming or transactional Offers no instructor presence or engagement cues	May overwhelm students with too much info at once (like SLOs, COs, etc.)

Selecting the Home Page



When you first open a new course, you will see a short menu on the right side of that initial landing page. From that menu, you can select which page from your course you want to appear as the Home page. You can select the Course Activity Stream, "Pages" Front Page, Course Modules, Assignment List, or syllabus as your Home landing page. Read more below for a key on what each of these elements do.

You don't need to do this first thing when you get into your new blank course. I often wait to set the home page until more content pages have been created and I have a sense of how I want students to navigate the course, and what I want to show them first.

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Designing Online Lessons is not currently supported

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Making Your Own Instructional Videos

Online Instruction ≠ In-Person Instruction

When you're planning instructional content for your online course, resist the urge to mimic your in-person lectures. Students take online classes because of the flexibility - they won't necessarily have an uninterrupted 75-90 minutes to sit and watch a lengthy lecture. And, calling back to our module on assessment, remember that we're designing learning experience that offer the "learn a little, practice a little, learn a little, practice a little" format.

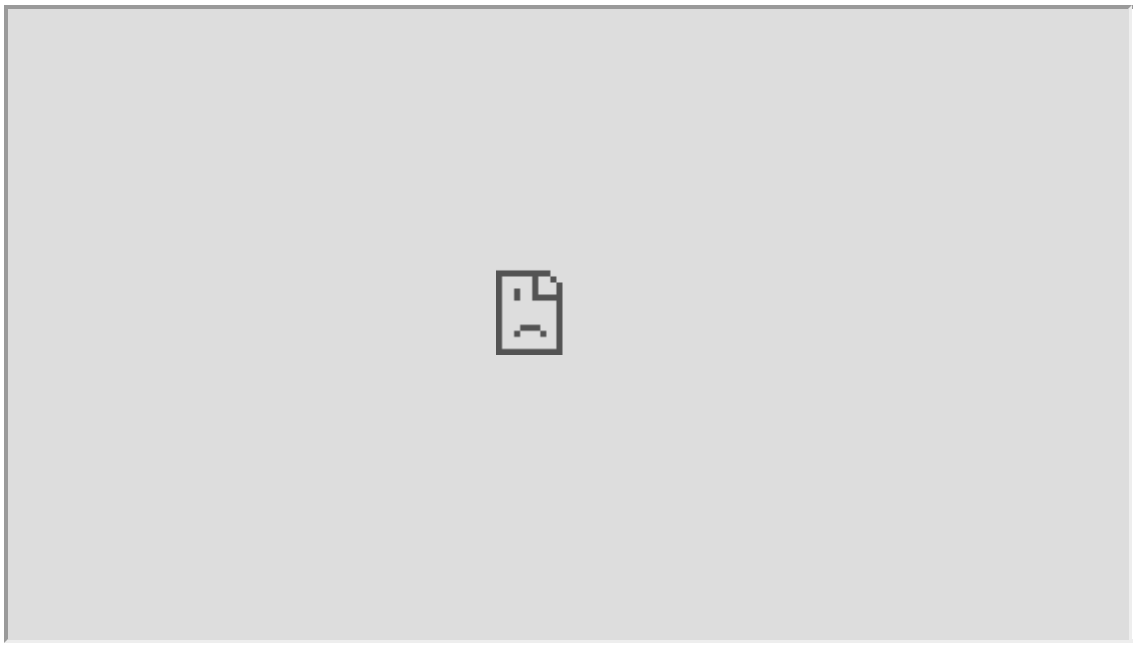
Tips for Videos

Humanizing Videos

New and seasoned online instructors often lament to me the number of times they have to record the same video to get it perfect. ***STOP!***

Your humanity is an asset! Don't lose it (or the hours in your day) by over-polishing your videos. Interrupted by a knock at your door? Say "There's someone at my door - be right back!" and pause the recording. Come back, sit down, and get going again. Bonus points if you tell the students what the interruption was - "My mom just dropped by unannounced! She must have known I needed a break..." or "My slippers from Amazon just arrived! OK, back to the topic of visual focal points..." These interruptions and imperfections are deeply human and relatable to students. They are often the things that get the best feedback in my online course surveys.

Watch this short video (just 3 minutes) by Karen Costa, author of *99 Tips for Creating Simple and Sustainable Educational Videos.*



These can be screencast-style videos (where you are sharing your screen while narrating it) or "talking head" videos, where it records only your face as you explain the topic (like in Karen's video above. Each have their pros and cons. For example, I use screen casting when I want students to be taking notes, and "talking head"-style when I'm trying to connect (humanize), or talk about something related to the class-flow.

If you'd like to review Karen's other tips (there are 99!), check out her YouTube playlist.

Micro-lecturing

Rather than sitting down for a 90 minute lecture, consider "micro-lecturing." A *micro-lecture* is a short recorded audio or video presentation on a single, tightly defined topic - maybe covering 1-3 slides of your 22-slide Powerpoint. The Association of College

and University Educators recommends actually recommends using videos of no more than 5-7 minutes to "encourage a self-directed model of learning, allowing students to select lessons to watch and to move through them at their own pace" (ACUE, 2020).

There is also research to back this up that gives us interesting insight into student behavior when it comes to our videos. Consider the following highlights from Brame's 2017 lit review on effective educational videos (a *fascinating* read):

"**the median engagement time for videos less than 6 minutes long was close to 100%**–that is, students tended to watch the whole video (although there are significant outliers; see the paper for more complete information)."
"As videos lengthened ... student engagement dropped, such that the **median engagement time with 9- to 12-minute videos was ~50%**, and **the median engagement time with 12- to 40-minute videos was ~20%**."
"the maximum median engagement time for a video *of any length* was 6 minutes. **Making videos longer than 6–9 minutes is therefore likely to be wasted effort.**

This data isn't based on a small sample either... it is based on 6.9 *million* video-watching sessions.

It seems pretty clear that the micro-lecture is the way to go.

Make Your Videos Reusable

Avoid mentioning specific dates or page numbers/chapters. Use things like "later in the semester" to keep your video reusable from Fall to Spring, or "on your upcoming assignment" to allow you to switch the assignment from semester to semester.

Creating a Video

I recommend using Canvas Studio to record, host, and embed your videos. Canvas Studio is the integrated video platform within Canvas for you to create, upload, edit, and share videos in your course. It offers tools for recording, screen-casting, captioning, and viewing analytics, and helps engage students with multimedia content that's easy to make accessible.

Where to find Canvas Studio

Canvas Studio is located in the Global Navigation Menu on the far left of your Canvas screen. You can also access it directly from the Rich Content Editor while creating Pages, Assignments, or Discussions, or from the *Studio* link in the course navigation menu (if you've enabled it). However you get there, when you click into *Studio,* you'll be taken to your personal media library. From there, you can:

Upload existing videos you've recorded elsewhere
Record brand new videos or screen captures
Organize your media content into folders and collections
Edit and manage the accuracy of your auto-captions
Share videos across multiple courses

Recording and Uploading Options

Studio offers multiple ways to get video content into your course:

Record from your webcam or screen using the built-in screen recorder
Screencast with voiceover only, for tutorials or demonstrations
Upload videos from your computer
Import YouTube videos (YouTube videos stay hosted on YouTube, but can be embedded so viewing can be tracked from Studio)

> Once uploaded, Studio videos can be edited, captioned, and reused across your courses. It's a simple way to host all of your content in Canvas, and prevent links from becoming "dead" or broken after a few semesters.

Captioning Content in Studio

> Studio will generate automatic captions, but they're never perfect. They will often misinterpret slang, acronyms, phrases in other languages, or discipline-specific jargon.

> ***You must always check auto-captions for accuracy, and edit them to ensure they are correct***.
>
> This can be time-consuming for newly created content, but once it's done, you can use the video for semesters ahead, knowing it is perfect and accurate. **This just one of those things about teaching online**: we don't have to deliver the same lecture 3 times in a day, we just have to do it once every few semesters, and the tradeoff is that we spend a few hours checking captions.

To check your captions for accuracy:

1. Open the video in Studio and click “Captions”.
2. Select the language and request automatic captions.
- This is *very* important if you are recording a video in a language other than English. Studio defaults to "listening" in English, so if you are speaking Spanish or French, the captions will be a total disaster.
3. After captions are generated, click “Edit” to review them, and correct any errors.
4. Save and publish the corrected captions.

Caption editing is tedious but essential — ***an inaccurately captioned video is an ADA violation.***

Sharing Videos with Students

You can share Studio videos in several ways:

Embed them into Pages, Assignments, Announcements, or Discussions using the Studio button from the Rich Content/Text Editor
From your Studio library:

1. Click the 3 dots to the right of the video
2. Click "Share Media" "Links" copy the embed code, and paste it into the Rich Text Editor using the / button at the bottom.

Copy the link from the Share Links window, and create a clickable link on a content page or paste it into an email, Announcement, or Message.

Studio videos include viewing analytics so you can see which students have watched your content and how much of it they viewed. Enable student comments on videos to encourage engagement and feedback!

Click Next to move to the next page

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★ Create a Video - Course-building Activity

Purpose

This assignment will help you practice using Canvas Studio to create and share video content in your course. Studio is a great Canvas-integrated tool for humanizing, supporting engagement, and delivering content in an accessible, student-friendly format. After completing this assignment, you will be able to:

create, caption, and *embed* your own videos in Canvas

Task

Create a short (3–5 minute) original video using Canvas Studio. You can record the video directly in Studio or upload it into Studio after recording with another tool.

Your video should take one of the following formats:

A micro-lecture that explains a concept, skill, or key topic in your course
A self-introduction or course tour to welcome students and/or orients them to your class
Another relevant format that supports humanizing, course navigation, or content-related instruction

Once your video is complete:

1. Embed it into a Page, Discussion Board, or Announcement in your DE Course Shell

2. Ensure the video includes accurate captions (you can edit auto-captions in Studio - There's a step-by-step guide below...)
3. Submit a URL link to the page in your DE Shell where the video appears

---

Captioning in Studio: A Step-by-Step Guide

Accurately captioning your Canvas Studio videos ensures accessibility and supports all learners. Follow these steps to review and edit captions directly in Studio.

1. **Go to Canvas Studio**
   Click Studio from the global navigation menu (far left of Canvas).
2. **Find Your Video**
   In your Studio library, locate the video you want to caption. Hover over the video and click “View” or the video title to open it.
3. **Request Captions**
   Click the “Captions” tab beneath the video.
   Select your language (e.g., English).
   Generate automatic captions.
4. **Wait for Processing**
   It may take a few minutes. The status will change from “Pending” to “Available.”
5. **Review and Edit Captions**
   Click the “Edit” button next to the caption file.
   Correct errors in the text boxes (e.g., names, terms, punctuation).
6. **Save Your Changes**
   Click “Publish” to apply the edited captions to your video.

Tips for Captioning Success:

Use proper punctuation and spelling to improve screen reader accuracy.
Include speaker cues if there are multiple speakers in a video, and only when needed (e.g., [Instructor], [Student]).

Criteria for Success

Expectations for Canvas Studio Video Assignment

Element	Description
Canvas Studio Video	Video is 3–5 minutes long and created or hosted in Canvas Studio
Captions	Captions are included (edited for accuracy)
Relevance	Video format supports humanizing, navigation, or instruction

Need Canvas Help?

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I submit a link as an assignment submission?
How do I upload a file as an assignment submission in Canvas?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Sep 22 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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Creating Text-based Content

Note: This content page is a great example of what we're learning here. There isn't too much, bullets and boldface text are used, Headings are in use, and accessible color is in use. It provides a lot of information, but it doesn't feel overwhelming (I hope.)

Writing the Reading

In online courses, written content is one of the main ways students interact with both the subject and the instructor. Whether you're building a Canvas Page, writing a weekly announcement or drafting assignment guidelines, it's important to communicate in a way that's clear, inclusive, and accessible.

Clarity is Key

Clear writing reduces confusion and supports everyone, but especially those navigating college systems for the first time, managing multiple responsibilities, or learning in a second language.

Tips for clarity:

Use plain language, and avoid jargon or overly complex sentence structures.

Instead of: “Students will demonstrate comprehension of course materials via a critical discourse analysis.” (*HUH?!*)

Try: “You’ll show your understanding of this week's reading by completing an analysis of the language used." (*OHH!)*

Use short paragraphs and bullets. Break down content into readable chunks.

Define expectations explicitly. Use direct, student-friendly phrasing: “You will…” or “In this assignment, you should…”

Write Inclusively

Inclusive language signals to students that your course is welcoming, respectful, and designed for diverse learners - for *them.*

Tips for inclusive writing:

Use “you” and “we” to build connection. (E.g., “In this module, you’ll explore…” instead of “Students will explore…”)

Avoid assumptions about background knowledge, culture, gender, ability, or identity.

Use gender-inclusive language. Say “they” instead of “he/she,” and avoid unnecessarily gendered examples.

Represent diverse voices. If you use examples, case studies, or quotations, choose a range of identities and perspectives.

Format for Readability

How content *looks* can impact how easily students understand it.

Best practices:

Use **Headings** (Heading 2 and Heading 3 in the Rich Content Editor) to create structure. Consider this course, and how the content on each page is broken into small chunks under a clear hierarchy of headings.

Use **bold or bullets** to highlight key points — not all caps.

Avoid underlining (it looks like a link).

Prioritize Accessibility over Accommodation

We'll get more into the difference between accessibility and accommodation in the next module, but for now, know that any and all text in the course should be easy to follow for all users, especially those using a screen reader.

Tips for ensuring accessibility:

Use proper **Heading styles** for structure (not just bold text).

Avoid color as the *only* way to convey meaning. (Screen readers don't identify color for their user. So if "everything marked in red is on the Final," your screen reader user will not be able to access that important information!)

Use **alt text** for any images you include (more on this to come!)

Run the **Canvas Accessibility Checker** before publishing.
accessibility checker icon

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Sharing Files? Students Need Context

Adding Files to Canvas Units

When building your online units/modules, it's important to go beyond simply uploading content to it and calling it a day. Students need context and **c**lear instructions to stay engaged and succeed. One of the most common missteps in Canvas is uploading a file directly into a module without any explanation or support.

What NOT To Do

Uploading a file like a PDF, Word document, or PowerPoint directly into a module may seem quick and easy, but it leaves students guessing:

Why should I open this file?
How does it connect to the lesson or assignment?
Am I supposed to read it, take notes, or complete something?

This method provides no guidance, and it can create confusion, especially for students in asynchronous courses who rely on structure and instructions.

Additionally, it is an accreditation requirement that we provide mediation for content in our courses. Imagine passing out a worksheet or reading in an in-person class, totally wordlessly, and then leaving the room. Weird, right? You need to explain what it is and what they should do with it, to avoid being a total weirdo.

What TO Do Instead

The recommended approach is to create a Content Page in the module and then attach or link the file within that page. This allows you to:

Explain what the file is and why it matters
Tell students how to engage with it (e.g., read before next class, take notes, use as a reference)
Connect the file to a skill, concept, or upcoming assignment

Here's how to do it:

1. Go to your module and click + to add a new item.
2. Choose Page and select [New Page], then give it a descriptive name.
3. In the Rich Content Editor, write a brief explanation:

   What is this document?

   Why are students reading or viewing it?

   How should they engage with it (e.g., annotate, reference, summarize)?
4. Upload or link the file at the bottom of the page or next to your instructions.
5. Click Save and Publish.

Here's an Example from the OCTA course:

Content page: COS Course Design Rubric, Section C: Assessment

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Legally Using the Content of Others

Copyright, Fair Use, and the TEACH Act

As online instructors, it’s common to include external materials like videos, articles, images, charts, and more in our courses. But when you're teaching in an online environment, it's essential to understand that there are rules guiding the use of copyrighted content.

Copyright: The Starting Point

Copyright protects original works that exist in a fixed medium - books, articles, music, videos, films, images, websites, and more. If something is copyrighted, you typically need permission to reuse it, unless your use qualifies as Fair Use, the work is openly licensed to allow for reproduction and reuse (such as through Creative Commons), or it falls under an educational exception like the TEACH Act.

Key takeaway:

Just because something is accessible via the internet does *not* mean it’s free to use in your course.

Fair Use: A Flexible, Content-Based Exception

Fair Use allows limited use of copyrighted material without permission *under specific conditions*. And it's not a rule — it's a legal defense! The viability of this defense is based on four factors:

1. *Purpose of the use* (educational vs. commercial, transformative vs. copied)
2. *Nature of the work* (factual works are more likely to be fair use than creative works)
3. *Amount used* (smaller portions weigh in your favor)
4. *Effect on the market* (if your use harms the original market , it may not be fair use)

You may rely on Fair Use if, for example, you share a short excerpt of a book or an image for analysis—but you must do so thoughtfully and intentionally.

If you are sharing photocopies of a textbook so students don't have to buy it, this harms the original market by eliminating those potential sales.

Key takeaway:

You might be able to get away with using copyright materials if your use meets all 4 factors.

Consider including a Fair Use statement to your syllabus if you'll rely on this defense.

The TEACH Act: Special Rules for Distance Education

The **TEACH Act** is a specific law that expands what can be shared in online, nonprofit educational settings, including learning management systems like Canvas. It applies only when *very* specific conditions are met, such as:

The course is password-protected and only accessible to enrolled students

The material is used as part of mediated instructional activities

The instructor is the one sharing the content (not students)

The material is legally acquired (no pirated copies)

Reasonable efforts are made to prevent unauthorized redistribution

Scenarios under the TEACH Act

◍ Scenarios the TEACH Act would allow ◍	⃠ Scenarios the TEACH Act would *not* allow ⃠
Scenario 1: Streaming a Movie Clip in a Film Studies Class You're teaching an online film studies course and want to show a **3-minute scene** from a legally purchased DVD. You upload the clip to Canvas and embed it in a lesson.	**Scenario 4: Uploading a Full Film for Asynchronous Viewing** You want students in a literature class to watch a full movie adaptation of a novel, so you upload the entire film to Canvas as a downloadable MP4 file. ✕ **NO** — The TEACH Act doesn't permit full-length dramatic works to be posted in full unless streamed in real

✓ **YES** — It's a portion of a dramatic work used in a password-protected LMS for instructional purposes.

Scenario 2: Showing an Image in an Art History Lecture

You're creating a video lecture that analyzes a painting. You display the image of the painting as you discuss it, and the lecture is hosted in Canvas.

✓ **YES** — Still images and non-dramatic visuals are generally permissible when directly related to the lesson.

Scenario 3: Playing a Full Audio Track for Music Analysis

In a music course, you upload an audio file of a full classical music piece for students to listen to while following a listening guide.

✓ **YES** — Non-dramatic musical works can typically be used in full when time (like during a synchronous session), and never as a downloadable file.

✔ **Recommended Solution:**

Link to the film through the college library streaming service (e.g., Kanopy, Swank) if available.

Encourage students to watch via commercial services they already use (e.g., Netflix, Amazon) with notice ahead of time.

