About the Template

In preparation of the upcoming term a flexible course template has been applied to this course shell. It is easily adjusted and edited to fit your personal instructional strategy and has some technical and pedagogical guidance to help get started. This document informs about the template, how it is structured and how to use or effortlessly edit it.

Course Menu

The course menu is along the left side of the course and is the main way to navigate around the course and includes:

- Course content – Course information documents, course content and a hidden link to Zoom.
- Communication – A space to put announcements, email students, a link to the class community discussion board and a hidden notifications link.
- Student resources - This is where students go for grades, locate numerous campus academic and student resources, course specific research guides and technical help with Blackboard, Zoom and other digital learning tools.

Faculty Guide

Access the faculty resource guide from the first link in the course menu. This area helps get your course ready for students and includes:

- Common semester start up tasks.
- UAlbany Blackboard resources to help with course development.
- Links to sample courses from experienced online faculty.
- Recordings from faculty on what works well for them while teaching online.

COURSE CONTENT

Course Information

This is set as the course entry point and contains the documents students need to understand the requirements and expectations of the course. The instructional documents for participating in the course, submitting assignments, and evaluation/grading criteria are typically explained in detail.
This section of the course includes:

- Sequentially organized course start-up documents with some basic set up guidance. Including; course welcome, instructor contact information and course syllabus.
- Links to the built-in ice breaker and class community discussion boards.

**Course Content Area**

**Module Design Guide**

The Module Design Guide or “instructional module” is located in course content and is a model of the structure of a course unit that includes some brief guidance to help select the tools that support your own instructional strategy. 

**Do not create any content in this area**, instead use it as a reference while designing your course.

The Module Design Guide contains:

- Embedded pedagogical and technical guidance information with links to just in time resources to support course design.
- An easy to manage course structure broken into several basic areas including:
  - Module at a Glance – a brief overview of the learning that will take place within a module including goals and due dates.
  - Materials – The required and optional readings, lectures, multimedia links and other resources.
  - Learning Activities – Clearly described and purposeful reflective or interactive aspects of the learning sequence such as discussions, blogs, journals, wikis, group work and other active components that prompt students to analyze, apply, and transform course concepts into knowledge.
  - Assessments – Activities that require students to further demonstrate that they have achieved the goals of the module /unit. Summative assessments such as assignments, tests and 3rd party assessment activities. It also includes information on rubrics and using the grade center.
  - Next Steps – Outlines what to do when finished with a module.
  - Ask a Question – A space where students may post questions about course content.

**Module 1**

**Semantic Note**

Note that we have used the term "Module" to correspond to a particular learning sequence, such as a course unit or week. You may decide on different terminology for your course and the template allows for this - change the title of Module 1 and any subsequent course units as fits your course structure and content.

This is where your module learning structure is set, and initial course content is built. It is organized very similar to the Module Design Guide, includes some basic guidance, but lacks any of the technical and pedagogical help and resources provided in the Module Design Guide.

Use this blank shell to:

- Start by, **setting the learning structure of your module**, but don't add any content.
- Next, **copy the module without content** as many times as you need to fit your course,
- Finally, **build the initial course content** in Module 1.

**Zoom Meetings (hidden from students)**

When using Zoom for your classes, we strongly recommend that you use the Zoom Tool in your Blackboard courses to streamline the process for you and your students. This also contributes to more safe and secure Zoom class meetings. We have added the Zoom Tool to the template. This connects your Zoom account to your Blackboard account so you don’t need to log in again when you click this link. It will open an area of your Zoom account within the Blackboard frame and allows you to schedule meetings specifically for this course. Students would find all Zoom class meetings and recordings, if any, for the course here.

- **How to Use Zoom in Blackboard**

**COMMUNICATION**

**Announcements**

The Announcements tool helps to increase your presence in the course, supports a sense of class community, and increase student satisfaction. You can think of this tool as a class email list that maintains a log of your messages throughout the semester.

**Class Community**

This is a link to a Discussion Forum labeled Class Community. The **Class Community** is a forum for your class outside the context of a particular course module. Just as you have the opportunity to talk or chat with each other or with the instructor when taking a conventional classroom course, you should also have the opportunity to do the same in a web course.
Email (hidden from students)

You can send email messages directly from Blackboard. They are not saved in the Blackboard system in any way. You simply initiate the email from Blackboard and then recipients receive the message in the UAlbany Mail inbox and can forward or reply, just like a regular email message. You can customize settings to limit the recipient options (for example, if you don't want to allow students to email the entire class). To do so, on the Control Panel menu, click Customization > Tool Availability and scroll down to the Email. Click the action link and click Email Settings.

Notifications (hidden from students)

This is a Module Page. This page aggregates notification alerts for your students in one place. You can determine which modules are included on the page, such as "What's New" or "To Do." This can be a useful tool to help students keep abreast of due dates.

STUDENT RESOURCES

My Grades

This is probably the area most of interest to your students. This lists graded items that correspond to the columns in the Grade Center. Think carefully about which columns you want to display in My Grades and set things up accordingly.

Campus Resources

This is a centrally managed repository of contact information and links for campus offices and services for student success. From the Disability Resources Center to Advising to Student Financial Services, this page provides an avenue for students to connect with critical support resources at any time.

Research Guides

In collaboration with the University Libraries, we have included a link to a Subject Gateway page specific to your course subject. If a page for your subject does not exists on the Libraries' website, the link will open a search page there.

Blackboard Help

Wherever student need technical assistance with Blackboard, this is the place to find help. This page includes self-help resources like the browser checker, plus contact information for the ITS Service Desk and after-hours support from our partner Blackboard Student Support Services. Blackboard help is available around the clock.

Need more help? Contact the ITS Service Desk.