Canvas Course Setup Checklist

This Course Setup Checklist is a collaboration between members of the Education Services department at Instructure and the Office of Distance Learning (ODL) at FSU. By combining expertise in Canvas, knowledge of Universal Design for Learning principles, and a deep understanding of pedagogical best practices, we've created a tool that will both elevate the quality of your Canvas courses and help you get them up and running. ODL has customized this checklist to best serve our FSU instructional community based on the information contained in our [Canvas Best Practices](#) resource.

How to use:

Each item on this checklist references the type of criterion demonstrated:

- *Essential* indicates a mandatory and standard design component to online learning.
- *Best Practice* indicates that the item is both a recommended practice and adds value to a course.
- *Exemplary* indicates that the item elevates learning significantly.

The abbreviated references for individual recommendations are as follows:

- QM = Quality Matters Rubric Standards, Sixth Edition (FSU is an institutional member of Quality Matters. Though you can view this rubric without an account, we recommend [creating an account at Quality matters](#) to gain full access to additional resources.)
- UDL = Universal Design for Learning Guidelines
- WCAG = Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1

Basics: Development Site

☐ **Best Practice**: Build out course in a Canvas development site (follow the course design checklist below).
↠ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*

Course Design

Course Information

☐ **Essential:** Create course home page via Design Tools template – either [create a home page from scratch](#), [import a homepage from Canvas Commons](#), or customize your existing home page template. The home page should provide a visual representation of course, a brief course description or introduction, clear instructions for students (e.g., where to begin), and navigation to current content in fewer than three clicks.

� *Reference: [QM 1.1](#)*

- ☐ **Essential:** Course card provides visual representation of subject by adding an image in **Course** Settings | [Canvas Guide – Add Image to Course Card.](#)
  ⇘ *Reference: [UDL 2.5](#)*
- ☐ **Essential:** Whether you use **Canvas's HTML Syllabus or a Word/PDF Syllabus**, it should include these items and any other information your students need to know about the course and FSU policies and procedures:
  ⇘ *References: [QM 1.4 – 1.7](#); [QM 2.1](#)*
  - ☐ **For all courses:**
    - ☐ [Make sure your FSU institutional policies are up-to-date](#).
    - ☐ Communication guidelines for how you would like students to contact you. For example, if you do not want students to contact you from within Canvas's messaging tool, specify contact via FSU Webmail only.
    - ☐ Technology requirements and expectations for use of supplemental textbooks, reading lists, and course materials.
    - ☐ Use [FSU's required syllabus language](#) and make sure to include any required departmental information.
  - ☐ **For face-to-face courses:** Use the [Syllabus Checklist](#) when building out your syllabus.
  - ☐ **For distance learning courses**: Use the [Syllabus Checklist for Online Courses](#) when building out your syllabus.
- ☐ **Best Practice:** **Home Page** utilizes a course banner with text and imagery that is relevant to subject/course materials**.**
  ⇘ *Reference: [UDL 2.5](#)*

Course Navigation: Simple and Easy to Follow

- ☐ **Essential:** [Hide course navigation links that will not be used](#) in the course. We recommend keepings *Files* hidden.
  ⇘ *References: Mobile Design Consideration; [QM 8.1](#); [UDL 7.3](#)*
- ☐ **Essential:** Content is grouped together and organized into manageable pieces using [Modules](#) page in the chronological sequence that you intend students to access items (e.g., organized by units, chapters, topics, or weeks).
  ⇘ *References: Mobile Design Consideration; [UDL 3.3](#)*
- ☐ **Best Practice:** [Text headers and indention](#) are used within **Modules** as needed to help guide student navigation.
  ⇘ *References: Mobile Design Consideration; [UDL 2.2](#)*
- ☐ **Best Practice**: All **Modules** and content pages have clear, unique titles and are [published](#).
  ⇘ *References: [UDL 2.2](#); [WCAG 2.4.6](#); [WCAG 2.4.10](#); [WCAG 4.1.2](#)*

- ☐ **Best Practice:** Course structure is parallel. This means that similar items in different Modules use similar naming conventions (e.g., "Introduction to Week 1" and "Introduction to Week 2" is better than "Introduction to Week 1" and "Exploring Week 2").
  ⇝ *Reference: [UDL 2.2](#)*