Use short clips (under 3 minutes) and embed them using Canvas Studio with instructional context.

Scenario 5: Posting an Entire Textbook PDF

You have a PDF copy of a commercial textbook and upload it to your Canvas Files for students to access throughout the semester.

✕ **NO** — Uploading entire textbooks or significant excerpts is not covered under the TEACH Act.

✔ **Recommended Solution:**

Link to the eBook through the college library, if available.

integrated into course instruction.	Use legally adopted Open Educational Resources (OER) instead—many high-quality textbooks are freely available with Creative Commons licenses. Share only short excerpts (e.g., a chapter or section), accompanied by a Fair Use rationale.
	Scenario 6: Sharing a YouTube Video Downloaded Illegally You find a movie online via a third-party YouTube uploader and download it to embed in your course. ✕ **NO** — The TEACH Act only applies to legally obtained materials. Illegally uploaded or pirated content is never permitted. ✔ **Recommended Solution:** Link directly to the official version of the video on YouTube or another platform—don't download it. Use YouTube's "embed" feature to safely display the video in Canvas while respecting platform terms. If no legal version is available, consider requesting a library-licensed copy or choosing a different resource.

Scenario 7: Posting Slides with Copyrighted Images from a Textbook

You copy multiple figures and tables directly from a publisher's textbook into your lecture slides and upload the slides into Canvas.

✕ **NO** — Reusing extensive visual content from copyrighted sources is not covered unless permission is granted or Fair Use can be clearly justified.

✔ **Recommended Solution:**

Use visuals that are created by you, openly licensed (e.g., Creative Commons images from Unsplash, Wikimedia Commons, or Pixabay) or licensed through the COS library.

If you *need* to use a specific figure and there is no other alternative (which is almost never), link to it in the textbook or request permission from the publisher.

Include a Fair Use justification if using small portions for commentary or instruction.

So What *Can* I Use?

When selecting external materials, consider the following options:

Material Allowances

Type of Material	What It Means	How to Use
Public Domain	It's not under copyright	Safe to use without restriction
Creative Commons (CC) licensed	You must follow the license terms	Look for CC-BY, CC-BY-NC, etc.
Your Own Work	You created it, you control it	You can use and share freely
Library Licensed Content	Your institution provides access	Link to the material rather than uploading
Fair Use	Use must be limited, educational, transformative	Document your rationale
TEACH Act	Content is shared securely in Canvas under legal guidelines	Applies to *some* copyrighted media

Type of Material	What It Means	How to Use
Permission Granted	You obtained written permission from the creator	Keep a record for your files

Tips for the Wary

When in doubt, **link instead of upload.** Sending students to access the original content is a safe way of avoiding unlawful reproduction of protected content.

Use **openly licensed** or **library resources** over copyrighted materials. Not sure of the license type? Ask a Librarian, your DE Coordinator, or Instructional Designer.

Document your **Fair Use** decisions in case questions do arise.

Use your librarians for guidance.

Click Next to learn about finding and using openly-licensed content.

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Finding Open (Not Copyrighted) Content

Why Use Open Content?

Using open content helps make your course more affordable, inclusive, and adaptable, which are all especially important at the community college. Many community college students struggle to afford textbooks, and Open Educational Resources (OER) eliminate the cost of learning materials, making your course more student-friendly from day one. Open licenses also allow you to adapt materials. You can modify examples, language, or structure to reflect your actual students, your unique tone, and your course learning outcomes... *and* to include diverse voices and perspectives often missing from traditional textbooks, supporting inclusive teaching practices. Open content also has the benefit of being able to be embedded directly into Canvas. There's also a *ton* of OER content out there, with more being created every day.

What's not to like?!

Finding Open Content

It's easier than you think! There was a time when there were one or two good open resources available for only the most highly-enrolled college courses, and switching to OER felt constraining, but that isn't the case anymore. California has invested $115 million dollars to create more open-resourced classes, and the influx of new, high-quality resources is incredible.

Finding OER (Open Educational Resources)

OER are teaching and learning materials that are free to use and legally permitted to be retained, reused, revised, remixed, and redistributed. You can find high-quality, peer-reviewed textbooks and course materials from a ton of different OER repositories.

OER Library Starter Kit:

OER Commons: https://www.oercommons.org
A large digital library of open content, including full courses, modules, textbooks, and assessments.

OpenStax: https://openstax.org
Free, peer-reviewed textbooks on high-enrollment subjects, developed by Rice University.

LibreTexts: https://libretexts.org
A collaborative platform offering textbooks and learning modules in STEM, social sciences, and humanities.

MERLOT: https://www.merlot.org
A curated collection of free and open online teaching, learning, and faculty development services.

Pressbooks Directory: https://pressbooks.directory
Searchable catalog of open textbooks created using Pressbooks. Many include multimedia and interactive elements.

SkillsCommons: https://www.skillscommons.org
OER focused on workforce development and technical education, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor.

... and more on the COS Online Learning Resources OER webpage.

Finding Openly-licensed Images

Gone are the days when we could just Google Image Search, grab the first relevant image, and drop it into our course. Images are subject to copyright just like text is, but many creators choose to license their work under open licenses (like Creative Commons). Always check the license and give proper attribution. The easiest way to avoid copyright issues is to find your images from open image libraries.

Recommended Open Image Libraries:

Unsplash: https://unsplash.com
High-quality photos you can use for free, even commercially. Attribution is appreciated but not required.

Pixabay: https://pixabay.com
Free images and videos with a wide selection. No attribution required, but always double-check licensing on each file.

Pexels: https://www.pexels.com
A library of stock photos and videos under a free-to-use license.

Flickr (Creative Commons section):
https://www.flickr.com/search/?license=4%2C5%2C9%2C10
Use the license filter to search for images marked with Creative Commons licenses. Attribution is required.

Openverse: https://openverse.org
Formerly the Creative Commons search tool, Openverse allows you to search across multiple open image and media repositories.

Noun Project: https://thenounproject.com
Icons and illustrations. Free to use with attribution, or available for a

fee without attribution.

Writing Attributions for Open Content

Whenever you use OER or open images, it's important to credit the creator and follow the license terms. Just because a license allows you to use a creative work does *not* mean that you do not have to credit the creator or note any changes you made, if any. Depending on the license type, you might get free rein to adapt as you like, or you may have restrictions.

A good attribution follows the TASL format:

T = Title

A = Author

S = Source (with a link wherever possible)

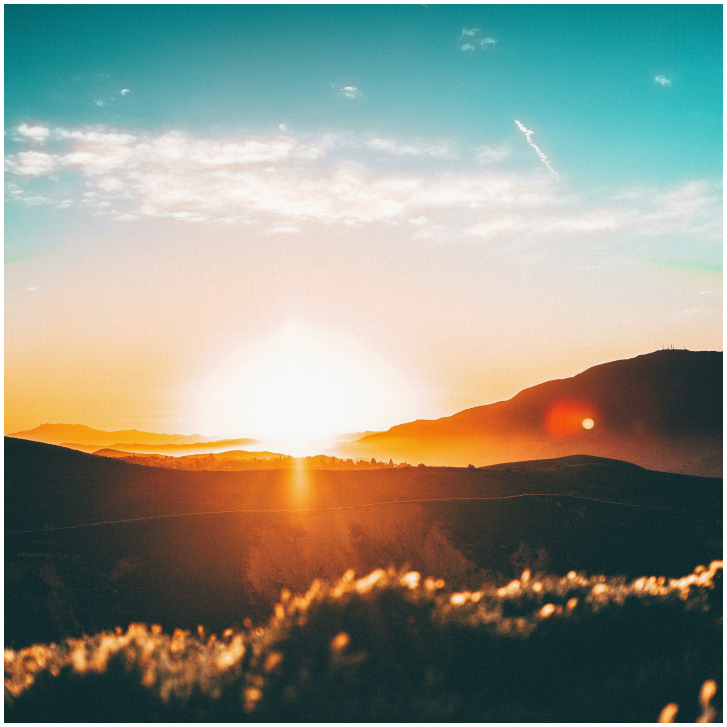
L = License

Example Attribution (for a textbook):

Writing for Success by Tara Horkoff is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Available at https://open.bccampus.ca/find-open-textbooks.

or Writing for Success by Tara Horkoff is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Example Attribution (for an image):



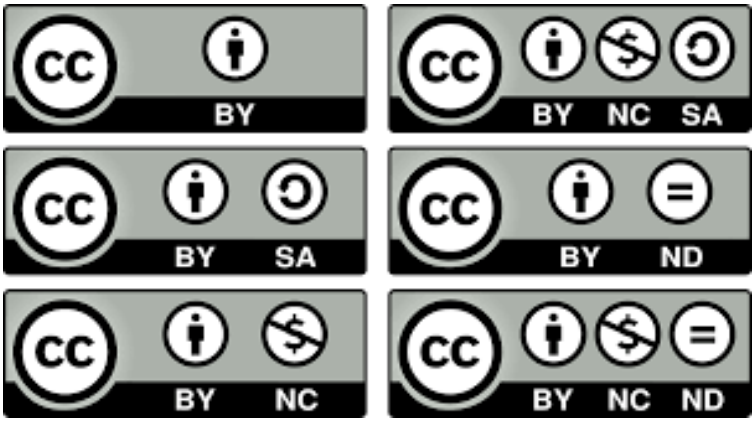
burn bright. by Jordan Wozniak via Unsplash, used under the Unsplash License.

Example Attribution (for a Creative Commons image):



Grizzly half upright by Betty Willis is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

Creative Commons

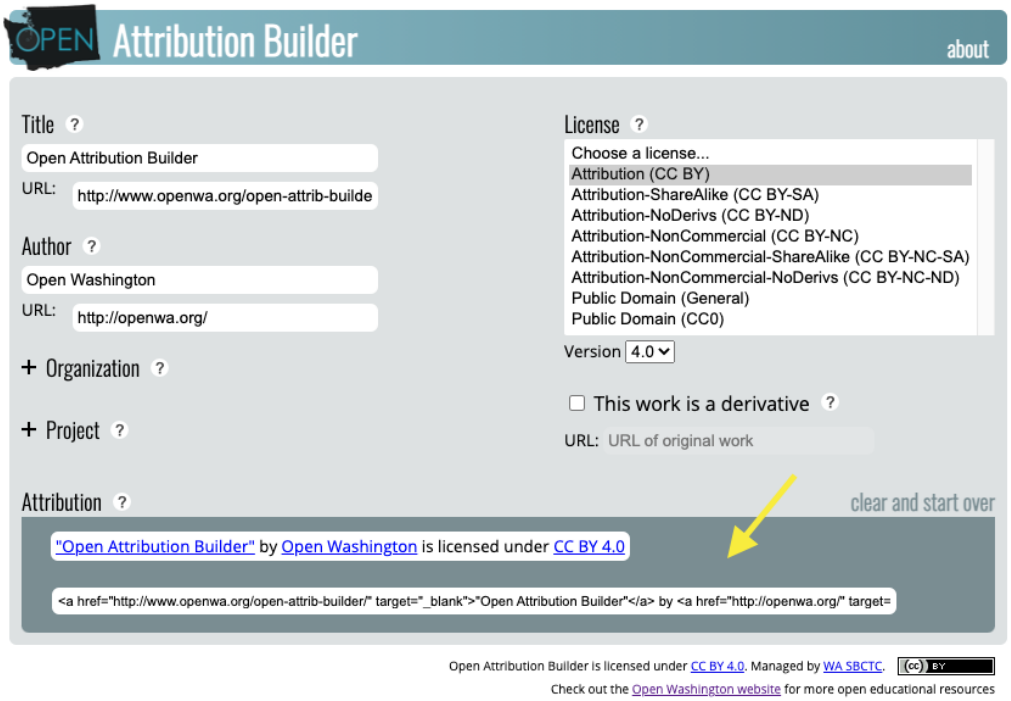


Creative Commons is an American non-profit organization and international network devoted to educational access and expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon legally and to share. There are six CC license types that content creators can use to license their works - each of these licenses covers one of the *5 Rs*: Reuse, Retain, Revise, Remix, and Redistribute (more about these later!)

If you see a Creative Commons license on something, you're welcome to use it in your course, but there may be some limitations depending on the license type. Click on the license-type image above for more info on each license type.

Let's say a work you want top use has a CC BY-NC license type. This means that you can distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only, so long as credit is given to the creator. So how do we give credit?

One great tool for creating attributions is the Open Attribution Builder made by Open Washington. Following the prompts on the page will create an embed code that you can add to your course. Copy the code (starting with the a href part) and paste it into the Canvas HTML editor (How do I use the HTML view in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?)



If the license requires attribution, never skip it, even for free resources. Always double-check usage rights before including media in your course.

Click Next to take a quiz on using the content of others.

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★ Using the Content of Others - Lil' Quiz

Due at: Sep 15 at 12am

Points: 4.0

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Evaluating External Content

Checking for Accuracy, Relevance, Accessibility, and Bias

When curating instructional materials for your online course, like articles, videos, websites, and case studies, it's important to evaluate quality and appropriateness to the course. Not all online content meets the standards we want to model for students. There are four key lenses to use when selecting external resources: **accuracy, relevance, accessibility,** and **bias.**

Accuracy

Is the information factually correct and up to date?
Are the sources cited or verifiable?
Is the author or organization reputable in the subject area?
Avoid content that includes misinformation, broken logic, or outdated statistics.

Relevance

Does the content directly support your course outcomes or weekly objectives?
Is the reading or video the appropriate length, depth, and complexity for your students?
Will this help students meet an assessment or participate in a meaningful discussion?
Is it current, or does it need a modern example or update to feel relevant?

Accessibility

Is the content usable by all students, including those using screen readers or other assistive technology?
Does the video include accurate captions or a transcript?
Are PDFs or documents tagged for screen reader compatibility?
Does the webpage have sufficient color contrast, legible fonts, and intuitive navigation?

Bias

Does the content present information fairly, or does it show clear bias?
Does the language reinforce stereotypes or exclude certain identities?
Is there diversity represented in authorship, examples, or perspectives?
If the content includes a bias, can it be used intentionally to teach media literacy or critical thinking?

A Question of Confidence...

Before sharing any external resource in your course, ask yourself: *"Would I feel confident defending this source to a colleague, instructional designer, or my dean?"* If not, consider finding a stronger option or providing important context to help students interpret it critically.

Want help evaluating a resource you're currently using or plan to use? Reach out to your instructional designer, librarian, or DE coordinator.

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Putting the Pieces Together is not currently supported

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★ Making Your Course Homepage - Course-building Activity

Purpose

The Home Page is the first page your students see upon entering your online course. There are several options for designing a Canvas Home Page:

Content Page: Has the same content capabilities as a standard Page. Also referred to as the Front Page. Fully customizable.
Course Modules: Set your Modules area as the Home Page. Will show students all course content in one place.
Syllabus with Course Summary activated: Lets you add content like a course description, links, images, etc. in a Rich Content Editor and also displays all of the assignments in your course with dates (not advised, but sometimes appropriate).

By completing this assignment, you will:

Use a variety of communication tools, both within and external to Canvas, to support student success.

For this reason, I encourage you to ask yourself which tool will provide the most clear and welcoming experience for your specific students.

Task

For this assignment, you will design a homepage in your DE Course Shell and submit the URL when you are done. This can be any of the Home page options listed above. *Files, Assignments, or Recent Activity Stream will not be accepted for this assignment.*

Your Homepage should at least include:

Something that says "Start Here" or clearly indicates an Orientation entry point
Your contact information
The textbook information

If you are interested in making a custom page homepage, here are some resources:

Creating an inviting course home page
Create a Canvas custom home page with buttons

Criteria for Success

Review the rubric below this assignment description for an overview of specific requirements - I will be using this while grading. You can expect feedback in the submission comments box.

You will submit this as a URL linking directly to your DE Shell. If done correctly, I will click the link and land directly on your newly created Home Page.

Canvas Help

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Sep 15 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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★ Creating Your Own Course Feedback Survey - Course-building Activity

Purpose

Mid-semester feedback lets us check in on our students to assess our instructional approaches and whether or not they are working- especially if it's our first time teaching online, or after a major course redesign. This one can (and should) be *anonymous.*

The Canvas Quizzes tool allows you to create a graded or ungraded anonymous survey to collect this type of information. You'll want to think about what you are most interested in learning from the feedback you collect here, like what instructional strategies are working or not working, and what types of specific changes could be made to help your students at the mid-semester point.

In my own classes, I find it helpful to **conduct a really simple survey** at Week 6 and 12. The Week 6 survey doesn't often provide as much useful feedback as the Week 12 survey does, but they both still help to identify the types of activities and materials my students enjoy and learn from. To be honest, a lot of the feedback collected is stuff that I can't or won't change - in my hybrid-night course I received feedback about "making the course available during the day" or "I don't really like to do research." But sometimes there are gems - students have actually asked if they could have more practice-type (formative) assignments, and that they'd like to work in groups more often.

One important thing to also note is how you **acknowledge the feedback.** Post an announcement after the Survey due date letting student know that you read their feedback, and letting them know you appreciated their honesty and are giving it fair consideration.

By completing this assignment, you will:

Use a variety of communication tools both within and external to Canvas to support student success

Task

You will create and then submit a link to a mid-course survey in your DE Course Shell. You can use a Canvas quiz, survey, or off-Canvas survey tool (like Microsoft or Google Forms).

Choose what you'd like to learn from your students - there are lots of survey samples that you can use for your course. The Berkeley Center for Teaching has a few examples posted that can be used or adapted and Valencia College has an entire guidebook on pros and cons.

The survey I use is incredibly simple, with just 3 open-ended questions:

1. What I like about this course so far is:
2. What I dislike about this course so far is:
3. If I could change one thing about this course, it would be:

Criteria for Success

Since this assignment can take a variety of shapes, the only criteria for success is that it is created, placed within your DE Course Shell, and submitted here as a URL.

Canvas Support

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I upload a file as an assignment submission in Canvas?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Sep 15 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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Additional Resources and Support is not currently supported

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COS Course Design Rubric, Section A: Content Presentation

This page is an example of how we can share a file alongside context! Rather than just adding the file to the Module so it opens on it's own, I'm embedding it here instead, so I can write a message that lets you know how to use it, why it's important, what to do with it moving forward, etc.

Review the Rubric: Content Presentation

Your DE Course Shell will be evaluated at the end of OCTA using the full version of the COS Course Design Rubric. I've extracted the section below from the full rubric so you can focus in on some of the areas related to the content we covered in this module. You might also notice some things that we've covered in other modules (like Instructions) and things we haven't covered too thoroughly just yet (like Policies) I recommend getting familiar with this rubric and referencing it frequently as you build out your Shell to ensure you are Aligning with all of the areas. **Your course must be fully Aligned to receive DE Certification at the end of OCTA.**

Have questions or concerns? Send me a Canvas message to visit me in my office hours Mondays from 3-4 PM and Thursdays from 11-12 PM!

