

Canvas Course Principles

This document aims to capture the good practice of using Canvas as our learning environment for students, and summarise it as principles to support enhancement across the university. To facilitate implementation, these principles are supported by resources, some of which have recently been developed. Given the diversity of organisational structures across the university, Boards of Studies are encouraged to consider the appropriate level for implementation of these principles. For example, assessment information might sit better within a module, but student representation might sit better at a programme, department or school level.

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Belonging & Inclusion

1. Where possible, include a welcome video to introduce students to the module/programme and to introduce yourself as the module and/or programme leader.
2. Include a general discussion in week 1 to provide opportunity for students to introduce themselves, share experiences and something about themselves in a respectful and constructive way.
3. Highlight and link to opportunities provided by the [Liverpool Guild of Students](#) (LGoS). These can be influential in students engaging with like-minded individuals, increasing confidence and belonging. Key areas include, [Societies and groups](#), [volunteering](#), [Give it a go](#), and [More than a month](#).
4. [Student Services](#) have several teams who offer support to students to support belonging and inclusion. The [University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Teams](#) can offer support on areas including anxiety, low mood, loneliness, stress and depression. [Disability Advice and Guidance](#) offer support to disabled students including Reasonable Adjustments, Disabled Students Allowance and exam arrangements. [Money Advice and Guidance](#) support students in financial hardship including the University's Hardship Fund. [International Advice and Guidance](#) support international students including advice on immigration and working in the UK.
5. Consider an activity which students can engage with that is [designed to nurture and develop students' sense of belonging and cohort cohesion](#). This activity should embed a 'fun' element into early student learning and engagement in informal settings.
6. Establish clear expectations for teacher-student interaction and how you expect students to participate and behave in your programme and/or module.
7. Provide clear and multiple ways for students to contact you and other module leaders, including an explanation of office hours and the various support channels available across campus.
8. Demonstrate to students how they can edit and complete their Canvas profile – encourage uploading avatars and ensure your profile is up-to-date and information-rich.

Structure & Navigation

1. Create a dedicated home or front page that makes it clear to students how to successfully navigate through the course and where to find relevant information.
2. Use the Modules area to structure your course as required, i.e., by week or thematically, and align these to the curriculum.

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3. Try to structure your course as logically as possible, with a clear route of progression throughout.
4. Ensure that all navigation links in the course navigation menu that are not being used are 'hidden', and that the course navigation menu is organised clearly, with only active content visible.
5. Consider adding an appropriate course image to your course, so that the course is easily recognisable from a student's course dashboard.
6. Use descriptive and logical names for your files, pages, assignments, quizzes, etc. E.g. 'Week 4: Introduction to Confidence Intervals for Normally Distributed Data' is better than 'Lecture 10'.
7. Inform students of the Canvas student iOS and Android mobile application that can be used to access courses.
8. Consider creating a template to provide a consistent layout across all the modules in the school.

Support: [Canvas help for staff](#)

Course Content

1. Ensure there is an easily identifiable page that clearly includes contact details for teaching staff and other relevant parties, office hours, communication schedule and channels, including information of any appropriate school and/or programme level policies and guidelines.
2. Keep language simple and inclusive (within the context of your discipline) and write in digestible 'chunks' of text (avoid long bodies of text).
3. Minimise navigation and consider the students journey – aim for fewer clicks and minimal scrolling.
4. Try to avoid uploading PDFs and use HTML content (i.e., Canvas pages).
5. Before publishing new course content, check accuracy and functionality by using Student view. Check that internal and external hyperlinks work.
6. Communicate with your students on how new content will be uploaded – i.e., if they can expect it week-by-week, ad-hoc or by specific dates and ensure students are notified when new content is published.
7. Provide guidance to students on how they can access alternative formats of course content, if required.
8. Signpost to the general [KnowHow support](#) or consider embedding targeted KnowHow content from Canvas Commons wherever is most suitable to support the learning.

