Course Set-Up Recommendations

This Course Set-Up Recommendations is a resource that can be used to help incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, student wellbeing practices, and web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG) when creating courses and course materials in Canvas.

Course Home

Goal: Create an informative homepage and course navigation that is easy to use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course image</strong> on the <strong>Dashboard</strong> (the first screen when you login to Canvas) provides a distinct visual representation of course</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home Page</strong> provides key information (or links), including</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) a course banner, a visual representation of course;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) a brief course description or introduction;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) clear indicator on where to begin (e.g., course overview and introduction module);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) contact information for instructor(s), teaching assistant(s), and technical support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* UDL 2.5 Illustrate through multiple media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Student Wellbeing: Structuring the course effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course navigation menu is customized by minimizing the number of menu items (enable or disable menu items) and prioritizing their order | ☑️ |
| * UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions   |     |
| * WCAG 2.4 Navigable: Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are |     |

Course Overview and Introduction

Goal: Welcome students to your course by providing information about your course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Overview and Introduction (syllabus)</strong> provides, in general, Information about your course</td>
<td>☑️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) information about course including course name, course format, class time and location, course requirements (e.g. prerequisites), and instructor contact information;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) detailed information about course content including course objectives, learning outcomes, reading materials, course schedule, learning activities, methods of assessments and due dates, and their weightings in the final grade;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) course-level policies such as participation, late penalties, and communication;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) University policies (e.g. academic integrity, accommodation for disabilities)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ) a guideline on how to succeed in a course;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Recommend including the following resources:

- [ ] resources on student wellbeing information;
- [ ] centre for accessibility
- [ ] academic integrity
- [ ] land acknowledge statement
- [ ] early alert
- [ ] equity and inclusion

Canvas Guide - The syllabus can be created using a page in a module or the built-in syllabus feature.

Resources: UBC Syllabus Template, Learner-Centered Syllabus

- UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
- UDL 6.2 Support planning and strategy development
- UDL 8.1 heighten salience of goals and objectives
- Student Wellbeing: Structuring the course effectively
- Student Wellbeing: Fostering instructor student relationship
- Student Wellbeing: Recognizing that students have lives outside of academics
- Student Wellbeing: Openly discuss wellbeing related topics

Course Content

Goal: Create course content that is structured, organized, and incorporates accessibility guidelines

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content is organized into manageable pieces by leveraging modules (e.g. organized by topics, weeks, units) and the organization across modules is consistent</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* UDL 3.3 Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Student Wellbeing: Delivering the material effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* WCAG 2.4 Navigable: Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are</td>
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</table>

Modules are organized using text headers and indentation | Yes |

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modules and items within modules have a thoughtful naming convention (e.g. name the module “Chapter 1: Introduction to Designing Courses in Canvas,” not just “Ch. 1”)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* UDL 2.2 Clarify syntax and structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Student Wellbeing: Delivering the materials effectively</td>
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All course activities (e.g. assignments, discussions, quizzes) are linked in the related module | Yes |

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<td>All course activities (e.g. assignments, discussions, quizzes) are linked in the related module</td>
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All links, files, videos and external URLs are active and working. The link validator in Canvas can help verify all external links. | Yes |

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All course materials are current, and free from typos and grammatical errors. | Yes |

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All materials and resources are appropriately cited and adhere to copyright guidelines. | Yes |

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Content created using the Rich Content Editor in Canvas has been checked to ensure that accessibility standards are met using the Universal Online Design Content Inspection Tool (UDOIT) in Canvas | Canvas Guide - Accessibility checker

- WCAG guidelines

The **file type** of linked non-HTML files (e.g. Microsoft Word or PDF files) is identified; ensure linked files also follow accessibility guidelines.

- WCAG 2.0 guidelines
- PDF/UA (Universal Accessibility)

If **Colour** is used to enhance course information, there should be sufficient contrast between the text and the background, avoid red and green, and the colour is not used in isolation to convey meaning (e.g., colour and bold are used to indicate importance) | Canvas Guide - Accessibility Checker

- UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions
- WCAG 1.4 Distinguishable: Make it easier for users to see and hear content including separating foreground from background

**Images** are used to support course content and are accompanied by text descriptions (Alt text) or captions for more complex descriptions. If non-text content is pure decoration, then it is implemented in a way that it can be ignored by assistive technology. | Canvas Guide - General Accessibility Design Guidelines

- UDL 1.3 Offer alternatives for visual information
- WCAG 1.1 Provide text alternatives for any non-text content