File COS POCR-Course Design Rubric-Section A.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

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Creating, Curating, and Organizing Content Q&A

Questions about content, organization, or about OCTA so far?

Click the "Reply" button to ask course-related or "how do I do this?" questions.



Along your journey, you may want to ask me or your colleagues about a topic, get some additional thoughts about an online teaching strategy or challenge, or you may just need some clarification about an aspect of the class. If so, jump in and ask it here! If it is a question about one of the content pages and/or assignments, please be sure to identify the location of the page as thoroughly as possible so we may troubleshoot promptly (providing a URL is ideal!)

Successful teaching and learning require a village in any modality Any participant is welcome and encouraged to respond to discussion posts. If you know an answer or have a resource to contribute, jump in and help out a friend!

If you have a personal question or concern about the class that you'd like to speak with me about, please Canvas message me directly.

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End of Module 4 - Recap

Unit Objectives (...did we make it?!)

By now, you should be able to:

choose content that supports the learning outcomes and objectives of your course;
create, caption, and embed your own videos in Canvas;
organize instructional content in ways that support student success.

In this module, you read about adding online course content in both video and text formats, and about organizing your content in ways that are clear and supportive of students.

We have now completed the steps of Backward Design - we've created objectives, built assessments to meet those objectives, and begun to gather and organize the content needed to be successful on the assessments. Be careful of adding *too* much content - focus only on things that students need to be successful on your course assessments.

Your DE Course Shellshould be steadily growing!

Through completing this unit, you have should have created a video, a course homepage, and a mid-semester feedback survey. If you haven't already, get those things added to your DE Shell.

Alongside the things we are creating, make sure you are building out more of your course content and assessments as planned in

your Course Road Map. Here are some things you can be doing now:

Decide if you want to use Weekly module or Unit-based modules.
Begin organizing your Modules.
Create instructional content (or placeholders for it)
Plan what formative assessments you'd like to include, and what summative assessments will conclude each unit or module.
Create draft versions of your Weekly Overviews and create your Unit-level objectives.
Start considering what content you'd want to include in an Orientation module.

The next module is going to focus on Accessibility.

Go back to the Modules, or click Next to begin Unit 5.

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Module 5: Accessibility and Universal Design (Sept. 22-28)

1. Unit 5 Overview
2. Accessibility Essentials
3. Accessibility and Accommodation
4. 1. Headings
5. How Do I Make Accessible Headings?
6. ★ Build or Remediate Course Content - Course-building Activity
7. 2. Links
8. How Do I Make Accessible Links?
9. ★ Complete the CCCAC Creating Accessible Links Training - CVC Badge
10. 3. Color and Contrast
11. How Can I Check Color and Contrast?
12. ★ Complete the CCCAC Accessible Stylings Training - CVC Badge
13. 4. Images
14. How Do I add Alt Text?
15. ★ Adding Alt Text - Lil' Quiz/Course-building Activity
16. 5. Tables and Charts
17. ★ Complete the CCCAC Tables and Accessibility Training - CVC Badge
18. 6. Video Media
19. ★ Complete the CCCAC Creating Accessible Captions Training - CVC Badge
20. Putting the Pieces Together
21. ★ Check the Accessibility of One Page in your Course - Course-building Activity
22. Additional Resources and Support
23. COS Course Design Rubric, Section D: Accessibility
24. Did You Enjoy the 20-minute CCCAC Credentials?
25. Accessibility Unit Q&A
26. End of Module 5 - Recap

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Unit 5 Overview

What to Expect in this Unit



This unit will give you a crash course on Accessibility. Making your course and course content accessible will help all of your students including those with approved accommodations. This unit is designed to help you with six of the main areas of accessibility.

Headings
Links
Color and Contrast
Images
Tables
Media/Captioning

Becoming an expert on accessibility isn't the goal here. Instead, focus on becoming aware of the options available to help you and your students succeed.

Unit Objectives

By the end of this module you should be able to:

Recognize the educational benefit of making content accessible
Modify existing course materials to comply with accessibility requirements
Develop new course materials that comply with accessibility requirements
Demonstrate the ability to evaluate and remediate digital course elements (e.g., captions, tables, color contrast, links) using accessibility principles and tools.

Click Next to get started.

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Accessibility Essentials is not currently supported

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Accessibility and Accommodation

Don't fear the "A" Word!

I know, I know... "Accessibility" sends shivers down our spine. It's so much to learn. It's overwhelming. My course has 417 errors. Can't someone else fix this for me? I'm a chemist, not an ADA expert! Honestly? All valid. If that sounds like your inner dialogue as you start this module, take a deep breath and know you're not alone in this.

You have me, your handy-dandy DE Coordinator, who will never abandon you. You have Erin, your instructional designer, who has a specialty in online accessibility. You have the Access and Ability Center, whose whole job is ensuring accessible educational experiences for students. But we can't do it *for* you, just *with* you. And we all really learn in the process of doing, so we have to jump in somewhere, right?

Let's do it now, before we get too far into our course building. It is *much* easier to create new content that is accessible than it is to create a whole course of content and then have to go back and fix it all.

Major Laws and Policies Guiding Accessibility

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Federal)

Prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program or activity that receives federal funding (like colleges).

Requires that students with disabilities have equal access to education, including digital materials, websites, and online courses.

Forms the foundation for most disability support services we offer.

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (Federal)

Requires that public institutions, like California community colleges, make all programs and services (including websites and course content) accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Ensures equal access to all aspects of campus life, including online instruction.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (Federal)

Sets specific technical standards for electronic and information technology accessibility.

Applies to all federal agencies and institutions receiving federal funds (like us)

California actually has even more stringent Section 508 standards of our own...

California Government Code § 7405 § 11135 (State)

Requires that state-funded programs and services, including CCCs, comply with Section 508 standards to access those funds.

Also mandates that IT and instructional materials used by public entities be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Applies regulations technology procurement, web content, and digital services.

Title 5, § 55200–55210: Distance Education Regulations (State)

Require that courses delivered online provide equivalent access to all students.

Reinforced by accessibility expectations outlined by the California Virtual Campus - Online Education Initiative (CVC-OEI) (which is the basis of the COS Course Design rubric we will use to review our classes at the end of OCTA!)

This legislation provides the underlying mandate for designing all college courses (not just online courses) that are accessible to students with visual, auditory, and physical impairments, as well as students with information processing differences. These laws and policies collectively mean that *accessibility is not optional.* It is a legal and ethical responsibility. Colleges are expected to design courses, platforms, and services so that all students can participate fully, *without* needing to ask for accommodations or make special requests.

What does Accessibility really mean?

ALL web-based materials required in **ANY** course (online, hybrid, blended, or face-to-face classes) must be made compliant.

This includes:

content you've created and posted to Canvas (pages, files, PPT slides, PDFs, Word docs, Excel spreadsheets, videos, etc)
material you've created and linked outside of Canvas (Zoom videos, Youtube, Khan Academy, etc)
content used as course material provided by textbook publishers and other third-party websites

Remember also we go through this module, that not all disabilities are visible, and students are not required to disclose they have a disability. When we are designing our courses, we should be designing them for *the universal audience,* not only typical students.

Accessibility vs. Accommodation

"But wait... I'm told when a need to make a change based on a student's verified disability. So I'm good, right?"

Well, no. Both are part of creating an inclusive learning environment, but they serve different purposes and happen at different stages.

Accessibility: Built-in from the Start (Proactive)

Accessibility refers to the design of materials and experiences that are usable by all learners without needing special requests or adjustments. Accessible course design means:

Videos have accurate captions for all students to read

Content uses clear heading structures that helps visually break up content for everyone

Colors have enough contrast to make them easy for everyone to read

Images have meaningful alt text so anyone can click it and see how the teacher is describing them

Pages can be navigated with a keyboard or screen reader so anyone can use that approach if they prefer it.

Goal: Remove barriers *before* they affect learners so everyone has an equivalent experience.

When your course is accessible, students with disabilities can engage with it independently, and students without disabilities benefit from the clear, organized design too.

File 224ac0_fcbe2c681f894a4ebfc88f18f946f7f7~mv2.webp could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

Accessible technology is technology that is designed for use by the greatest number of people, including people with disabilities, and doesn’t require adaptation or modification to remove barriers to access or operation. Conversely, technology that presents barriers to users with disabilities is "inaccessible". In the above graphic, the

fence (i.e. the environment) represents a barrier to access. When the barrier is removed, all three people can see the game. **When we proactively design our courses to do this, we are participating in *Universal Design*.**

Accessibility is not a discrete feature of a website or application. It is many intentional design and development decisions, based on real-world practice, institutional policy, public standards, and awareness of the diversity of users experiences. It is achieved through designing systems that provide an equivalent user experience to all users, regardless of disability or the way they access the technology.

Accommodations: Adjusting Later (Reactive)

Accommodations are individual changes made in response to a student's documented needs, often coordinated by the AAC (Access and Ability Center). Accommodations might include:

Extended time on quizzes

Alternative formats for reading materials

A notetaker or interpreter

Flexibility with due dates due to medical needs

Goal: Ensure equitable access to learning for an individual student when standard materials or processes aren't enough.

When we are making an accommodation, some aspect of a system (like a document or classroom) has been changed to meet the needs of a specific individual or group. Accommodations are patches or fixes, applied retroactively to overcome barriers in the environment or system *as they are identified.* In the above graphic, only the tallest person can see over the fence while the other two depend on risers to be able to see over the same fence. In this example, the fence presents a barrier to access, and while the

risers represent an accommodation, the fence will continue to present a barrier to others in the future.

For example, if an instructor distributes a print document in class, a student who is blind will be unable to read that document. In this case, accommodation would require the instructor to provide an alternative version of the document, such as an electronic text or audio file. If a student with a similar disability enrolls in the future, they will run into the same access issue, and will need to request an accommodation again. This delays access to learning material, putting these students at a disadvantage.

Why Both Matter

Think of it like building a schoolhouse:

Accessibility is designing the school with ramps, automatic doors, wide desks, and good lighting from the beginning.

Accommodations are when the school is designed only for the typical student, and adjustments are made when someone finds they can't get inside on the first day of class.

> We'll never be able to anticipate *all* the needs our students might have, but **by focusing on accessibility over accommodation**, we can reduce the number of individual accommodations and associated delays — and **make the course better.**

How do I learn to do it?

We'll start by working our way through this module, which will give a brief overview of making online content accessible.

This unit will require you to practice with six different accessibility requirements:

1. Headings,
2. links,
3. color and contrast,
4. images,
5. tables, and
6. media.

Once we're done with this unit, **you will be required to check for accessibility in all of the future assignments you submit for OCTA,** and to remediate the things you've already submitted by the time we finish this course. For a course to run online with enrolled students, it must be free of accessibility errors. That's the law.

Ready to begin? Click Next to move to the next page

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1. Headings

You've been exposed to Headings quite a bit in this course so far, so hopefully this is an easy piece of the puzzle to integrate!

Headings are built into the actual structure of a page or document. This means that a Heading isn't just a matter of using a bigger, bolder, or colored font. It is an actual formatting tool that we apply to our section titles that make them stand out visually to the typical reader, AND they are embedded in the code of a webpage so a screen reader can identify page sections and help a user find content and jump around.

Why We Use Headings (This Heading is using Heading 2 h2 style)

> **You:** Psssstt.... why is it not Heading 1, since it's the first Heading on the page?!
>
> **Me:** But *is it* the first Heading on the page? Look again, and read on! ☺

Organizing web pages by Headings helps users get a sense of the page's organization and structure. Visually, headings are presented as larger and more distinct than the surrounding text. Enlarged text guide's a reader's eye around the page. Consider how you've engaged with the reading content in this course. Are you really reading each page top to bottom? Or are you choosing which sections to skim and which to deep-read based on the clear Headings? Clear Headings, while an accessibility requirement, are a great example of an require feature that really helps *everyone.*

Using Headings and making them visually apparent is *especially* helpful for users with disabilities. If the underlying code for a page's Headings is correct, screen reading software can navigate a page according to those Headings, can provide a user with a list of all Headings, and allow them skip around to their desired sections, just like you do! Without Headings, a student using a screen reader has to listen to the *entire page of text* every time to get to the

content they're looking for. Imagine studying for a Midterm, and you have to listen to the entire textbook cover to cover several times?! Yikes.

Do I need to apply Headings to every page? (This is Heading 3 h3 style, by the way)

No. But chunking material prevents *cognitive overload. Cognitive overload* happens when our brains can't process new information because they're overwhelmed processing too much already. Any time we can cut content into digestible pieces, students will be better able to identify and understand the key points of each section. Headings can also help students create a *cognitive schema* (mental map) for the information they're learning, and allows them to skim the page for important content.

So... yes?

Heading Hierarchy (We're back to Heading 2 h2 style here, because it's a new main section.)

Headings are ranked h1 (Heading level 1) through h6 (Heading level 6 - but we rarely use that many headings. I haven't made it past Heading level 4 in this OCTA course yet.) Headings create hierarchy, with the h1 representing the most important idea on the page (or the page Title, like here on Canvas 👀), and sub-sections organized with lower-level headings indicated by h2. If you want to divide your h2 section into sub-headings, you'd then apply h3 level headings, and so on.

Think of it like outlining your content:

I. Your Roman numerals are Heading 1 h1.

A. Your capital letters are Heading 2 h2.

1. Your Arabic numerals are Heading 3 h3.

    a. your lowercase letters are Heading 4 h4,

        i. your lowercase Roman numerals are Heading 5 h5.

Some sections might have three or four subheadings, and others might not have a subheading at all. Do not skip heading levels, and **do not select heading levels based on their appearance.** If you don't like how the Headings look, you can go back and change their appearance after the Heading structure has been established.

All pages should at least have a h1 level heading, which indicates the title of the page.

In Canvas, h1 is applied by default when you type in your Page Title,

so you'll *always* start with h2.

Writing Descriptive Headings (this is Heading 3 h3 style again, since this is a sub-section of "Applying Headings"

As you're very aware by now, Headings help readers locate and understand information quickly. Thus, an effective Heading should indicate the main points on the page. For this page, covering the bare basics of Headings, the main ideas were just two: Why We Use Headings, and Heading Hierarchy.

So what's the easiest way to come up with a descriptive Heading for existing content? Just go through the section and answer one simple question: *what's it about?*

Click Next to learn how we actually *apply* Headings to the content we create!

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How Do I Make Accessible Headings?

👆 Look! Up there! It's Heading 1 <h1>!

Applying Headings in Canvas' Rich Content Editor (Heading 2 h2, checking in!)

The Rich Content Editor (👈 read the RCE page in the Canvas Basics module, if you need a refresh) is the official name of the big blank text box you see when you create a new Canvas page, assignment, announcement, discussion, etc. The "rich" part is the robust set of tools sitting above the text box, indicated by little icons. One of them is a Heading-creation tool.

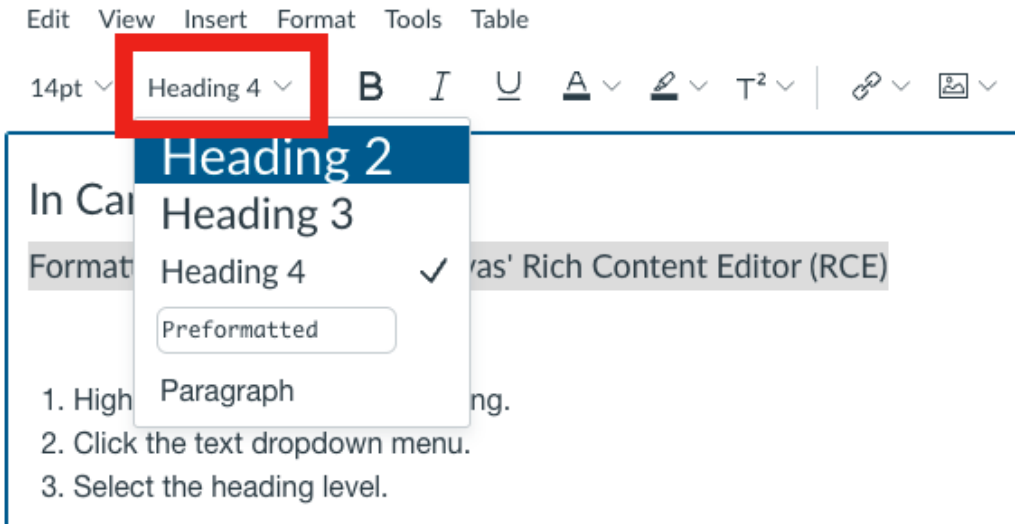
As a reminder, Canvas uses Heading 1 as the Page Title, so all of your headings will start with Heading 2.

1. To start, type in your section title (Heading) as you would normally type.
2. Then, highlight the text you'd like to turn into a Heading.
3. Find the dropdown for Headings in the toolbar. It is near the left side, located between your Font size dropdown and your font stylings (**B**, *I*, U) options, and will probably say *Paragraph* when you first look for it, because you are set to plain ol' Paragraph style by default.
4. Choose the appropriate heading level.

- If it's the first Heading you're putting on the page, you'll choose Heading 1.
- If it's a sub section of Heading 1, you'll choose Heading 2, and so forth.

5. Once a Heading level has been set, you can make font style changes using the bold, italics, font size, or color if desired.

- Choose a dark color. More on color contrast to come in this unit...



Rich Content Editor Canvas Support (this is h3, because this relates to my h1 section.)

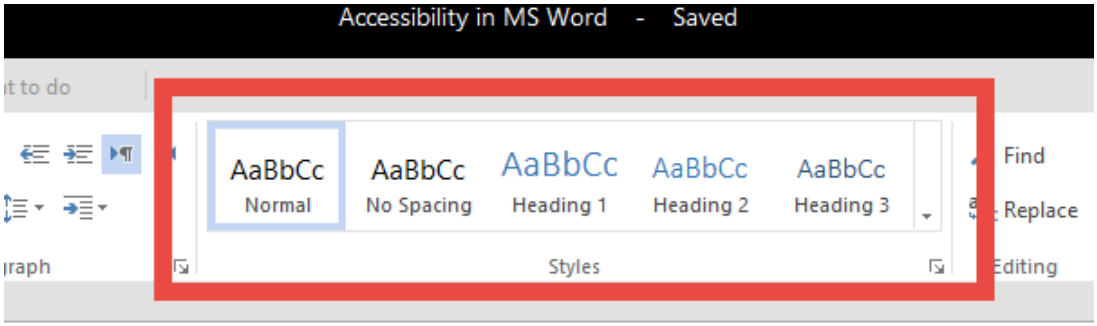
How do I access the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?
How do I add and modify text in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?
How do I resize the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?
How do I use the Accessibility Checker in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?

Applying Headings in External Documents (This is Heading 2 h2 again.)

Remember, you are responsible for ensuring that ***all*** course content is accessible, which includes the content you create with Canvas, but *also* includes external files like PowerPoint slides, Word documents, Google docs, and PDFs. Everything you share as required instructional material must be accessible. That means we'll spend a moment now learning about applying headings in programs other than Canvas.

