



# Guidance for Planning an Inclusive Teaching Course in Canvas

This guidance will support you in developing an inclusive teaching course in Canvas, particularly in the planning, creating and updating stages.

You can use this [Planner template](#) to manage course development with colleagues.

The Pre-launch Quick Check List is also available for a final check of your course just before you are ready to publish it.

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# 1. Information / Communication Design

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## Key information

Make sure key information is available in the Canvas course or can be accessed from the course.

- Expectations - clear expectations of student engagement / participation and standards of work (including in different teaching scenarios – e.g. tutorials) are provided (see section 3).
- Course handbook.
- Course outline.
- Reading lists (see section 5).
- Course materials.
- Course schedule.
- Events / Important dates (see section 2).

## Tools and activities

Review how you intend to use various tools and activities and explain them to students. These include:

- Dates in Canvas calendar
- Assignments
- Announcements
- [Teams](#)
- [Panopto](#) recordings

## Communication

Review and explain how you intend to communicate with students. For example:

- How students should contact staff online
  - Email.
  - Canvas discussions.
  - Teams chat.
- Will you use Announcements in Canvas or send mass emails?
- Are expectations set around response times?

## 2. Canvas Implementation

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### Modules

The [modules tool](#) is used to 'chunk' content into manageable pieces (e.g., organised by units, chapters, topics or weeks).

- **Label modules** in a consistent and descriptive way throughout the course (e.g., name the module according to topic or week; use a numeric prefix to identify items that belong within a particular module, e.g., "1.4 Reading List" is the fourth item in week 1).
- **Use titles that make sense to students** at a glance, providing them with the information needed to know what the resource or activity is without opening it.

### Navigation

Keep navigation clear and consistent through the course. Explicit and meaningful headings and short introductions with bullet points on each page inform students' navigation decisions.

### Calendar events

Add important dates, due dates and / or timetables to the [Canvas calendar](#) (or alternative).

The [Calendar Import Tool](#) lets you **import events in bulk** into the Canvas calendar.

### Consistency

Provide a **consistent** student experience **across related Canvas courses** – in how they are arranged and where items are located.

## 3. Course Design / Pedagogy

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### Learning Environment

Establish a learning environment in Canvas that is inclusive for all students. [Key principles of inclusive teaching](#).

## Expectations

Outline expectations of the course to provide a guide for students when reviewing materials and preparing for assessments. It should be clear what students will learn and how they will be expected to show what they have learned.

- [Guidance on writing effective learning outcomes](#) is available on the Centre for Teaching and Learning website.
- The learning activities and assessments are designed to support students to achieve these learning outcomes.

## Feedback to students

Provide timely and consistent feedback. Oxford Teaching Ideas include information on [Inclusive feedback](#).

- Tools for providing feedback in Canvas include: [SpeedGrader](#) and [peer review assignments](#).
- There is also an Oxford Teaching Idea on [peer feedback](#).

## Feedback from students

Give **students the opportunity to feed back** on their experience.

This is a way to find out from your students how teaching is or is not helping them learn and so take a targeted approach to making changes to your teaching practice. An [Introduction to Evaluating Your Teaching](#) is available.

## Variety

Provide a range of activities in the Canvas course to engage students (e.g., quizzes, discussions, polls, opportunities for collaboration outside of teaching events etc.).

Use different formats for delivering content (e.g., books, journal articles, websites, diagrams, podcasts, animations etc.).

## Study Skills

Provide links to further study and academic skills resources. For example, [Study skills and training | University of Oxford](#).

## Handouts

Provide handouts summarising the main points of the lecture/session where appropriate.

## 4. Assessment

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Make sure that students can easily access a detailed and up to date information about assessment:

- **Assignment timetable** – provide details of the assignment timetable for the term at the start. Ideally, use the Canvas calendar.
- **Assessment methods** –how will learning be assessed (both exams and formative assessment).
- **Explicit assessment criteria:**
  - Clear descriptions of the required tasks.
  - Clear instructions on deadlines.
  - Details on how the assignments should be submitted (link to the e-assessment tool (e.g., Inspera) where relevant).
- **Links to past papers.**

## 5. Reading Lists

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Preferably, create reading lists using [ORLO](#) and embed them in the Canvas modules list.

The [Designing effective reading lists](#) resource provides questions to consider when preparing reading lists.

### List structure

- Distinguish between core and additional readings for the course (essential, recommended, and further readings).
- Group by topic– if reading lists cover a variety of topics, consider grouping the list according to these.
- Timetable reading – if you plan to focus on a particular text or topic each week or teaching session, consider making this explicit. For example, by using headings such as ‘Week 1 Reading’.

