

Module Site Design, structure and layout

This section covers the key themes for the effective design, structure and layout of VLE sites, ensuring that ease of navigation and accessibility of course materials contributes towards student learning and supports the face-to-face programme.

Learning and teaching material should be stored online and organised to aid navigation and facilitate independent study. Resources may also need to be accessed by colleagues supporting students or external examiners. Therefore, you should adopt a logical and consistent structure across your programmes to organise your online learning and teaching materials, and ensure they're added in a timely fashion (prior to sessions where appropriate),

Sign-posting can be done in two main ways:

- Clear labelling of links with familiar words.
- Instructional directions to lead through the content.

Clear labelling and instructional directions enable users visiting the site to know where and when to look for content and why materials should be used. Keeping all your sites

Users with screen reading software will also know exactly what is contained within the site and be able to navigate their way around effectively, improving accessibility.

Your site will also be usable by colleagues without having extensive knowledge of the module itself, for example an academic supervisor, disability support staff or an external examiner.

Labeling links

Links should enable students to guide themselves through your module site.

Whether you are adding additional links in the Left Menu or titling Items within

Content Areas, use words that students will be familiar with and be consistent across the taught programme. Students will be expecting labels such as 'Reading List', 'Assessment', 'Lectures' and 'Seminars' or 'Labs'.

You will need to be consistent with your colleagues (as specified in the TEL baseline). Work together across programmes to ensure you use the same terminology and lay outs as much as possible. This makes navigation easier for the student, but also easier for staff to quickly find material within your site.

Instructional directions

If you require students to look at specific pieces of content, you should direct them to it. For example, a link to a PDF book chapter requires an instruction for students to read that PDF. This helps contextualise the resources made available, use the description boxes to be explicit about your expectations, and how you would like your students to use the material.

Instructional directions are even more important for activities using online tools or activities which are not connected to face-to-face sessions. Make use of the description boxes across your site to help staff and students navigate, and know at a glance what a file or folder might contain (e.g. learning outcomes, key points covered etc)

Checklist: Module site design, structure and layout

Sign-posting

- Clear labelling of links in the left menu and of folders and items.
- Instructional directions on module content to direct students through VLE materials, with signposting to alternative platform in exceptional cases.
- Use a welcome announcement and further announcements to direct students to new content.
- Contact information for the module or programme lead is present within

the Contacts area.

- Course links: can be used to aid sign-posting and navigation.
- The module or programme information is present in the module/programme info area in Course Resources.

Left menu

- Consistent left menu links across department modules. Use the left menu to reflect the structure of the taught programme.

Presenting course content

- Items and folders: use one folder per week or topic to group content together.
- Present on screen only what is required for a specific task.
- File names for attachments: use consistent, descriptive file names to aid navigation and accessibility.
- Titles and descriptions on course content: clear titles and descriptions will add context and provide instructions on how materials should be used.
- Colours, themes and images: will break up text and make VLE sites more visually appealing.
- Module and programme information is being presented consistently.

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