Microsoft Word (this is h3, because this relates to my h1 section.)

1. When drafting in MS Word, click on the Home menu to see the Styles options appear.
2. Select the text in your document that you want to turn into a Heading.
3. Click on the Heading style from the Styles menu to apply the style to your selected text. Like in Canvas, you can then go back and update the font color, and size.
4. Heading 1 *can* and s*hould* be applied manually in Word. Word has a Title style that should be applied to the Title of the document, allowing you to start your Headings at Level 1.



More Word Resources (Hey, finally! This is Heading 4 h4)

Add a Heading
Customize or Create New Styles

Google Docs (this is h3)

1. Highlight the text that you want to format as a heading.
2. Choose the heading level:
    1. Go to "Format" "Paragraph styles".
    2. Select the desired heading level (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.).
    3. Alternatively, use the "Normal text" dropdown in the toolbar and select the heading level.

3. You can customize the appearance of your headings by changing the font, size, color, etc..

Microsoft Powerpoint

1. Open your PowerPoint presentation and select the slide you want to edit.
2. Go to the *Review* tab and click on *Check Accessibility.*
3. Expand the *Slide Title* menu on the Accessibility ribbon.
4. Choose the appropriate option to add or edit the slide title.
   Edit Slide Title: Moves the cursor to the existing title placeholder.
   Add Slide Title: Adds a title placeholder to the slide if one doesn't exist.
   Add Hidden Slide Title: Adds a title placeholder that's not visible during the slideshow.
5. Type or edit the slide title in the placeholder.
6. Repeat for all slides, ensuring each has a unique and descriptive title.
7. Run the Accessibility Checker again to confirm that all slides have titles.

More PPT Resources (this is h4)

Highly Recommend: Clemson's Digital Accessibility Guide: PowerPoint

Adobe PDFs (this is h3. Is this annoying yet?)

PDFs are *hard.* An inaccessible PDF can take me hours of remediation and many laptop slams. Truly, the easiest way to fix the heading structure in a PDF is to fix it before it's made into a PDF. If there is something you do not have the original document of and you cannot copy or replicate it (I've retyped lots of things!), please reach out to your accessibility experts on campus.

More PDF Resources (this is h4)

Highly Recommend: Clemson's Digital Accessibility Guide: PDFs
Create Accessible PDFs
Creating Accessible PDFs in Adobe

Click Next to practice applying Headings to your course Home Page.

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★ Build or Remediate Course Content - Course-building Activity

Purpose

Clear heading structures are one of the most important aspects of making course content accessible, especially those using screen readers or assistive technology. Headings not only support navigation, but also help students visually organize information and stay oriented on a page. This task gives you a chance to practice applying accessible heading styles in the Canvas Rich Content Editor, helping you build inclusive course materials from the start.

By completing this assignment, you will either:

Modify existing course materials to comply with accessibility requirements, *or Develop* new course materials that comply with accessibility requirements

Task

First, choose one place within your DE Course Shell where you'll apply or revise heading styles using the built-in heading options (do not use bold or enlarged text to simulate headings). You might select:

Your course Home Page
An Orientation page
A Content page or instructional reading of your own writing
A Discussion Board Prompt
Assignment guidelines
A Weekly Overview or Checklist page

Next, use the Rich Content Editor:

1. Apply an <h2> style to the main section titles
2. Apply <h3> or lower for sub-sections, as needed

3. Ensure your headings are in logical, sequential order (e.g., don’t jump from H2 to H4)
4. Avoid using bold or underlined text to "fake" a heading
5. Run the Canvas Accessibility Checker to confirm your headings are properly formatted

Criteria for Success

Your submission will be considered successful when you have:

Applied at least two different heading levels (e.g., <h2> and <h3>) to the content
Used descriptive headings in a logical, hierarchical order
Avoided bold text or visual styling alone to simulate headings
Submitted a URL link to the updated page within your DE Course Shell
The page is free of Headings-related accessibility errors.

Due at: Sep 29 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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2. Links

Formatting Links for Accessibility

I sound like a broken record, but *accessible content benefits all students,* not just those with disabilities or those using assistive technology. Properly formatted links help students navigate content and understand where their clicks will take them. Because of this, it's important for link text to make sense independent of surrounding sentences or content.

Imagine if the "Canvas Support" sections throughout this course looked like this:

> **Canvas Support**
>
> Need help? Visit these links for support:
>
> https://cccaccessibility.org/tools-training/self-paced-accessibility-courses
>
> https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Studio-Guide/How-do-I-submit-Canvas-Studio-media-as-a-File-Upload-assignment/ta-p/1677
>
> https://usability.yale.edu/web-accessibility/articles/links

You might be able to figure it out from looking at it. But imagine you're using a screenreader.

Was that as cringey to listen to as it was for me to make?! Yes, a screen reader will read a URL *letter by letter*. So if you offer links in multiple places throughout your course... well., thoughts and prayers to your students using screen reading assistance! But we can save them from this auditory hell by creating *descriptive links!*

Creating Descriptive Link Text

The link text *alone* should convey the function and purpose of the link. It should not rely on surrounding context or phrases to indicate

where it will take a clicker. Link text should also be unique and easy to speak out loud.

> This is an example of a *bad* link set-up: Click here for more information on the CCC Accessibility Center.

It's *bad* because "Click Here" is *not descriptive* of where the link will take students in a standalone context.

> Here is an example of a *good* link set-up for the same link: Visit the CCC Accessibility Center for more information.

It's *good* because "the CCC Accessibility Center website" describes where the link will take students, all by itself. The context allows it to be read smoothly, but it isn't necessary to be clear.
Links that simply read “Click here,” or “Read more" are not helpful in navigating, can be confusing when a screen reader reads them out of context, and can cause anxiety for students who don't know what they're clicking on. (*Pssst*.... some students use hotspots to access the internet, and it can take a *lot* of time to load up each new webpage. If the link isn't something they wanted or needed, that can be really frustrating.)
If possible, use the title of the webpage as the descriptive link text (ex. Academic Senate for California Community Colleges). If this isn't an option, think about the purpose and context of the link (similar to how we write our Headings - tell the user what the link is). You can also include the link in a sentence as we did in the *good* example above. Just make sure it can be understood on it's own.

Color and Underlining

Giving links a different color from the surrounding text is really common on the web. Oftentimes, links turn blue all by themselves. These color differences help highlight the link for sighted users, but color differences alone are **not** sufficient for accessibility. Your students may be colorblind, have low vision, or be using an old monitor with color issues and will need to identify links through other means.

In general, links should a non-color indicator of some kind. This is why, in addition to turning blue, links often underline themselves. If you change

the style (color, size, etc) of your links, always make sure to include a color and a non-color indicator.

Because web links are almost always underlined, accessibility experts ask that we do not use underline for emphasis. Use **bold,** use *italics*, but avoid using underline, or youyr students might wonder why the link (that was never actually a link) won't open for them.

Click Next to learn about creating accessible, descriptive links.

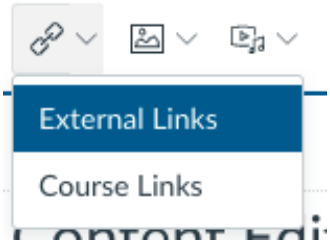
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How Do I Make Accessible Links?

Formatting Links in Canvas' Rich Content Editor

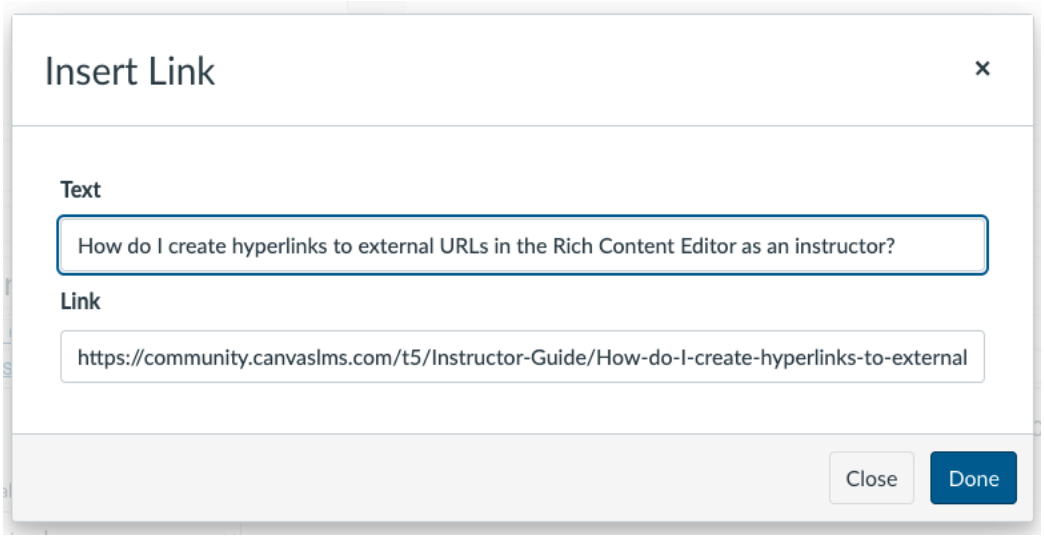
Canvas makes creating blue, underlined, and descriptive links pretty easy with the RCE. You'll start by opening the Rich Content Editor and finding the link icon (). You can create links to resources that exist *outside* your course (like an OER textbook, a YouTube video, or a Visalia Times-Delta article) or you can create links to others places *within* your course (like other pages, modules, assignments).



External Links

With the External Link option, a box will pop up with a space for the descriptive text and the URL. Fill them in as prompted.

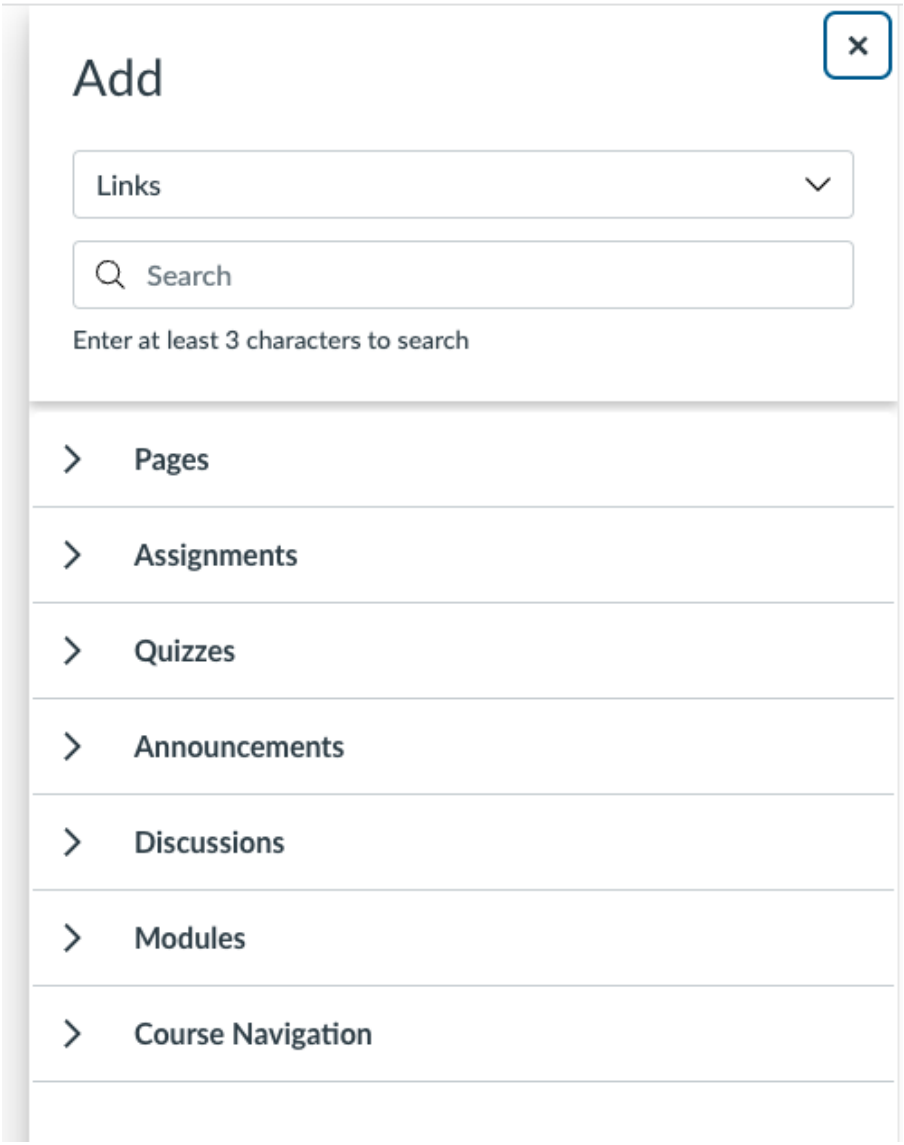
If you already wrote your descriptive text and now want to make it a link, highlight it and then choose the External Link option. It will add the URL to the existing text.



Course Links

When you choose the Course Links option, a navigation menu will pop up on the side of your browser.

From there, you can type the name of the item you want to link to search for it, or browse through the dropdowns for the item you'd like to link.



More Support for Creating Links on Canvas

How do I access the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?
How do I create hyperlinks to external URLs in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?
How do I create hyperlinks to course or group content in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?
How do I create hyperlinks to course, group, and user files in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?

How do I edit and remove hyperlinks in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?
How do I use the Accessibility Checker in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?

Formatting Links in External Documents

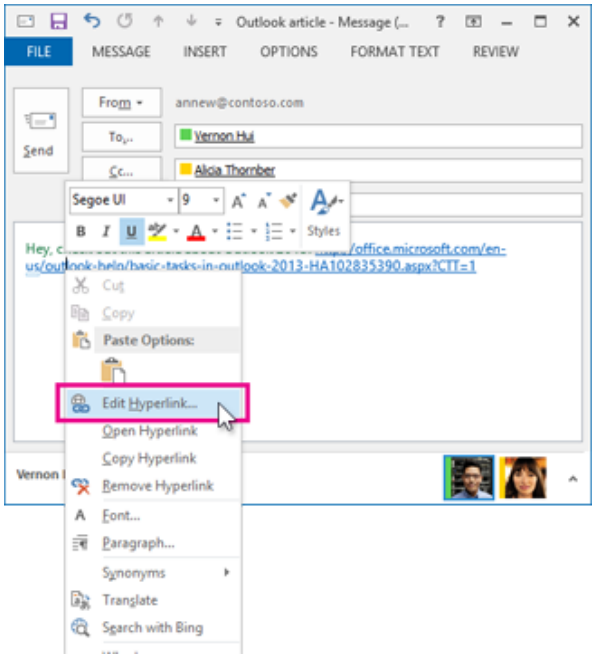
Remember, *everything* has to be accessible, even the external files like PowerPoint slides, Word documents, Google docs, and PDFs that you attach to your course. That means we'll spend a moment now learning about applying descriptive link text in programs other than Canvas.

Microsoft Word, PPT, or Google Docs

In Word, you can change the text of an existing link, or add a link to existing text.

There are three ways to insert a link:

Option 1: Copy and paste the URL into the Word document. This turns your full letter-by-letter hyperlink into a link. Then use the Shortcut menu (right-click) to find the *Edit Hyperlink* option.



Option 2: Click *Insert* from the tool menu at the top, and select *Links* and follow the prompts.

Screenshot of the Add Link tool in Microsoft Word

Option 3: If you'd prefer to create a link out of the existing text, you'll highlight the text and use the shortcut menu (right-click) to Insert a Hyperlink.

Screenshot of adding a link to existing text in Microsoft Word

The process is pretty much the same in Powerpoint, and in Google Docs. Isn't that nice!

More Resources

Create or edit a hyperlink
Customize the text for a hyperlink

PDFs

Again, the easiest way to create a hyperlink with descriptive text in a PDF is... to do it before it's made into a PDF. If there is something you do not have the original document of, and you cannot replicate it (I've retyped lots of things!), please reach out.

More PDF Resources

Links and attachments in PDFs

Click Next to practice making a descriptive link.

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★ Complete the CCCAC Creating Accessible Links Training - CVC Badge

Purpose

Links are an essential part of digital navigation, but when poorly labeled or formatted, they can create confusion or barriers for screen reader users.

This short training from the CVC's Accessibility Essentials course set will help you understand how to create accessible hyperlinks in your course materials.

Task

Complete the 15-minute “Creating Accessible Links" training provided by the California Community Colleges Accessibility Center (CCCAC) and submit proof of completion.

Steps:

1. Visit the CCCAC Creating Accessible Links course in the Online Network of Educators course catalog.
2. Click Enroll Now.
    1. If you've already taken a CVC course, follow the steps to enroll and begin the course.
    2. If you have never taken a CVC course, create a free account to enroll and begin the course.
3. Complete the course. It includes 3 pages of learning and a 5 question "exit assessment" which you must pass at 80%.
4. At the end, you’ll receive a digital credential or badge for completing the training.
5. Go to "Credentials" on the course's navigation menu.
6. Click the course name from the list, and click Share Badge on the screen that appears.

7. Submit the URL here as proof of completion.
8. You now have a CVC Accessibility Credential! 

Criteria for Success

You completed the full training and passed the assessment at 80% or better. You submitted a link to your earned badge.

Due at: Sep 29 at 12am

Grading Type: Pass/Fail

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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3. Color and Contrast

We See the World Differently.

Students use a variety of different media and methods to view your course and materials. Something that was richly colored on your office monitor might look gray-on-gray on your home laptop. Adaptive technologies like screen magnifiers, or even wearing polarized sunglasses can change the way colors look to us individually. Students may be looking at your course on their phone screen, in dark mode, while standing in bright sunlight. Some may have an old computer monitor with different color calibration settings.

While we can never control (or know) what all of our users see, you can follow these two simple rules:

1. Never use color alone to communicate.
2. Make sure your colors have strong contrasts between them

Never use color alone to communicate.

Color should never be the *sole* means of conveying information. It can create emphasis and add a great deal of visual interest, but it has to be in addition to another way of indicating, emphasizing, or communicating. Consider this study guide:

Final Exam Study Guide

Anything indicated in red is going to be on the test. Anything in blue may be an essay question.

Accessibility
Accommodations for students with diverse needs
Behavioral modification strategies
Community building strategies

Culture
Collectivism v individualism
Gender and sex
Knapp's stages of relational development
Modeling
Motivational theories
Nonverbal communication categories
Perspectives on student behavior
Scaffolding

Now imagine you are visually impaired (some of you may be!). You might not be able to differentiate between the red and blue tones. Imagine further than you are using a screen reader. You will have no idea what text is in what color, and would have to just study everything equally, while other students get to focus their time and attention more on the orange-coded topics. Not great for an equitable experience...