Support: [Canvas help for staff](#)



Assessment & Feedback

- 1 In advance of teaching: share all key assessment and assignment available dates, due dates, and submission formats; highlight which (if any) assessments must be completed in-person, and share the location; highlight which assessment are formative and which are summative, and state the contribution to the total module mark for each assessment component. This should be shared in a consistent way in line with the local arrangements.
- 2 Clearly state the requirements and rubrics for each assessment, including clear instructions for expectations around specialist software (if relevant).
- 3 Share appropriate resources to support preparation and revision.
- 4 For any information that is unknown or undecided at the beginning of semester (e.g. a room has not been organised for a class test), ensure any new information is communicated via an announcement.
- 5 State which (if any) assessments are group work, and communicate as required all relevant parts of [CoPA Appendix G](#) (e.g. the peer moderation strategy).
- 6 Signpost students to the expectations regarding Academic Integrity, as explained in [CoPA L Annex 1](#), and the [KnowHow Academic Integrity course](#).
- 7 Highlight that feedback on summative work will be returned to students within the agreed timescale. Implement department/school level monitoring processes to assure this.
- 8 Explain how students can navigate the Gradebook, including different sorting options to view upcoming assignments.

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Accessibility & Multimedia

1. When creating course content, utilise the Canvas formatting toolbar appropriately, such as using style options - paragraph, heading 1, heading 2 etc.
2. Consider visual accessibility of Canvas pages. This can include font style and colour (try to use a colour friendly palate of 2-3 colours per page maximum) with [good contrast for accessibility](#).
3. Ensure that all images have an appropriate image description, or alt text.
4. Before a Canvas course or new course content is published, the Ally Accessibility Report has been viewed and all remaining issues have been addressed. Recommended course accessibility score is 67%-99% (High) or more.
5. Ensure all hyperlinks are provided with a meaningful title and where possible integrate hyperlinks into ordinary language, i.e., within a sentence or paragraph.

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6. Make an effort to provide accurate subtitles for all video content via Panopto or Canvas Studio and provide an accompanying transcript.
7. Highlight the accessibility software available through the university. See [Accessibility Software Guide](#).
8. Include text inviting students to request alternative formats where appropriate. For example, 'While we strive to ensure that all materials on this Canvas course are accessible, please contact the module leader if you require materials in alternative formats to support your learning'.

Note: There is a legal requirement for the University to ensure all digital material it shares online intended for current use must be accessible. This has been a requirement since September 2020. Reference; [Public Sector Bodies](#). Learn more about increasing your accessibility in [Canvas Help for Staff](#), or CIE's guide on [Blackboard Ally for Staff](#).

Communication

1. Use Course Announcements regularly and consistently to communicate and generate motivation in students, i.e., weekly summaries and/or roundups, announcing new content that has been uploaded to Canvas.
2. When using discussion boards ensure that there are clear aims and boundaries for the discussion. [Consider adding a code of conduct](#) to the course so that students are aware of expected behaviour, and the importance of being respectful to different opinions.
3. Be clear with students on your role in active Canvas discussions. Be active in keeping students on-task and be timely in your responses, where possible.
4. Consider demonstrating the notifications section of the account menu to students – this provides opportunity for students to tailor the notification settings and minimise risk of missed communication, assignment deadlines etc.
5. Enable Show recent announcements on course home page in the course settings menu. Recommended number of announcements shown on the homepage is 3 (three).



Publishing Content

1. Check all hyperlinks are working (go to Settings and 'Validate Links in Content').
2. Preview and explore the course in student view to make sure it appears as planned.
3. Once published, ensure the course appears as published on the Canvas Dashboard.



4. Consider sending a Course Announcement to alert enrolled students to the newly published content.

Evaluation & Enhancement

1. Include a continuous and/or periodic feedback route for students to report feedback on Canvas pages. This can help to identify issues that can be addressed during teaching.
2. Ensure local mechanisms are in place to consider and act on student feedback on Canvas courses. This should include feedback arising from [Student Evaluation of Modules and Programmes](#).
3. Peer Observation can include observation of Canvas courses. Such practice is encouraged as digital learning plays a significant role in the student experience.
4. Consider providing feedback on the Canvas Principles themselves. Did you find them useful? Do you have suggestions for further enhancements? Please provide feedback via cie@liverpool.ac.uk.

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Suggested Staff Support Resources

- [Academic Skills from KnowHow](#): information for staff
- [Canvas Help](#) from CIE
- [Canvas Connect](#) Community of Practice
- [On-Demand Courses](#), such as: [Canvas Help for Staff](#), [Cohort Belonging and Inclusion](#), [Introduction to Digital Tools for Education](#)
- Where to get [Canvas Support 24/7](#)

Visit the Centre for Innovation in Education (CIE) webpage for a [comprehensive list of support resources](#) covering Canvas, digital tools, active learning, authentic assessment, confidence, digital fluency, global citizenship, inclusivity, research-connected teaching, and [generative artificial intelligence for teaching, learning and assessment](#).

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