Course Content

- ☐ **Essential:** Copyright law is followed. Course breaks no copyright considerations | [FSU Libraries Copyright Guidance](#); [Canvas Guide – Copyright Resources](#)
- ☐ **Essential:** All file names are descriptive and naming conventions between items in the Syllabus and the corresponding course content items in Canvas are consistent.
  ⇝ *References: FSU Best Practice; [WCAG 3.2.4](#)*
- ☐ **Essential:** All links in course site (links added to Modules and anywhere that you use the [Rich Content Editor](#)) are formatted as [self-described hyperlinks](#).
  ⇝ *Reference: [WCAG 2.4.4](#)*
- ☐ **Essential:** All links, files, videos, and external URLs are active and working | [Canvas Guide – Link Validation](#).
  ⇝ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*
- ☐ **Essential:** Canvas content pages meet the following requirements:
  ⇝ *References: FSU Best Practice; [QM 8.4](#); [UDL 1.1](#); [UDL 7.3](#); [WCAG 1.4](#)*
  - ☐ Use [Design Tools templates.](#)
  - ☐ Use styles (e.g., Heading 2, Paragraph, etc.) to format text, with a preference to use sans serif fonts (Arial, Verdana, Helvetica, or Lucinda Sans).
  - ☐ Use appropriate color contrast (black text on white background offers accessible color contrast).
  - ☐ Pass [Design Tools' accessibility checker.](#)
- ☐ **Essential:** Color does not overpower the course information; sufficient contrast between text and background makes information easy to read; and color is not used in isolation to convey meaning (e.g., color and bold are used together to indicate importance) | [Canvas Guide – Accessibility Checker](#).
  ⇝ *References: [UDL 7.3](#); [WCAG 1.4](#)*
- ☐ **Essential:** All [individual course content items are published.](#)
  ⇝ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*
- ☐ **Essential:** [Make sure all multimedia is accessible](#):
  ⇝ *References: [QM 8.5](#); [UDL 1.2](#); [UDL 1.3](#); [WCAG 1.1.1](#)*
  - ☐ We strongly recommend using [Kaltura](#) for any video/audio you create yourself.
  - ☐ All images you use (including banners, headings, and icons) are accompanied by text descriptions (alt text) or captions for more complex descriptions.

☐ **Best Practice:** Tables are only used for tabular data.
⇻ *References: Mobile Design Consideration;* [*WCAG 1.3.1*](#)

☐ **Best Practice:** For distance learning courses: There is a "Welcome" or "Let's Get Acquainted" discussion.
⇻ *References:* [*QM 1.9*](#); [*UDL 8.3*](#)

☐ **Exemplary:** [Integrate FSU Libraries resources into your Canvas site.](#)
⇻ *References:* [*UDL 3.1*](#); [*UDL 7.2*](#)

☐ **Exemplary:** Modules begin with an Introduction/Overview page and end with a Conclusion/Summary page to "bookend" each Module.
⇻ *Reference:* [*QM 2.2*](#)

☐ **Exemplary:** External tools (e.g., Pearson MyLab and Mastering, Cengage, etc.) are embedded within Modules or in a page, assignment, discussion, or quiz using the [Rich Content Editor.](#)
⇻ *Reference:* [*UDL 5.2*](#)

☐ **Exemplary:** Use auto-open Inline Preview option thoughtfully | [Canvas Guide – Auto-open for Inline Preview.](#)

☐ **Exemplary:** For undergraduate distance learning courses, Module completion requirements and/or prerequisites are used to personalize learning | [Canvas Guide – Adding Prerequisites](#).
⇻ *References:* [*QM 3.3*](#); [*UDL 6.4*](#)

Basics Continued: Semester Site

☐ **Essential:** [Use the "copy a Canvas course" option](#) to move content from your development site to your semester course site in Canvas. *VERY IMPORTANT: DO THIS BEFORE YOU START EDITING YOUR SYLLABUS PAGE IN YOUR SEMESTER CANVAS SITE.*
⇻ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*

☐ **Essential:** [Create your HTML Syllabus page](#) and/or upload a syllabus document to your semester Canvas site. If you use the HTML syllabus page: ***DO NOT COPY CONTENT INTO YOUR SEMESTER SITE AFTER CREATING YOUR HTML SYLLABUS. If you must copy content into your semester site after creating your HTML syllabus, create a backup of your syllabus first because it may be overwritten during the copy process.***
⇻ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*

☐ **Best Practice:** [**Add the FSU Emergency Module to your course site**](#). This module is ready for use upon importing it, however, you may wish to move it to the top of your Modules page. [Learn what the Emergency Module contains and how to use it](#).
⇻ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*

☐ **Essential:** Check to make sure you have [hidden course navigation links that will not be used](#) in the semester site. We recommend keeping *Files* area hidden.
⇻ *References: Mobile Design Consideration;* [*QM 8.1*](#); [*UDL 7.3*](#)

☐ **Essential:** Check that the links in your semester site are working. Links in Canvas Content pages are static, so y*ou will need to manually update all internal course links* (e.g., link to an assignment or quiz) after bringing course content over from your development site. [Use the Link Validation option to check external links](#).
⇻ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*

- ☐ **Essential:** Make sure to [publish your semester course site and every item in it](#) that you want your students to access.
- ☐ **Essential: If you are using any external applications in your course that are not already** [pre-installed](#)**,** submit an [external application request form](#) to have them enabled in your semester site. Check all external application assignment links to make sure that they are working (e.g., Cengage assignment 2 link points students to Cengage assignment 2).