Color is great as a partner *to something else*. Look at this simple change, which makes the document accessible to everyone now:

Final Exam Study Guide

Possible Essay Question Topics:

Accommodations for students with diverse needs
Behavioral modification strategies
Culture
Motivational theories

Other Topics to Expect:

Accessibility
Community building strategies
Collectivism v individualism
Gender and sex

Knapp's stages of relational development
Modeling
Nonverbal communication categories
Perspectives on student behavior
Scaffolding

Color Contrast

Color contrast is measured as a ratio of brightness to darkness, the difference between the text color and its background. WCAG 2.0 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, version 2.0) specify different contrast ratios depending on the size and weight of a font. Smaller fonts need to be darker and higher contrast, while bigger ones have a little more wiggle room. But just a very little.

The graphic below shows you which default colors in the Canvas RCE have appropriate contrast.

✓ = accessible colors for text or highlight (pay attention to the white or black checkmarks! They indicate the font color.)

★ = colors that are accessible only for text larger than 14 pt.



The next page has information about using the WebAim Contrast Checker, a handy-dandy tool that I use *all the time* to ensure the colors in my courses are high contrast, accessible, *and* pretty!

Click Next to try it out.

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How Can I Check Color and Contrast?

Color Correcting using the Canvas Accessibility Checker

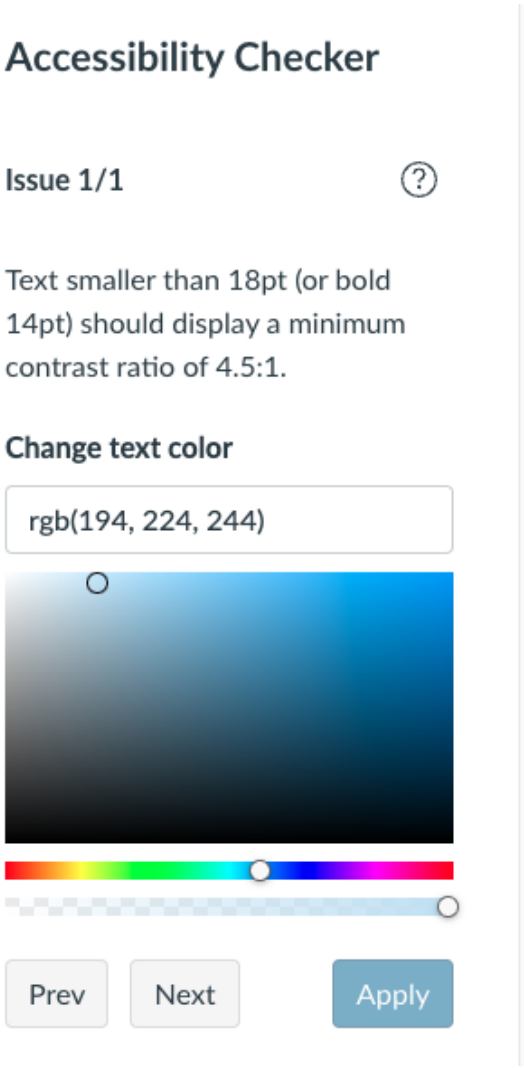
At the bottom-right of the Rich Content Editor stands the **Accessibility Checker** **Accessibility icon.**

If you see a blue notification on it, that means there is something (or some *things)* that need to be updated.

For color and contrast, it will let you know the issue and offer a color changer. You can drag the little dot around the color spectrum (drag it toward the darker end).

Once an accessible color is chosen, the "Apply" button will be enabled.

Choose Apply to update the color.



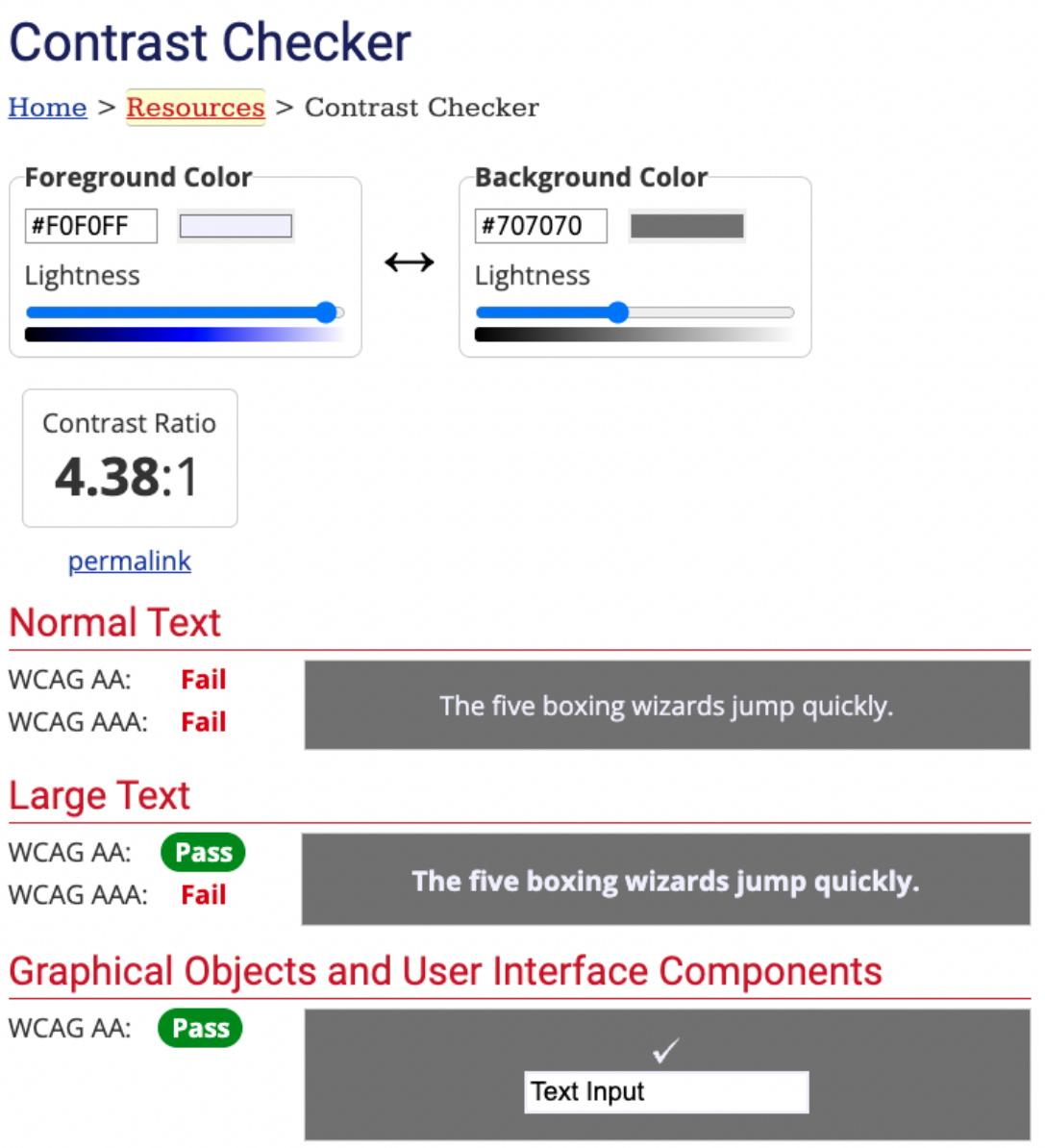
Using the WebAIM Color Contrast Checker

The WebAIM Color Contrast Checker is a free tool (thanks, Utah State!) that helps you make sure your text contrast is acceptable and accessible. I use this tool for content I'm checking outside of Canvas, like my OER materials, websites I'm linking to in my course, and anything I create in Canva (not *Canvas*... Canva is an unaffiliated design tool).

1. **Go to the WebAIM Color Contrast Checker.**
2. **Pick your colors:**

Under **"Foreground Color,"** enter the HEX code (e.g., #000000 for black text).
Under **"Background Color,"** enter the HEX code for your background (e.g., #ffffff for white).
Not sure what colors you're using? Use a color dropper tool or browser extension to grab them from your Canvas page or document.

3. **Check the results.** The tool will instantly tell you if your color combination passes the WCAG contrast guidelines.
4. **Adjust as needed.** If your colors don't pass, use the sliders or enter new codes until your combination meets the required ratio.



Click Next to move to the next page

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★ Complete the CCCAC Accessible Stylings Training - CVC Badge

Purpose

Visual elements can make a big difference for students with low vision, color blindness, or other visual processing needs. Applying these practices ensures your course is more inclusive and easier to navigate for all learners.

This short training from the CVC's Accessibility Essentials course set will help you improve the accessibility of your course materials by learning best practices for using color, contrast, and fonts.

Task

Complete the **20-minute “Accessible Stylings" training** provided by the California Community Colleges Accessibility Center (CCCAC) and submit proof of completion.

Steps:

1. Visit the CCCAC Accessible Stylings course in the Online Network of Educators course catalog.
2. Click Enroll Now.
    1. If you've already taken a CVC course, follow the steps to enroll and begin the course.
    2. If you have never taken a CVC course, create a free account to enroll and begin the course.
3. Complete the course. It includes 3 pages of learning and a 5 question "exit assessment" which you must pass at 80%.
4. At the end, you’ll receive a digital credential or badge for completing the training.
5. Go to "Credentials" on the course's navigation menu.

6. Click the course name from the list, and click Share Badge on the screen that appears.
7. Submit the URL here as proof of completion.
8. You now have a CVC Accessibility Credential! 

Criteria for Success

You completed the full training and passed the assessment at 80% or better. You submitted a link to your earned badge.

Due at: Sep 29 at 12am

Grading Type: Pass/Fail

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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4. Images

Alternative Text (aka Alt Text) and Long Descriptions

Whenever a page presents images and other non-text content (like an infographic for example), it must also present "alternative text" that provides equivalent information to that presented in the image.

Alternative text, more commonly referring to by it's nickname "alt text," is essentially a description of an image. It has two important functions for accessibility:

The alt text is read aloud by a screen reader, so in the event that a person can't see the image in a traditional sense, they can still access the content and function of the image.
Alt text can also be incredibly helpful in cases where an image won't load, or when the user has chosen not to view images.

Writing Alt Text or marking an image "Decorative"

Writing good alt text can be a bit more of an art than a science. A lot depends on the context of the page content where the image is being presented. If your image content is complex, you might choose to use longer descriptions in the paragraphs surrounding the image to fully capture it.

When writing alt text, consider what details the students need from the image. If you aren't sure, ask yourself why you included that particular image. The same image might have different alt text depending on its context and what you want students to "get" from it.

Four Tips:

#1: Use no more than 20 words. Alt text should be succinct.

You will get a Canvas Accessibility Checker error if your alt-text is more than 120 characters. If it want to clear the error, shorten your alt-text. The “under 120 (or 125) characters” guideline for alt text is not a legal requirement, but rather a widely accepted best practice based on how screen readers function. Some screen readers will truncate alt text that exceeds 125 characters.
What if the meaning of your image can't be captured in 20(ish) words? Read about Long Descriptions below.



(Photo by Loan on Unsplash)

Suggested alt text: A gray tabby kitten mid-yawn sitting in a hardwood floor.

#2: Avoid “image of”, “photo of”, etc, unless the medium is particularly important.
A screen reader will always say the word "image," before reading the alt-text, so these kinds of phrases are redundant, forcing the software to say: "Image: Image of _____" or "Image: This is a picture of _____."
When the medium is important, like in an art study, it is appropriate to provide the medium. (ex: "Image: An oil painting of _____", Image: An AI-rendering of _____")

AI-generated image: officer taking a report from an orange kitten standing in a T-shirt and denim shorts.

(Image generated by Sora, an AI model developed by OpenAI)

Suggested alt text: AI-generated picture of an officer taking a report from an orange kitten standing in a T-shirt and denim shorts.

#3: Mark an image as "decorative" only when:

The image is purely decorative and provides no useful information to your students.
The information provided by the image is also elsewhere on the page, and the image is unnecessary to access it.



(Photo by Christin Hume on Unsplash)

On a page welcoming students to online learning, I would probably mark this image as Decorative.

#4: When there is text on the image (posters, flyers, banners, etc.), the same text should be in the alternative text or on the page.



(Image generated by Sora, an AI model developed by OpenAI. Text overlay designed and added by Elise Baker.)

Suggested Alt text: An orange and blue octopus in an underwater forest. Text reads: OCTA – Online Certification in Teaching and Accessibility.

When do I need a Long Description?

While alt text works well for simple images (like photos, icons, or decorative visuals), if the meaning or content of an image cannot be captured in 20(ish) words or less, you'll need to provide a longer description of the image nearby. This is common for:

Charts or graphs with data trends

Infographics with multiple points or text blocks

Diagrams showing relationships or processes

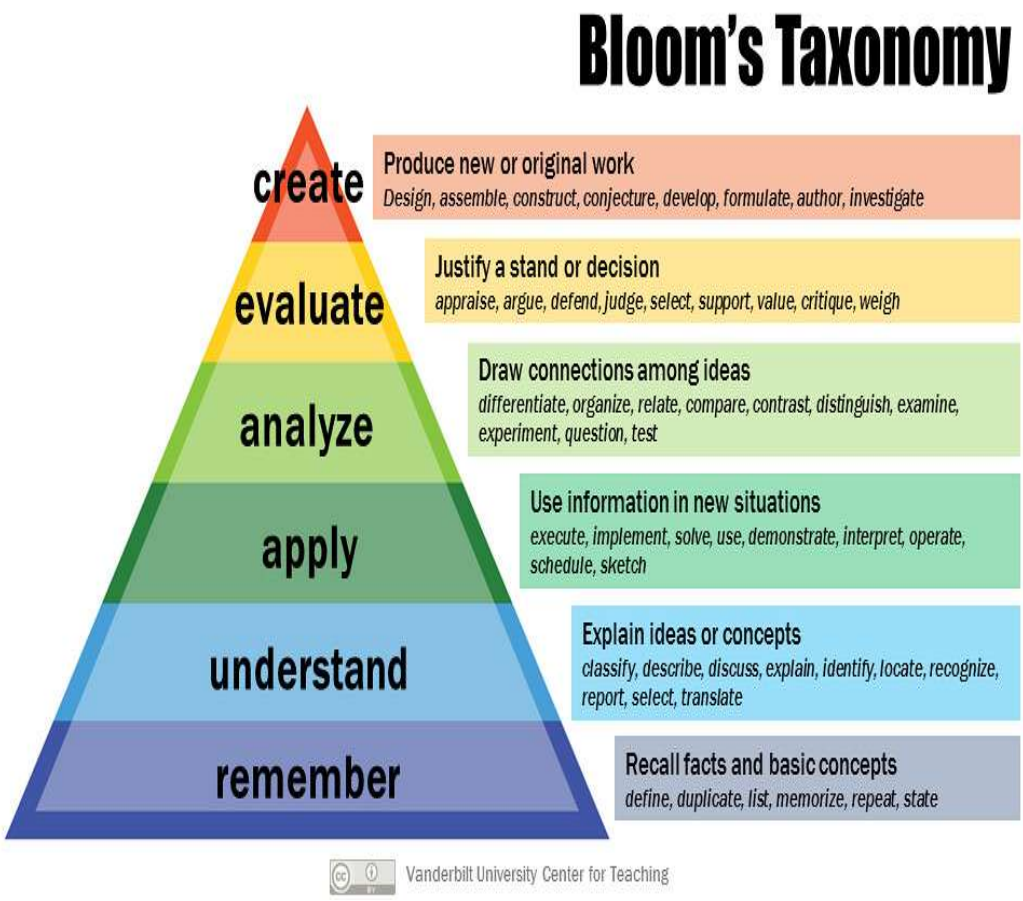
Maps with meaningful locations or labels

In these cases, use your alt-text for a very short summary, and write "Full description follows," so the user knows they'll get the content by reading on. Then do follow it with the promised longer description nearby. Consider some of these infographics we've come across in OCTA so far. Click each image to return to the page you saw it on, and see how a longer description was included nearby or in surrounding context.

Pssst... I've suggested alt-text for these images below so you can see how you might create alt text for an image that is also a link!



Suggested alt text: "Infographic on backward design process. Link leads to full text description."



Suggested alt text: "Bloom's Taxonomy infographic. Link leads to full text description."

Making sense?

Click Next to learn how to apply your alt-text.

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How Do I add Alt Text?

Applying Alt Text in Canvas

There are four ways to add alt text to images in Canvas.

The **best way** is to add alt-text as you are building your course and adding images. Any time you had an image, you'll get a dialog box that pops up, allowing you to preview the image. It includes a spot for you to write your alt text or mark the picture as decorative. It's that simple!
Another way is to create an entire content page with your images used throughout, and then click the Accessibility Checkeraccessibility icon icon once you're done. It will prompt you to add alt text to each image one after another. Once all images have alt text and errors are cleared, you're good to go.
The third way is more of a **remedial** approach. If you've been reading this module and thinking "I don't have that...", you'll want to follow these instructions to remediate the issue:

1. Click **Edit** on the Canvas page, discussion, or assignment with an image in need of alt-text.
2. Click on the image you want to edit, then click the small Image Options gear icon or right-click and choose **Image Options**.
3. In the panel that opens on the right, find the **Alt Text** field.
4. Enter a short, meaningful description of the image's content or purpose, or if the image is decorative and conveys no meaningful content, check the “Decorative Image” box.
5. Click **Done** and then **Save** the page.

...or just click the Accessibility Checker and let it guide the way!

Canvas Alt Text Resources

How do I manage alt text and display options for images embedded in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?
How do I embed images from Canvas into the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?

Adding Alt Text in Microsoft Word or Powerpoint

If you are sharing Word documents or PPT slides electronically, you'll also need to add alternative text to images on those resources before they can be shared with students.

1. Right-click on the image in your file and select **Edit Alt Text**.
2. A panel will appear on the right side of the screen.
3. Type a clear, concise description in the text box.
4. Do **not** include phrases like “image of” or “picture of”—screen readers already indicate it’s an image.
5. If the image is purely decorative, check the box that says **Mark as decorative**.

Microsoft Alt Text Resources

Everything you need to know to write effective alt text
Add alternative text to a shape, picture, chart, SmartArt graphic, or other object

Alt Text Reminders

Keep it concise—usually under 125 characters.
Focus on the image’s purpose, not just its appearance.
Skip phrases like “photo of” or “image of.”
Use long descriptions elsewhere for charts, graphs, or infographics.

Click Next to practice.

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★ Adding Alt Text - Lil' Quiz/Course-building Activity

Points: 5.0

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5. Tables and Charts

Making Tables Accessible

Tables should be used to present data in rows and columns, *not* to control the layout of contents on a page. Some Canvas users (me included!) often have an idea of how they want a page to be laid out, with images and text in certain spots, and tables *seem* like a good way to get there. But they should only be used for data, not layout.