**Audio** materials (mp3, wav, etc.) and **videos / screencasts** are closed-captioned or accompanied by a transcript | Canvas Guide - Create Caption Files

- UDL 1.2 Offer alternatives for auditory information
- UDL 1.3 Offer alternatives for visual information
- WCAG 1.1 Provide text alternatives for any non-text content
- WCAG 1.2 Time-based Media: Provide alternatives for time-based media

Page and section headers are formatted using **heading styles** (not font sizes) and content is organized in a hierarchical and logical fashion. | Canvas Guide - General Accessibility Design Guidelines

- UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
- WCAG 2.4 Navigable: Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are

**Hyperlink** text uses phrases that describe the content of the linked page (i.e., avoid generic phrases like “Click here” or using a raw URL such as [https://www.canvaslms.com](https://www.canvaslms.com))

- UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies
- WCAG 2.4 Navigable: Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are

Flashing/flickering text and/or animated text is not used.

- WCAG 2.3 Seizures: Do not design content in a way that is known to cause seizures

**Tables** are only used for tabular data, not the design of the course. If tables are required for design, accessibility guidelines are followed (e.g. incorporate caption, headings).

- WCAG 2.4 Navigable: Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are
File names do not contain spaces and/or special characters (like % * & #). The document file name is concise, generally limited to 20–30 characters, and makes the content of the file clear.

A separate accessible version of content is provided when there is no other way to make the content accessible.

* UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

## Interactions / Communication / Discussions

**Goal:** Build student engagement and nurture a safe and supportive learning environments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| There is a “Welcome” or “Let’s Get Acquainted” discussion | * UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions  
* UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community  
* Student Wellbeing: Fostering instructor-student relationship  
* Student Wellbeing: Fostering peer-to-peer relationships |
| Your information has been entered in your Canvas profile | [Canvas guide - Instructor profile](#)  
* Student Wellness: Fostering instructor-student relationship |
| Students are asked to complete their profiles, including a short biography and profile picture. | [Canvas Guide - Student profile](#)  
* UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community  
* Student Wellbeing: Fostering peer-to-peer relationships |
| Throughout the course, the following interactions are structured in a way to support learning: | [Canvas Guide - Peer review assignments](#), [Canvas Guide - Peer review discussions](#)  
* UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community  
* Student Wellbeing: Fostering instructor-student relationship  
* Student Wellbeing: Fostering peer-to-peer relationships  
* Student Wellbeing: Delivering the material effectively  
* Student Wellbeing: Creating a safe classroom environment |
| A monitored discussion board is provided and its use is encouraged for course support issues. | * UDL 8.3 Foster collaboration and community  
* Student Wellbeing: Fostering instructor-student relationship  
* Student Wellbeing: Fostering peer-to-peer relationships |

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Assessments & Activities

**Goal:** Provide students with information about activities and assessment requirements and set-up assessment weighting in your course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each activity and assessment (e.g. discussion, assignment, quiz) has a detailed description of requirements, assessment criteria (if applicable), due date(s) and instructions of how to submit the assessment within the activity page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* UDL 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* UDL 4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Student Wellbeing: Structuring the course effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samples of completed assignments are provided to illustrate instructor expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* UDL 5.3 Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Student Wellbeing: Structuring the course effectively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment weighting is based on your assessment plan (for example, quizzes, essays, homework).</td>
<td>Canvas Guide - Assignment Groups, Weighted Grading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubrics are used to help students understand how they will be assessed.</td>
<td>Canvas Guide - Rubrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* UDL 6.4 Enhance capacity for monitoring progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**References**

**Accessibility, Student Wellbeing, Universal Design for Learning**

- (Accessibility) Cheatsheets by the National Center on Disability and Access to Education (NCDAE)
- Accessibility Guidelines for Learning Designers by Rosado, J & Chen, H., CTLT, University of British Columbia
- Accessibility Toolkit - 2nd Edition by BC Campus
- How Teaching Practices Influence Student Mental Health and Wellbeing by University of British Columbia
- Links to Non-HTML Resources by WebAIM
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles by CAST
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) by W3C

**Course Evaluation Checklists: External Resources**

- Checklist: Creating Your First Canvas Course by CAT, Temple University
- Checklist for Online and Blended Course Development by ETS, University of British Columbia
- Online/Blended Learning Course Quality Checklist by Sharif, A., University of British Columbia

**Contact Information**

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