Gradebook Setup

- ☐ **Essential:** [Set up your course grading scheme](#) and [set up grade weighting](#) so that they match your Syllabus information.
  - ⇾ *Reference: [QM 3.2](#)*
- ☐ **Essential:** Create assignments and grade columns as needed within each assignment group (See "Assignments: Setup According to Course Needs" below).
- ☐ **Best Practice:** Make an attendance plan if you want to keep track of it in Canvas, whether you want to track [first day attendance](#) only or track [attendance throughout the semester](#).
  - ⇾ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*
- ☐ **Best Practice:** [Use Canvas Rubrics](#) to evaluate assignments and/or discussions.
  - ⇾ *References: [QM 3.3](#); [QM 3.5](#); [UDL 6.4](#); [UDL 8.4](#)*
- ☐ **Best Practice:** If you are using drop rules, make sure to create drop rules for an assignment group (e.g., drop lowest grade from Quizzes assignment group).
  - ⇾ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*
- ☐ **Best Practice:** Use a [missing submission policy](#) to automatically assign zeros for missing work. This will assign students a grade of 0 once the due date has passed if they have not submitted the assignment (Keep in mind: this will not impact "no submission" or "on paper" assignments).
  - ⇾ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*
- ☐ **Best Practice:** Optional: [Hide the Total column from view](#) if you do not want students to see it.
  - ⇾ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*
- ☐ **Exemplary:** Extra credit: [Make sure any extra credit you plan to offer is factored in correctly](#).
  - ⇾ *Reference: FSU Best Practice*

Assignments: Setup According to Course Needs

- ☐ **Essential: Items for which students will not submit anything on Canvas** (e.g., you want a column to enter in a participation grade): Make a regular Canvas assignment with submission type "no submission."
- ☐ **Essential: Items students will turn in offline and in-person**: Make a regular Canvas assignment with submission type "on paper."
- ☐ **Essential**: **Items students will submit in Canvas, but plagiarism check is not needed:** Make a regular Canvas assignment with submission type "online."
- ☐ **Essential**: **Items students will submit in Canvas and plagiarism check IS needed:** [Use a Turnitin Direct assignment](#), or [use the old Turnitin LTI assignment if this item includes a peer review component](#).

- ☐ If students will submit two very similar versions of a paper (e.g., draft and final version), **make sure to select in your draft assignment settings *"do not store the submitted papers."***
- ☐ **Essential:** Detailed instructions and guidelines for completing assignments are provided.
  - ⇢ *References: UDL 4.2; UDL 8.1*
- ☐ **Essential:** Make sure all assignments are published.
- ☐ **Best Practice:** Sample assignments are provided to illustrate instructor expectations.
  - ⇢ *Reference: UDL 5.3*

Graded Canvas Quizzes & Assessments

- ☐ **Essential:** For quiz type, choose **Graded Quiz.**
- ☐ **Essential:** For high-stakes quizzes and exams, maximize quiz security to prevent cheating:
  - ☐ Set up your feedback settings based on your quiz situation:
    - ☐ If students are taking quiz at a proctored location, select the **only once after each attempt** option.
    - ☐ If students are not taking quiz at a proctored location, uncheck the **Let students see their quiz responses** option so that students do not see their responses at all.
  - ☐ Require an access code.
  - ☐ Set availability dates to determine when students can access quiz.
- ☐ **Essential:** Make sure all quizzes are published.
- ☐ **Best Practice: For multiple-choice quizzes only:** use the **Shuffle Answers** option if the quiz contains only multiple-choice questions with no combined answer options, such as "both A and B are correct", "C only is correct", or "all of the above".
  - ⇢ *Reference: FSU Best Practice for Academic Integrity*

Discussions

- ☐ **Essential:** Detailed instructions and guidelines for completing **discussion posts** are provided.
  - ⇢ *References: UDL 4.2; UDL 8.1*
- ☐ **Essential:** Make discussion replies threaded.
- ☐ **Essential: If you want students to attach files to discussion posts:** enable this capability in the Discussion settings.
- ☐ **Best Practice:** Require students to post to a discussion before they can view their peers' posts.
  - ⇢ *Reference: FSU Best Practice for Academic Integrity*

Additional Resources & Information

Resources

FSU Resources

- Syllabus Checklist for Online Courses
- Accessibility & Usability Overview

External Accessibility Resources

- Quality Matters Rubric Standards, Sixth Edition
- WCAG 2.1 Guidelines

Universal Design for Learning: External Resources

- National Center on Universal Design for Learning
- Best Practices for Building Universal Design Principles into Your Canvas Courses

Universal Design for Learning: Canvas Community Resources

- Commons Course: Universal Design of an Online Course
- Share UDL Course Design Tips, Tricks, and Techniques, Kelley L. Meeusen, Clover Park Technical College
- Universal Design for Learning Principles in Canvas, John Martin, UW-Madison
- Implementing Universal Design for Learning on Canvas, Eric Moore, University of Tennessee

Citations

1. CAST. (2011). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.0. Wakefield, MA: Author.
2. Noblesville Schools Quality Canvas Course Checklist [Google Doc]. Noblesville Schools. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OWrUISUYVlsD78K4w-nldfpnNrzcqKIaGuo5oRxnxMw
3. Online Course Best Practices Checklist [PDF]. (2012). Palomar College Academic Technology Department. http://www2.palomar.edu/poet/BestPracticesChecklistSP12.pdf

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