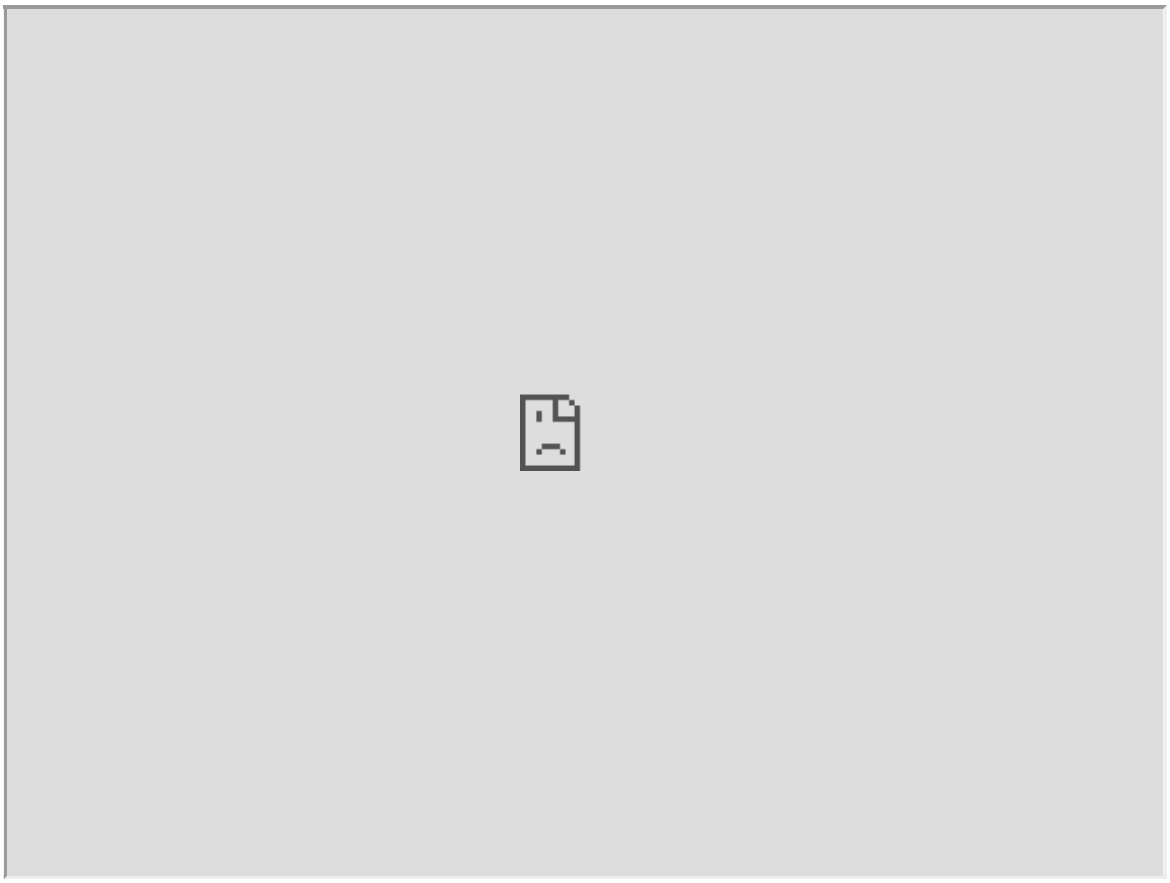
When presenting data in a table, keep the table simple. If the table is complex, consider whether you could divide it into multiple smaller tables with a heading above each. Sometimes a table just has to be complex, and that's fine. But work to simplify when you can.

An accessible table includes:

at least one-row header or column header
a brief caption

Accessible Tables in Canvas

Review the video below for tips on making accessible Tables in Canvas from Helen Graves, former Professional Development Director for the CVC.



Accessible Tables in Microsoft

If you are providing digital documents or PPTs, you'll need to make sure the tables are accessible in those too. You might not need this now, but remember that it's here so you can revisit it next time you are making a table to share with students. Here is the process for doing this in Microsoft systems:

1. Create your table.
2. Set a header row.
- Click inside the table.
- Go to the **Table Design** tab (Word) or **Table Tools Design** tab (PowerPoint).
- Check the box for **Header Row**.
- This tells screen readers that the first row contains column headings.
3. Add descriptive column headings. Use short, clear labels for each column (e.g., “Date,” “Score,” “Student Name”). Don’t leave header cells blank.

4. Avoid merged or split cells wherever possible. Merged cells can confuse screen readers and make navigation unpredictable.
5. Add alt text for the table

- Right-click on the table and select **Table Properties** (Word) or **Edit Alt Text** (PowerPoint).
- Write a brief description of what the table shows (e.g., “Summary of student scores by assignment.”).
- Skip phrases like "Table showing..."—screen readers already announce it’s a table.

6. Always check your tables in any program with the available Accessibility Checker.

- Go to **Review Check Accessibility**.
- Follow prompts to fix any remaining issues.

More Support for Microsoft

Creating Accessible Tables in Word or PPT

Click Next to earn a badge from the CVC for mastering Table Accessibility.

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★ Complete the CCCAC Tables and Accessibility Training - CVC Badge

Purpose

Tables are often overlooked accessibility practices, but are essential for users who rely on screen readers.

This short training from the CVC's Accessibility Essentials course set will show you how to build tables that are accessible to everyone.

Task

Complete the **20-minute "Tables and Accessibility" training** provided by the California Community Colleges Accessibility Center (CCCAC) and submit proof of completion.

Steps:

1. Visit the CCCAC Tables and Accessibility course in the Online Network of Educators course catalog.
2. Click Enroll Now.
    1. If you've already taken a CVC course, follow the steps to enroll and begin the course.
    2. If you have never taken a CVC course, create a free account to enroll and begin the course.
3. Complete the course. It includes 3 pages of learning and a 5 question "exit assessment" which you must pass at 80%.
4. At the end, you'll receive a digital credential or badge for completing the training.
5. Go to "Credentials" on the course's navigation menu.
6. Click the course name from the list, and click Share Badge on the screen that appears.
7. Submit the URL here as proof of completion.

8. You now have a CVC Accessibility Credential! 🎉

Criteria for Success

You completed the full training and passed the assessment at 80% or better. You submitted a link to your earned badge.

Due at: Sep 29 at 12am

Grading Type: Pass/Fail

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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6. Video Media

Captioning Basics

We covered captioning earlier in this course, in our Creating and Curating Content unit.

While some argue that closed captions are a lot of work to meet the needs of a small group of students, like curb cuts, it turns out that universal design benefits many. In fact, in a recent survey of student use of captions, researchers discovered that 98.6% of students find captions helpful in attention and retention, while 75% of students regularly use captions.

If you're wondering why, here's a short list of the most common reasons students use closed captions:

they are deaf or hard of hearing
they are listening/viewing in a public place;
they are listening/viewing at work;
captions help with studying.

While captioning can be labor-intensive, there are tips, techniques, and shortcuts that can help. Here are four basic guidelines for captioning:

1. The captioning must be **complete**, which means the video must be captioned from start to finish, including noting opening music and background noises, when intentional.
2. The captions must be 99% **accurate**. This means, literally, word-for-word, including grammar and punctuation.
3. The captions should display **synchronously** with the audio, running neither too fast nor too slow, and they should be on-screen for an adequate amount of time to allow careful reading.
4. The caption **placement** should not obscure other important information. Usually, captions are placed at the bottom of the screen.

Captioning with Canvas Studio

Revisit our lesson on Making Your Own Instructional Videos for a refresher on captioning in Canvas Studio.

Captioning with Zoom

For Live Meetings

Before your meeting, office hour, or class session:

1. Go to cos-edu.zoom.us and log in.
2. Click **Settings** in the left menu
3. Under the **Meeting** tab, scroll to the **In Meeting (Advanced)** section
4. Turn on the following:

Closed captioning
Enable live transcription service to show transcript on the side panel in-meeting
Allow participants to save captions (optional)

During your meeting, office hour, or class session:

1. Click the **CC (Show Captions)** or **Live Transcript** button on the Zoom toolbar
   Click **Enable Auto-Transcription**
2. Zoom will now begin generating real-time captions. Participants can adjust font size and placement in their own Zoom settings.

For Recorded Meetings

For meetings you plan to store *to the Cloud:*

1. Make sure **"Audio transcript"** is enabled under your Zoom Recording Settings before the meeting
2. After the meeting, Zoom will generate a separate transcript file (.vtt)

3. You can edit the transcript within Zoom under **My Recordings**, and captions will appear when the video is played back

For meetings you store *Locally* (as a file on your device):

1. Since Zoom doesn't automatically generate captions for local files, you actually have to upload the video to a platform like YouTube or Canvas Studio to caption.
2. Whatever tool you use, review and edit captions for accuracy before publishing to students

Captioning with YouTube

Using YouTube's Auto-Captioning:

1. Go to youtube.com and sign in with your Google account
2. Click the **Create** icon (camera with a +) and select **Upload video**
3. Follow the prompts to upload your file
4. Let YouTube Generate Automatic Captions
5. Edit Captions for Accuracy
6. Go to **YouTube Studio**: studio.youtube.com
7. From the left-hand menu, select **Subtitles**

- Click on the video you want to edit
- Under the “Subtitles” column, click the **three dots** next to the automatic captions and select **the pencil icon** (Duplicate and edit).
- Play the video while editing the captions, fixing spelling, punctuation and timing.

8. When finished, click **Publish** to make the edited captions live.

Download or Export Captions for a Transcript (Optional)

After editing, you can download the captions file (.vtt or .srt) to:

Use in other platforms (like Canvas Studio or Panopto)

Share with students as a transcript

Click Next to move to the next page

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★ Complete the CCCAC Creating Accessible Captions Training - CVC Badge

Purpose

Captions are a critical accessibility tool for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, but they also benefit those who are multilingual, learning in noisy environments, or that process information visually.

This short training from the CVC's Accessibility Essentials course set will help you understand how to create accurate and meaningful captions for video and audio content in your course.

Task

Complete the **20-minute “Creating Accessible Captions" training** provided by the California Community Colleges Accessibility Center (CCCAC) and submit proof of completion.

Steps:

1. Visit the CCCAC Creating Accessible Captions course in the Online Network of Educators course catalog.
2. Click Enroll Now.
    1. If you've already taken a CVC course, follow the steps to enroll and begin the course.
    2. If you have never taken a CVC course, create a free account to enroll and begin the course.
3. Complete the course. It includes 3 pages of learning and a 5 question "exit assessment" which you must pass at 80%.
4. At the end, you’ll receive a digital credential or badge for completing the training.
5. Go to "Credentials" on the course's navigation menu.

6. Click the course name from the list, and click Share Badge on the screen that appears.
7. Submit the URL here as proof of completion.
8. You now have a CVC Accessibility Credential! 

Criteria for Success

You completed the full training and passed the assessment at 80% or better. You submitted a link to your earned badge.

Due at: Sep 29 at 12am

Grading Type: Pass/Fail

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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Putting the Pieces Together is not currently supported

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★ Check the Accessibility of One Page in your Course - Course-building Activity

Purpose

By testing a real content page that includes common accessibility elements—headings, an image with alt text, and color—you'll gain experience identifying and fixing issues that could create barriers for students using assistive technology. This activity will give you practice in evaluating the accessibility of your course using Canvas's built-in checker.

By completing this assignment, you will :

Demonstrate the ability to use the canvas accessibility checker.

Task

For this activity, you will choose one existing Canvas content page in your DE Course Shell that includes all three of the following elements. If you do not have all three elements on a single page in your course, you may need to make some edits to complete this assignment.

A heading structure (e.g., Heading 2, Heading 3)
At least one image with appropriate alt text
Use of a color other than black

Then, follow these steps:

1. Open the page in Edit mode.
2. Click the Accessibility Checker icon (at the bottom right of the Rich Content Editor).
3. Review any issues that are identified and make corrections where needed.
4. Submit documentation that you completed the check (see options below).

Need some help?

How do I use the Accessibility Checker in the Rich Content Editor?

Criteria for Success

1. You selected a page from your DE Course Shell with all required elements: Heading structure, an image with alt text, and color use.
2. You ran the Canvas Accessibility Checker and addressed any issues it flagged.
3. You submitted a URL to the page in your DE Shell and a short explanation of what you updated, if anything.

Due at: Sep 29 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online Text Entry, Online Upload

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Additional Resources and Support is not currently supported

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COS Course Design Rubric, Section D: Accessibility

This page is an example of how we can share a file alongside context! Rather than just adding the file to the Module so it opens on it's own, I'm embedding it here instead, so I can write a message that lets you know how to use it, why it's important, what to do with it moving forward, etc.

Review the Rubric: Accessibility

Your DE Course Shell will be evaluated at the end of OCTA using the full version of the COS Course Design Rubric. I've extracted the section below from the full rubric so you can focus in on some of the areas related to the content we covered in this module. You might also notice some things that we've covered in other modules (like Instructions) and things we haven't covered too thoroughly just yet (like Policies) I recommend getting familiar with this rubric and referencing it frequently as you build out your Shell to ensure you are Aligning with all of the areas. **Your course must be fully Aligned to receive DE Certification at the end of OCTA.**

Have questions or concerns? Send me a Canvas message to visit me in my office hours Mondays from 3-4 PM and Thursdays from 11-12 PM!

File COS POCR-Course Design Rubric-Section D.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

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Did You Enjoy the 20-minute CCCAC Credentials?

Level-up your CV and Online Teaching

By completing this module, you've already earned the following badges:

CCCAC Tables and Accessibility
CCCAC Creating Accessible Captions
CCCAC Accessible Stylings: Color Use, Color Contrast, Fonts
CCCAC Creating Accessible Links

Here are a few more you might be interested in completing:

CCCAC Accessibility with Plain and Inclusive Language
CCCAC Accessible Images for Social Media
CCCAC Accessible Text for Social Media
CCCAC Alternative Text for Images
CCCAC Beginner's Guide to Accessibility Process Design
CCCAC Creating Accessible Emails
CCCAC Foundations of Digital Accessibility Law

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Accessibility Unit Q&A

Questions about Accessibility or about OCTA so far?

Click the "Reply" button to ask course-related or "how do I do this?" questions.



Along your journey, you may want to ask me or your colleagues about a topic, get some additional thoughts about an online teaching strategy or challenge, or you may just need some clarification about an aspect of the class. If so, jump in and ask it here! If it is a question about one of the content pages and/or assignments, please be sure to identify the location of the page as thoroughly as possible so we may troubleshoot promptly (providing a URL is ideal!)

Successful teaching and learning require a village in any modality Any participant is welcome and encouraged to respond to discussion posts. If you know an answer or have a resource to contribute, jump in and help out a friend!

If you have a personal question or concern about the class that you'd like to speak with me about, please Canvas message me directly.

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End of Module 5 - Recap

Unit Objectives (...did we make it?!)

That was a doozy of a unit, I know. You gained a lot of new knowledge and skills (and badges!) by completing it.

By now, you should be able to:

Recognize the educational benefit of making content accessible
Modify existing course materials to comply with accessibility requirements
Develop new course materials that comply with accessibility requirements
Demonstrate the ability to evaluate and remediate digital course elements (e.g., captions, tables, color contrast, links) using accessibility principles and tools.

In this module, you read about the importance of creating accessible learning experience for all of our students, and learned about different ways and tools to make your content accessible and legally compliant. Hopefully, you feel encouraged and have a better idea of how to develop content that is accessible from the jump, and how to check and make updates to your existing content.

How's that DE Course Shell looking?

You should be making steady progress, spending time every week building out your DE Course Shell. There are many Course-building activities built into this course to help you along the way, but much of the building is going to be up to you! Remember, placeholders are OK for things you aren't totally sure about yet, or for media content you haven't created yet. But a solid framework should be in place here at the end of Week 5.

When you click Next, we'll look at a checklist to help your DE Course Shell stay on track as we approach the end of OCTA.

If you feel like you're *really* behind, let's talk.

The next module is going to focus on online policies and procedures.

Click Next to see the checklist.

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Checkpoint 1: DE Shell Progress

1. DE Course Shell Checklist (Week 6)

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DE Course Shell Checklist (Week 6)

DE Course Shell Progress Checklist

As you've been working through this course, you've been actively building out a DE course shell in Canvas that demonstrates your understanding of accessible, student-centered course design. This page provides a checklist to help you track your progress and ensure your shell includes all of the elements that have been introduced so far.

Check off what you've accomplished and identify what still needs some attention. You'll also find some suggestions for enhancements and quality checks to further strengthen your course.

Required Elements

Required Elements of the DE Course Shell by Week 6

Complete?	Element
	Welcome Letter set up as a Pre-Course Canvas Announcement
	Discussion Board with Participation Expectations
	A Summative Assessment using the TILT Framework (note: this was a Discussion in OCTA. Now is the time to place it in your Shell.)

	A Formative Assessment
	Mid-course Student Feedback Survey
	An Embedded Video
	Three Scheduled Announcements
	A Designated Home Page for Your Course
	An Image w/ Appropriate Alt Text
	One Accessiblility Error-Free Page in the Course
	Slowly populating the modules planned in your Course Road Map
	Consistent Naming Structure for Module Titles
	Additionally, now that we have covered Accessibility, **it is expected that you will begin to work backwards and remediate the content** that we created *before* we knew how to create accessible content. It is expected that by Week 8, **all content c**reated in pursuit of the Online Certificate in Teaching and Accessibility (OCTA) **will be fully accessible.**

Click next to begin Module 6, covering Policies, Procedures, and Orientation in an Online Course.

Back to Checkpoint 1: DE Shell Progress

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Module 6: Policies and Procedures in the Online Course (Sept. 29-Oct. 5)

1. Unit 6 Overview
2. Setting Up Expectations and Support
3. ★ What Do Students Need in an Online Course Orientation? - Discussion/Exercise
4. Building an Orientation Module
5. Humanizing Your Course Policies
6. Online "Attendance"
7. Putting the Pieces Together
8. ★ Writing and Revising Online Course Policies - Course-building Activity
9. ★ Submitting an Accessible Online Course Syllabus - Course-building Activity
10. ★ Create an Orientation Module - Course-building Activity
11. Additional Resources and Support
12. COS Course Design Rubric (Full Version)
13. Policies and Procedures Unit Q&A
14. End of Module 6 - Recap

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Unit 6 Overview

What to Expect in this Unit



In this unit, we are going to start to work on the the initial set-up of the online courses we've been building. We'll focus in on building an orientation, to get students started on the right foot, and on establishing our expectations via clear course policies and procedures. If you've been teaching a little while, you likely already have some expectations for things like attendance, late work, and classroom behaviors, and if you're new to teaching, you've likely been in courses with both strict and lax course rules.

Whatever your experience level, we'll all benefit from a discussion of what information and introductions students need to start the semester off on the right foot. We'll then move into *humanizing* our policies and checking to make sure they make sense for an online class. You may choose to revise your existing policies, or you may choose to start from scratch. If you're new to online teaching, there are some policies that are specific to online courses that you'll have to draft for the first time.

Unit Objectives

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

Build an orientation module
Develop clear and equitable online course policies;
Create an accessible syllabus for your course.

Click Next to move to the next page

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Setting Up Expectations and Support is not currently supported

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★ What Do Students Need in an Online Course Orientation? - Discussion/Exercise

Purpose

This conversation will require you to reflect on how you prepare your students to succeed at the beginning of a course in a modality you are familiar with, and how that approach might shift based on the instructional modality. Orientation, whether it takes place in-person, on Zoom or in an asynchronous content module, is an essential moment to establish expectations, support student engagement, and ease anxiety from the start. By talking about your own practices and reading about others', you'll hopefully begin to narrow in on what an effective online orientation module should include.

This discussion will prepare you for the assignment at the end of this module, where you'll begin building orientation content/placeholders in your course shell.

Task

Initial Post, due by Wednesday 11:59 PM

In your initial post, please respond to the following questions:

1. What do you believe an effective orientation should accomplish?
2. What do you currently include in your own course orientations (in person, online, or hybrid)?

3. What changes/additions to the content might be necessary to hold an orientation online?

Your post can be written or recorded (audio/video), and should reflect your current thinking and practices—even if those are still evolving.

You most post to the discussion before you will be able to see others' responses.

Peer Responses, due by Sunday 11:59 PM

Read and respond to **at least two peers**. In your replies, take one of the following approaches to advance the conversation and support one another:

Ask a follow-up question
Share a similar or different experience
Offer a suggestion or resource
Reflect on something that gave you a new idea
Anything else that organically comes up from your read...

Criteria for Success

The initial post addresses all three questions with thoughtful detail
There are responses to at least two peers in a way that supports and furthers discussion

Due at: Oct 6 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 5.0

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Building an Orientation Module

Why Build an Orientation?

Hopefully participating in the discussion helped answer this question already! An orientation module is a critical part of any well-designed course. It proactively addresses the most common questions and areas of confusion, so students start the class feeling clear and confident about what they need to do to succeed. It also offers an opportunity for you to introduce yourself and be seen outside of the content you're teaching, which has a humanizing effect.

In an online class this is particularly important, since you won't be sharing physical space with your students on the first day of class. Some of the basic "orientation" stuff happens naturally in an in-person class, just by virtue of you introducing yourself and getting the class rolling.

In online courses, the orientation module replaces the first day of class.

It gives students a clear and guided path to the important policies, to meting their teacher and classmates, and to the services that will support them at COS.

What should an Orientation module include?

Below is a list of pages or components an online orientation module might contain. They are all recommended, but you can pick and choose, combine and refine to make them feel more suited to your unique class.

> ***Tip:*** Open another tab, go to your Modules in your DE Shell, and create placeholder pages for all of the things in this list that you want to include.

A Welcome Message

A short video or written message welcomes your students to your course, sets a positive tone, and humanizes you. This can also be a space to introduce the theme or structure of the course, give a Canvas tour, or show off your dog and just be a totally normal person welcoming new students to the class.

An Instructor Introduction

This could be a video introduction or a brief written bio. If you made a Welcome video, consider writing your instructor "About Me" page. If you wrote your Welcome message, then consider recording your Instructor Introduction as a video.

My "About Me" is a content page with pictures. It includes sections called My Education, My Career, My Hobbies, and My Relationship To You. All are written in student-facing language to make me relatable and approachable, and concludes with some

pictures that show my life outside of the "professor" role. Feel free to borrow this format if it feels authentic to you!

Meet Your Teacher

My Name: Elise Baker

Email: eliseb@cos.edu

I'm pleased to be your instructor on your journey to become a more effective group communicator. Group work is challenging but can also be incredibly rewarding. I admit that I prefer working alone to working with others, but that's just my personality type - I'm independent, introverted, and great at finding ways to occupy and entertain myself. However, even introverts serve an essential role in groups. You'll see as we learn this semester!

My Education

I didn't love high school but I did love to learn, so I started attending community college as a dual enrollment student, just soon as I could. I transferred from Fresno City College to Fresno State, where I earned a Bachelor's degree and then a Master's degree, both in Communication Studies. How funny for an introvert, right?

My Family

I live in Fresno with my husband Drew, two gray cats named Olive and Squash, and sweet little dog named Myla. My grandparents lived in Visalia, and my Dad went to Redwood High and COS before transferring to Fresno State in the 1970s, so I've been hanging out in Visalia all my life.

My Hobbies

I love to hike, camp, and identify edible plants and mysterious mushrooms all along the coast. I'm an avid gardener and reader (I have a 52-book goal for this year - recommend me your favorite books!), and also love to roller skate, crochet, and go to music festivals all over the US.

My Relationship to You

I'm a complex human, just like you are. Teacher is just one of my many, many identities, just like student is just one of yours. I hope you will see me as a living breathing human, and I will do the same for you. I hope we can create a learning space where we can be ourselves and embrace individuality and learn from each other. Reach out to me if you need help, have questions, or just want to connect. Your questions will never annoy me, so never start an email with "I'm sorry to bother you..." You're not! Let's talk!



Elise with a mushroom ID book and a bright red Amanita muscaria mushroom



A "How To Get Started"

A clear, step-by-step guide that tells students what to do first. This might feel redundant from your Welcome announcement you wrote earlier, but this is important stuff, so the more times students see it, the better. This can include a checklist, a list of tasks to complete to avoid being dropped, a link to access the textbook, the syllabus, etc...

A Course Overview

A very short summary of what the course covers, how it's structured, and what students can expect in terms of weekly workload, pacing, and grading. This should be written in student-centered language. Resist the urge to copy and paste the Course Description from the COR here. That belongs in

your Syllabus (more on that ahead...) but the Orientation is all about students.

> ***Tip:*** Try giving your Course Description to your favorite LLM (like ChatGPT) and ask it to re-write it in language suited to CA community college students. Read, refine, and share, if it feels like what you were after.

Access to the Syllabus

Provide a direct link to your syllabus, preferably as an accessible Canvas page. It is strongly recommended that you include syllabus highlights in bullet points nearby, or a syllabus quiz.

> ***Why a Quiz?*** It's a super easy auto-graded "check-in" style assessment that allows you to start to tracking engagement and take "attendance" in the first few days of the semester. It also directs student attention to the most important parts of the syllabus, which saves you time and saves them surprises later!

Required Technology Information

Introduce the key tools students will need to use (e.g., Canvas, video platforms, external apps, hardware, etc). Include links to tutorials or help guides where appropriate. Consider including the following links on this page:

> COS Library: Laptop Checkouts
>
> Need Canvas Help? Canvas Student Support

COS Help Desk: Student Tech Stupport

A Communication Policy

Explain how and when to contact you, what communication platforms you'll use, and expected response times. You may also include netiquette guidelines for respectful interaction. To ensure you are meeting accreditation requirements, I recommend implementing the template that is on our OCTA Contact and Communication Policy page.

For more info on the communication policy, revisit our RSI Bite #1: Have a Communication Policy, and Follow it! page in Module 3.

Information About Student Services

Let students know how to request accommodations and where to find campus support services, such as tutoring, writing centers, tech support, and mental health resources. A team of COS faculty actually created an easy-to-adopt Campus Resources page in Spring 2025, and added it to Canvas Commons just for you. You are encouraged to import right into your Orientation module! If you use it, be sure to thank Katie Beberian (English), Linda De Rio (Psychology), Emily Campbell (Library), and Brice Nakamura (English)!

Need help importing? How do I import a resource from Canvas Commons into my Canvas shell?

An Engagement/Roll Call Activity or Discussion

Include a low-stakes or ungraded activity to help students get comfortable using Canvas tools and are *incredibly* useful at eliminating online enrollment fraud from the jump.

Examples:

an “Introduce Yourself” discussion builds peer-to-peer connection and community,
a syllabus quiz helps direct attention to the most important policies, dates, and deadlines
a practice assignment submission:
have students access their textbook and submit a screenshot to show they successfully did
have students write a short response about which student services they see themselves using this semester
have students create a 30-second self-introduction video or audio clip
assess what submission format your course will use the most and have them use it. (file upload, submitting a link, uploading a video, doing a text entry, etc.)

Optional: Policies-by-the-Page

Some instructional designers recommend putting each course policy on its own clearly labeled page (i.e. Late Work Policy, Drop Policy, Net Etiquette Policy, etc.), rather than leaving them to be discovered in a text-heavy syllabus. There are some benefits to doing it this way:

Each policy is very easy to find at any time, and does not require scrolling around "hunting" for it when it needs to be referenced.

Students are more likely to read each policy thoroughly if they are presented as a short "chunk" of text on a page, versus one paragraph in a 10-page document.
You can add in more personal elements (or even a video) if you want to further explain a policy that students might not understand (like *why* all work must be typed in 12 pt. font with 1" margins)

Final Tips

Keep content brief and organized. Use heading styles, bullet-style highlights wherever possible, and simple, jargon-free language
Make the orientation module very easy to find via a "Start Here" or "Orientation" link if using a Home Page, or by having it be the top thing on the page if you're using Modules as your home page.

Click Next to learn about humanizing our course policies.

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Humanizing Your Course Policies

We could all use a little more kindness right now, couldn't we?

A Pedagogy of Kindness

In Unit 4, you read about the theory of *humanizing* your courses and have undoubtedly notice the word pop up again and again since then. One of the principles of humanizing is **trust** - both trusting your students and showing students that they can trust you. Trusting students can be hard, especially if we've never met them, and there are likely reasons for your existing policies on things like attendance, late work, and academic honesty. All it takes is one hard learned lesson, right?

But as it turns out, inflexible policies seem to impact our minority and first generation students disproportionately (Ciancanelli, Stewart, Adamo, 2023).

Think about the following quote:

> "*A compassionate pedagogy is more necessary now than ever before: to see the student beyond the screen, to recognize the limits and affordances of body, space, and technology, to identify issues of privacy in an increasingly surveilled digital world, and to be*

> *conscious of the basic needs of students which must be met to make learning possible*." (Stommel, Friend and Morris, 2020)

Students (and faculty!) experience basic needs insecurity, and struggle to access nutritious and sufficient food; safe, secure, and adequate housing; healthcare to promote mental and physical well-being; affordable technology and transportation; resources for personal hygiene; and childcare and related needs (Real College Survey, 2021).

The 2021 survey adds, that their collected responses indicated that "students were struggling to concentrate, worried about their academic performance, concerned about their mental and physical health..." With these increasing barriers to education, adding *flexibility* to our courses and course policies can help students be more successful.

Cate Denial's Pedagogy of Kindness (2019) and distills down to two simple things: **believing people**, and **believing *in* people**.

Believing your students doesn't have to mean that you always say "yes" or that you become a doormat. You don't even have to revise a policy, really... just rephrasing can make it more inviting or supportive. This table, from the Center for Teaching and Learning at UMass, has some examples of effective re-wording.

Rephrasing to Humanize a Policy

Say	Instead Of
I encourage you to…	Students must…
You have the opportunity to…	I will only accept…
Late work is accepted for partial credit of 60% of the total point value	Late work will be penalized by a reduction of 40%.

Say	Instead Of
It is important that you log in several times a week. Otherwise, you will miss out on the many learning activities that we will engage in. If you cannot log in to Canvas for several days, let's talk about how you can make up missed work.	Students are expected to be on Canvas frequently. Long periods of inactivity will result in a lowered grade.
The following course values will guide our interactions and help you learn.	Students are expected to comply with all course policies or will face consequences.

Reviewing Course Policies

Sometimes we copy-paste our syllabus semester-after-semester, until we have a Frankenstein of outdated policies and different teacher voices that are barely ours anymore. Revising your course for *modality* (moving online, or hybrid, or back to in person) is a great time to reflect on course policies and make updates. Here are two policies to think about, and some tips for revision.

Revise a late-work policy to allow students clear options when they need a reasonable amount of additional time. Here are some options:

A one-time *"Life Happens" Hall Pass P*olicy can give any student an automatic 72-hour extension on one (major) assignment per semester, no questions asked, as long as the student informs you in writing before missing the deadline. You can adjust the hours to whatever feels right, but I'd recommend at least 48 hours. Life *does* happen.

A *“Standard Deduction”* Policy can indicate that any late assignment will earn a flat 10% grade deduction as long as they are completed within 7 days of the deadline.
A “*One Extension”* Policy can give any student the option to propose a reasonable deadline extension, subject to your approval, once during the semester (perhaps as long as they provide a plan for how they will complete the work).
A "*By The Time I Grade It"* Policy. This is the one I use in my online courses. If the work is submitted by the time I go to grade it, I call it on time. This feels true to my personal pedagogy, because sometimes I am swamped with other work and don't get around to grading something when I planned or promised to. It feels fair to me. If I finish grading the batch of submissions and theirs wasn't in the stack, *then* it's missing/late. I don't ever deal with late requests with this policy in place, because students know they probably already had a decent extension.

Revise a policy about make-up or revision work to allow students clear options when their performance in the course is negatively affected by outside circumstances. Here are some options:

A standard “*I Know Where I Messed Up*” Assignment can ask students to summarize, analyze, and/or make an additional contribution based on the week's questions/materials that they missed or messed up on, and post asynchronously by a reasonable deadline to earn equivalent or partial credit.
Example: They submitted low-quality work for the week, and report that they didn't have time to do it correctly due to a stolen laptop over the weekend. They can submit to the I Know Where I Messed Up Assignment to show that... well, they know where they messed up and actually *do* understand the content.
A standard “*One Revision”* Policy can allow any student to revise one (major) assignment within two weeks after it is graded, perhaps for a new grade, or perhaps for up to a 10% increase on their prior grade provided that the revisions are significant (not just error corrections).

Note that fewer students than you might expect tend to participate in these efforts, because revision is hard!

Adapted and expanded from Designing for Flexiblity by Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning at George Mason University, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

You will have the opportunity to submit some course policies at the end of this module.

Click Next to move to the next page.

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Online "Attendance"

How do we measure attendance online?

In an online course, attendance is measured by student participation - *not* logins.

The ACCJC, the California Community College accrediting agency, uses the term ***academic engagement*.** In these terms, attendance is actually participating in curriculum-related coursework. Submitting an assignment, taking a test, participating in an online discussion would all count as academic engagement - as long as *the content is related to the curriculum of the course.*

Let students know that their participation, *not their log-ins* are how attendance and engagement are measured.

Reporting Last Date of Attendance (LDA)

We are required by law to report the last date of attendance when a student earns a final grade of F or UW. According to 34 CFR § 668.22"Institutions must determine the last date of attendance for students who withdraw or stop participating in a class and receive federal financial aid."

There are a few options for identifying student participations, but the best option is to download a copy of your Canvas Gradebook (How do I export grades in the Gradebook?) and use some of the score columns as participations. This means looking at the last course-related assignment the student submitted, and noting the date it was submitted. That date is their **LDA.**

You can also use the Canvas New Analytics tool to find the last time the student participated. From your Canvas course, click on the New Analytics button on the side menu, and then click on “Students” from the tabs across the top of the page. Use the “Last Participation” column for last date of attendance.


A screenshot of the New Analytics tool, viewing Student Last Participations

Drop Policies

"If a student has stopped attending class before the end of the tenth week of a full semester course or 60% of a short-term course, an instructor may submit a drop slip for the student or drop the student through their online faculty portal." (COS AP 5075)

No-Show Drops:

In a face-to-face class, students who are not in the classroom on the first day are often dropped as "no-show" drops. This doesn't have a direct translation to online, since attendance is measured by "engagement in the academic activities" instead of logging-in.

To gauge who to No-Show Drop, ask students to complete a task or a set of tasks by a particular date in order to avoid being dropped. This should be something that doesn't require purchasing the textbook (since some students may not have it by the first week). See our Orientation Module page for some ideas. Best practice is to allow students 48-72 hours to complete these tasks. Those that fail to do so are dropped as No Shows, and can be replaced by students on your waitlist.

Late Drops:

Late drops can be requested once the final drop date has passed, but only for specific, extenuating circumstances. Documentation must be included with the request. If approved, the student would be dropped with a “W” and no refund.

AP 5075: Course Adds and Drops

Administrative Procedure 5075 addresses adds and drops in detail

Click Next to move to the next page

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Putting the Pieces Together is not currently supported

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★ Writing and Revising Online Course Policies - Course-building Activity

Purpose

Online courses require more specific policies for things like participation, attendance, and drops. As we complete our course frameworks, adding policies is essential. By completing this assignment, you will:

Develop clear and equitable online course policies

Task

For this assignment, you will create/revise and submit the following policies:

A course communication policy. You submitted this in Module 3. Now is the time to review it and make any changes you'd like to based on things you've learned since then. Y*ou do not have to make changes to it if it still feels aligned with your design and pedagogy,* but you may want to use this opportunity to check it for accessibility.
Include your days/times of availability, your response time, and preferred method(s) of communication.
Include how you expect to contact students (through announcements, Canvas messaging, feedback on assignments) and how frequently those will be used.
A no-show and late drop policy.
Identify the task(s) students will be required to complete and the day (ex: Day 3 of the first week, or the date the first learning unit is due)

in order to avoid being no-show dropped.
Identify the assignment(s) that count toward "attendance" for students to prevent being dropped in the late drop deadline.
A late work policy (review late work considerations here: Humanizing Your Course Policies)
Will late work be accepted at all? If so, when (or which type of work) and under what circumstances?
Will there be a different "late" policy for homework, for example, versus exams?
A feedback plan (review feedback information here: Giving Feedback for Formative and Summative Assessments)
Include how soon students can expect feedback on their assignments (generally speaking)
What type of feedback should students expect from you on their assignments? How/where do you want them to access that feedback
A technology support policy
When should students contact you versus help desk or Canvas support?
Provide access to the help desk via descriptive hyperlink if you are planning to direct them there

To submit:

You may submit these policies as links to pages in a module in your DE Shell, a file upload (.doc,), or via direct text entry.

Criteria for Success

Review the rubric below this assignment description for an overview of requirements - I will be using this while grading. You can expect feedback in the submission comments box.

Canvas Help

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I upload a file as an assignment submission in Canvas?
How do I submit a text entry on Canvas?
How do I submit a link on Canvas?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Oct 6 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online Text Entry, Online URL, Online Upload

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★ Submitting an Accessible Online Course Syllabus - Course-building Activity

Purpose

This assignment gives you the opportunity to revise your syllabus to look for language that refers to being in-person and to update any needed accessibility requirements.

By completing this assignment, you will:

Develop clear and equitable online course policies;
Create an accessible syllabus for your course.

Task

Review the File online syllabus checklist 2025.docx could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access..

In this assignment, you'll be submitting an accessible syllabus that includes all items from the checklist and is written for online (includes no references to being in person). Your syllabus will be in a Word document *or* a Canvas page.

You can use the content pages for the first 5 essential steps for accessibility:

Accessibility - 1: Headings

Accessibility - 2: Links

Accessibility - 3: Color and Contrast

Accessibility - 4: Images

Accessibility - 5: Tables (Link has been removed because content is not present or cannot be resolved.)

Additionally, this Guide from Microsoft will help you to check for accessibility in word documents.

You have three options to submit:

Please submit your syllabus in whichever way you plan to share it with your students.

Option 1: Submit a Word file (.doc, .docx) that has been checked for Accessibility.

Option 2: Submit a direct URL to the content page your syllabus appears on within your DE Course Shell.

Option 3: Submit a direct URL to the Syllabus tool (Link has been removed because content is not present or cannot be resolved.) in your DE Course Shell that includes your accessible syllabus.

Criteria for Success

Review the rubric below this assignment description for an overview of requirements - I will be using this while grading.

You can expect feedback in the submission comments box.

Canvas Help

How do I submit an online assignment?
How do I upload a file as an assignment submission in Canvas?
How do I submit a URL as an assignment in Canvas?
How do I view the rubric for my assignment?
How do I know when my assignment has been submitted?

Due at: Oct 6 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL, Online Upload

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★ Create an Orientation Module - Course-building Activity

Purpose

A well-designed orientation module sets students up for success by clearly explaining how the course works, what is expected of them, how to access help, and how to begin. In online courses, especially asynchronous ones, the orientation module takes the place of the “first day of class” and plays a critical role in creating the learning environment.

By completing this assignment, you will:

Build an orientation module

Task

Create an Orientation Module in your Canvas course shell that includes the essential elements outlined below. These may be custom pages, assignments, discussions, or linked external tools. This module should be 95% complete at the time of submission, with the exception of dates and details as-yet unknown. Placeholders (e.g., "Insert welcome video here") are acceptable for media elements if the structure and intent are clear.

Your module should include the following:

1. **Welcome Message** (written or video)
   A warm, personal welcome that sets a positive tone. A tour of the course works here as well.

2. **Instructor Introduction** (written or video)
   Contact information, a brief bio or video, a human touch.

3. **How to Get Started/Avoid Being Dropped**
   A checklist or page guiding students through what to do first.

4. **Course Overview**
   A brief summary of what the course covers and how it's structured on a weekly basis.

5. **Syllabus Access/Quiz**
   Place the full syllabus (accessible Canvas page or Word doc) and optionally follow up with a short quiz or syllabus highlights page.

6. **Required Technology Information**
   Guidance on how to navigate Canvas and use course tools

7. **Communication Policy**
   Expectations for respectful interaction and how/when to contact the instructor.

8. **Information on Student Services**
   Information about disability services, tutoring, tech support, and other student resources.

9. **An Engagement/Roll Call Activity**
   A low-stakes activity such as an "Introduce Yourself" discussion, syllabus quiz, or assignment submission practice.

10. ***Optional:*** **Policies by-the-page** (each course policy on its own clearly labeled page

To submit:

Submit a URL that links directly to your Orientation Module in your DE Shell.

Criteria for Success

Your Orientation Module should:

Contain all nine required components listed above
Be fully developed with content. Some placeholders OK.
Be clearly designed for students - plain language and organization.
Be completely free of accessibility errors.
Be submitted as a URL

Due at: Oct 6 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 10.0

Submitting: Online URL

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Additional Resources and Support is not currently supported

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COS Course Design Rubric (Full Version)

The COS Online Course Design Rubric

Review the COS Online Course Design Rubric in full. This rubric will be used to review what you have built in your DE Course Shell in order to approve your certification at the end of the OCTA course. Since you have elected to complete the Online Certification in Teaching and Accessibility (OCTA) course versus POCR (Peer Online Course Review) you can ignore pages 2-4.

Next week, to finalize your certification requirements, you will submit two things a link to your completed DE Shell. **I*t must be Aligned in all areas of the rubric* for you to earn your full Distance Education certification.**

There is one tool on the rubric that you have not yet been exposed to, and that is the Pope Tech Accessibility Checker. It is a more intensive accessibility checker than the Canvas version we have been using, but it is equally helpful in identifying and remediating Errors. We will cover that tool in next week's module.

If you have any questions about how to align your course with the rubric as you work toward the goal, please let me know. I will have extended availability to support you in the final week of OCTA.

File COS Peer Review Rubric - May 2025-compressed.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access.

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Policies and Procedures Unit Q&A

Questions about Policies, Procedures, or Orientation modules?

Click the "Reply" button to ask course-related or "how do I do this?" questions.



Along your journey, you may want to ask me or your colleagues about a topic, get some additional thoughts about an online teaching strategy or challenge, or you may just need some clarification about an aspect of the class. If so, jump in and ask it here! If it is a question about one of the content pages and/or assignments, please be sure to identify the location of the page as thoroughly as possible so we may troubleshoot promptly (providing a URL is ideal!)

Successful teaching and learning require a village in any modality Any participant is welcome and encouraged to respond to discussion posts. If you know an answer or have a resource to contribute, jump in and help out a friend!

If you have a personal question or concern about the class that you'd like to speak with me about, please Canvas message me directly.

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End of Module 6 - Recap

Unit Objectives (...did we make it?)

Having completed this module, you should now have the skills to:

Build an orientation module
Develop clear and equitable online course policies;
Create an accessible syllabus for your course.

In this module, you considered the purpose and contents of an online orientation, and were asked to to think about humanizing your course policies. You then reviewed, revised, or reinvested in your policies and procedures for your future online courses.

You then submitted a fully accessible syllabus and developed your Orientation module - *huge* steps on the way to teaching this course.

Due next week: The DE Course Shell

The next module is our last. You will review the final expectations for submission of the DE Course Shell, learn about one more tool to support course accessibility, and submit your completed Shell.

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Checkpoint 2: DE Shell Progress

1. DE Course Shell Checklist (Week 7)

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DE Course Shell Checklist (Week 7)

DE Course Shell Progress Checklist

Our OCTA course concludes next week with the submission of your full DE Course Shell for review. This page provides a checklist to help you track your progress and ensure your shell includes all of the elements that have been introduced so far.

Check off what you've accomplished and identify what still needs some attention. ***Everything on this list is expected to be fully free of accessibility errors at the time of final shell submission.***

Required Elements

Required Elements of the DE Course Shell by Week 7

Complete?	Element
	Welcome Letter set up as a Pre-Course Canvas Announcement
	Discussion Board with Participation Expectations
	A Summative Assessment using the TILT Framework (note: this was a Discussion in OCTA. Now is the time to place it in your Shell.)
	A Formative Assessment preparing students for the Summative Assessment

	Mid-course Student Feedback Survey
	An Embedded Video
	Three Scheduled Announcements
	A Designated Home Page for Your Course
	An Image w/ Appropriate Alt Text
	One Accessiblility Error-Free Page in the Course (note: *all* pages must be accessible at the time of final shell submission)
	A Complete Orientation Module
	A customized Course Navigation Menu only including links students will need to *directly access*
	Consistent Naming Structure for Module Titles
	Populated content as planned in your Course Road Map An overview page for each Module that includes the student-facing summary of content and unit objectives Formative and summative assessments to support those objectives (some placeholders OK)

	Instructional content to support those objectives (some placeholders OK) Opportunities for discussions that support those objectives

Click next to begin Module 8, our final OCTA module!

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Module 7: Submit Your Sandbox (Oct. 5-12)

1. Unit 7 Overview
2. Reviewing Your DE Course Shell for Accessibility
3. Pope Tech Accessibility Checker
4. Submitting your DE Sandbox Shell
5. Capstone Project: Submit your DE Course Shell
6. Final Course Survey
7. That's all folks!
8. End of OCTA - Course Conclusion

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Unit 7 Overview

What to Expect in this Unit



This final module is focused on polishing up your DE Course Shell to submit for review using the COS Online Course Design Rubric.

To successfully complete the course, you will need to **submit all assignments,** earn a **total score of 90%** or better, and **align your final project shell with the COS Online Course Design Rubric**.

There will be no work accepted after this Sunday at 11:59 PM. *No exceptions.* Now is the time to make sure you are set up to be successfully certified. If you're unsure if your final grade will be 90%

or better, **please** don't take a gamble. Resubmit things you earned less than 100% on before the end of the course.

If you are not able to complete the requirements or earn a 90% in the course, you will need to re-enroll in the training in a future offering.

Unit Objectives

By the end of this module, you will have completed the Certification course. As a reminder, here are the Objectives introduced at the beginning of the course:

develop a comprehensive course plan for a fully online or hybrid course
use the core features of the Canvas course management system to design an online or hybrid course
develop an introductory orientation module
develop learning units with clear objectives aligned to the course outcomes
design accessible course content
locate Open Educational Resources and other material curated from the internet to support student learning
design formative and summative assessments to support and measure student learning
use a variety of communication tools both within and external to Canvas to support student success

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Reviewing Your DE Course Shell for Accessibility is not currently supported

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Pope Tech Accessibility Checker

What is Pope Tech?

Pope Tech is an advanced accessibility tool integrated directly into Canvas. It is designed to help us ensure our course content is usable by all students, including those using screen readers, keyboard navigation, or assistive technologies. It scans your Pages, Assignments, Discussions, Syllabus, and other content areas that were created with the Rich Content Editor (RCE).

Yes, Canvas does have its own built-in accessibility checker that you've already worked with in this course, but Pope Tech offers a *much* more thorough analysis, aligning closely with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards. It can identify issues that Canvas's checker may miss and provides clearer, categorized feedback.

Comparison: Pope Tech vs. Canvas Checker

Feature	Canvas Checker	Pope Tech Checker
Basic formatting issues	**Yes**	**Yes**
Image alt text missing	**Yes**	**Yes**
Color contrast checking	**No**	**Yes (including embedded text images)**
Lists and heading structure	**Limited**	**Thorough**
Link text clarity	**No**	**Yes**
Keyboard navigation issues	**No**	**Yes**

Feature	Canvas Checker	Pope Tech Checker
Categorized feedback (Errors vs. Alerts)	**No**	**Yes**

Using Pope Tech

Read page 16 of the File COS Peer Review Rubric - May 2025-compressed.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access. for instruction on how to check a whole course or just one page of content at a time. You will have to use Pope Tech to check your course's accessibility before submitting the final version to the DE Coordinator for review.

Understanding the Results: Errors vs. Alerts

Pope Tech will categorizes any issues it identifies as **Errors**, **Alerts**, or **Features**:

Errors

An Error is a *definite* accessibility problem that *must* be corrected for the course or page to meet minimum accessibility standards.

Examples:

Missing or empty alt text for images. You have to correct this **Error** by adding alt text.

Text with insufficient color contrast. You have to correct this **Error** by making the text darker or larger.

Improper heading structure (e.g., skipping from Heading 2 to Heading 4). You have to correct this **Error** by fixing the order of the Heading styles.

> For all Errors, **you must take action.** All Errors should be corrected before publishing your content.
>
> A course must be free of Errors in Pope Tech to pass the COS Course Design Rubric at the end of this module.

Alerts

> Alerts are *potential* issues that may or may not actually be problems, depending on context (fun, right?) They are not necessarily Errors, but they do require human review. This is where your Accessibility training from OCTA will help you out.
>
> Examples:

A YouTube video with captions. Pope Tech can't check for accuracy of the captions, so it **Alerts** you that you have to check for accuracy yourself.

A link to a PDF document. Pope Tech can't check a PDF fort accuracy, so it **Alerts** you that you need to check it for accessibility yourself.

Underlined text. Underlined text isn't an accessibility error, but it is not advised unless you are indicating a link. Pope Tech **Alerts** you to go check if it's really necessary to underline for emphasis, and maybe choose another way to indicate emphasis.

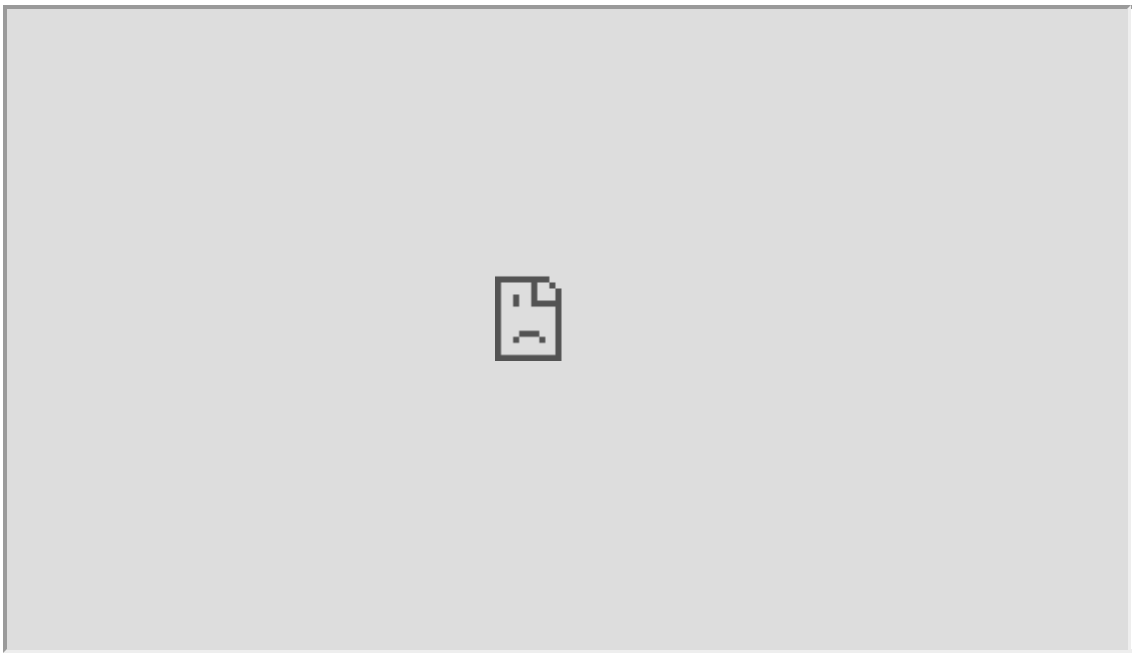
Not all Alerts require you to take action, but **all Alerts should be reviewed carefully.** If you check it out and the content is accessible as-is, no change is needed. Otherwise, revise according to the best of your ability and knowledge of accessibility practices.

Remember, Pope Tech works *only* on content created in the Rich Content Editor. It does not scan PDFs, Word Docs, or external links, so if your course uses a lot of those things, you may find a lot of Alerts popping up in your Review. If this is the case, as yourself if those things *have to* be provided as external documents, or if they could be converted to accessible Canvas content pages.

If you ever have an Error or an Alert popping up and you don't know if it needs to be fixed or how to fix it, ask Erin (erinh@cos.edu) or Elise (eliseb@cos.edu) to take a look.

Remediating Accessibility Using Pope Tech: A Demonstration

I ran a Pope Tech Accessibility Check on this course the summer I built it, and recorded some of the process for you to watch as a demo if you want to! OCTA started out with 9 Errors and 123 Alerts at the first Pope Tech scan. I spent about an hour and 15 minutes reviewing everything and following the prompts to check and fix the issues. Now, OCTA has 0 Errors and a handful of Alerts that have been manually checked and are OK!



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Submitting your DE Sandbox Shell is not currently supported

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Capstone Project: Submit your DE Course Shell

Purpose

This final assignment gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to design an accessible, engaging, and student-ready distance education course. By applying what you've learned about accessibility, communication, content design, and assessment in Canvas, you'll submit your fully developed DE sandbox course shell. This course should reflect best practices in online pedagogy and meet the standards of the **COS Online Course Design Rubric**.

Completing this assignment ensures you're ready to launch your own DE course with confidence—and helps our instructional design team provide meaningful feedback where needed.

By completing this assignment in alignment with all expectations specified below and throughout this course, you will have indicated mastery of *all* of the following course-level objectives:

Develop a comprehensive course plan for a fully online or hybrid course
Use the core features of the Canvas course management system to design an online or hybrid course
Develop an introductory orientation module
Develop learning units with clear objectives aligned to the course outcomes
Design accessible course content
Locate Open Educational Resources and other material curated from the internet to support student learning
Design formative and summative assessments to support and measure student learning
Use a variety of communication tools both within and external to Canvas to support student success

Task

Submit the URL to your DE Sandbox Course Shell.

Before you submit, review your course to ensure it contains the required elements listed below. You may include *some* **placeholders** for content that is not yet finalized (e.g., video script, assignment drafts), but your shell must be structurally complete and pass a self-check using the COS Online Course Design Rubric. *Too many placeholders that limit my ability to evaluate the course will result in an incomplete certification.*

Required Elements Checklist

Your DE Sandbox Shell should include the following elements:

Element	Included?
Welcome Letter set up as a **Pre-Course Announcement**	
Discussion Board(s) that outline participation expectations	
Summative Assessment(s) using the TILT Framework	

Element	Included?
Formative Assessment(s) that prepare students for the summative one	
A **Mid-Course Feedback Survey** (anonymous, student-facing)	
Embedded Video(s)	
Three Scheduled Announcements	
A **Designated Home Page**	
Image(s) with appropriate alt text	
A complete **Orientation Module**	
A customized **Course Navigation Menu** with only student-needed links	
A **Consistent Naming Structure** for all Module Titles	

Element	Included?
Modules of content aligned to your Course Road Map Overview pages that include summary of content and unit objectives Formative & summative assessments Instructional content Opportunities for discussion aligned with objectives	
An **Accessibility Error-Free Course**	
A course that is **Aligned with the COS Online Course Design Rubric**	

To Submit:

Paste the URL of your DE Sandbox Course Shell in the assignment submission box.

Criteria for Success

Your DE Sandbox Shell will be considered complete when:

It includes **all required elements** listed above.

It aligns with **each section of the COS Online Course Design Rubric**.

Placeholder content is minimal, clearly labeled, and ready for development.

Your course is **visually and pedagogically cohesive**.

🎣 *Tip:* Complete a self-check against the File COS Peer Review Rubric - May 2025-compressed.pdf could not be included in the ePub document. Please see separate zip file for access. before submission.

Due at: Oct 13 at 12am

Grading Type: Points

Points: 50.0

Submitting: Online URL

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Final Course Survey

One last survey! This one allows you to give feedback about me, the course, and my teaching.

Submissions are anonymous. The feedback is used to make updates for future versions of this training and in my ongoing development.

Thank you for completing it.

Due at: Oct 13 at 12am

Points:

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That's all folks! is not currently supported

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End of OCTA - Course Conclusion

OCTA Conclusion

Congratulations on submitting your last OCTA assignments! You get to relax now, while I review your shell. I will provide you with the completed rubric (and feedback!), along with notification of your certification status with a week of the course conclusion.

You have done *so* much to reach this page in the course, and I am extremely excited about the future of distance education at COS.



Ongoing Instructional Support

Just because you have completed the certification, it doesn't mean that your support is over. This is truly just the beginning.

If you are about to launch an online course for the first time next semester, it's a good idea to have regular check-ins with your instructional designer (ID). Erin Heasley is our resident ID, and is happy to support you as you build and eventually teach a new course in *any* modality.

I am your DE Coordinator, and I am also happy to partner with you as you build and teach in distance education modalities. There are a lot of moving pieces in an online class that can get overwhelming the first time you teach it. It exercises different muscles than teaching face-to-face (as you now know!)

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