A clear structure will help students to prioritise their course reading schedule and make appropriate use of resources.

## Availability of readings

- Check [SOLO](#) to find all items available within the libraries, including books, journals, CD-ROMs, DVDs. Electronic and print resources in SOLO can be added to ORLO lists to provide direct access or live library availability.
- Make the reading list available in advance (at least a week). **Note:** It can take at least six weeks for students to receive texts in alternative formats through the [Accessible Resources Unit](#).

## ORLO tips

- In ORLO reading importance tags and sections help to structure reading lists.
- If using ORLO, make sure to embed the most up-to-date version of the [ORLO list in Canvas](#).
- Note: another function within ORLO is the ability to export a PDF copy of a published ORLO list, with links included, from student view.
- Oxford Reading Lists Online resources: [ORLO \(Oxford Reading Lists Online\): Guides to using Canvas at Oxford](#), [Getting started - Oxford Reading Lists Online \(ORLO\) - Oxford LibGuides at Oxford University](#), [Bodleian Libraries: Reading Lists](#).

An example of a reading list that has a good structure, effective use of reading importance and a nice range of items is [OII MSc SDS Foundations of Social Data Science MT](#).

## 6. Digital Versions of Handouts

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### Digital versions of learning/teaching materials

Provide links to teaching materials in advance of the lecture/class/lab/tutorial. At least 48 hours and ideally a week in advance.

Ensure students know any work they need to undertake / complete before the session.

The Bodleian Library provides a [digitisation service](#).

## 7. Recordings

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### Accessible recordings

Provide access to recordings of lectures or equivalent materials where appropriate in line with University policies.

Ensure that recordings have:

- Descriptive names that make it clear what lecture they belong to
- Clear organisation (either in folders)
- Automatically generated captions (this is enabled by default in Panopto)
- Manually edited captions where necessary

Also consider:

- Providing teaching session slides separately
- Creating bullet point summaries of key points discussed in videos
- Providing text transcript of audio or video files provided (where possible and feasible).

## 8. Readability

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See [Readability Principles for More Productive and Actionable Documents and Presentation.docx](#) for more details.

### Ease of reading and understanding

Pay attention to how easy it is to quickly read documents and pages you create. Think about:

- What students need to know first.
- What documents they are likely to come back to many times.
- How quickly can they find relevant information.

### Structure

- Put important things first, leave background or welcome statements to linked pages.
- Break document into multiple sections marked by section headings
- Break up lists into bullet points.
- Bold key phrases / facts in long paragraphs to improve discovery.

## Formatting

- Use a large font.
- Keep lines short.
- Avoid ALL CAPS, *italics*, and large blocks of centred text.

## Language

- Keep short sentences (under 20 words).
- Use short paragraphs to improve scannability.
- Address the reader rather than talk about them.

## 9. Digital Accessibility

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Use the **Ally Course Accessibility Report** to review digital accessibility issues of pages and documents uploaded to the course.

**Note:** This will not check accessibility of readings linked to through ORLO. However, the Bodleian digitisation service ensures that ORLO scans are OCR searchable.

Not all the issues will be important to all your students and may not require immediate action. See detailed guide on [five most common accessibility issues and how to prevent them.docx](#).

| Issue                                  | Solution   |
|--|--|
| Scanned PDF without OCR                | Use <a href="#">Bodleian digitisation service</a>  |
| PDF without tags                       | Always <b>Save As PDF</b> (DO NOT Print to PDF)  |
| Documents without any headings defined | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Structure your document into sections and subsections</li><li>2. Mark Section headings with Heading styles according to level</li></ol>   |
| Tables without headers defined         | Mark first row and/or column in Word, PowerPoint, or Canvas page editor  |
| ALT text not specified                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mark image as decorative</li><li>• Provide a text alternative in surrounding text</li><li>• Add caption or bullets to graphs or tables.</li><li>• Provide very brief description of the image in the ALT text field</li><li>• Always replicate text contained in image</li></ul> |

## 10. Supporting Resources

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- Oxford Canvas Guidance: [Manage Courses \(Rollover\)](#), [Using Canvas at Oxford](#), [Teams](#), [Panopto](#), [Calendar Import Tool](#), [ORLO \(Oxford Reading Lists Online\): Guides to using Canvas at Oxford](#).
- Canvas Guidance: [Modules tool](#), [Canvas calendar](#), [SpeedGrader](#), [Peer review assignments](#).
- Canvas courses: [An introduction to Inclusive Teaching at Oxford](#), [Flexible Inclusive Teaching](#), [An Introduction to Tutorial Teaching at Oxford \(Humanities and Social Sciences\)](#) and [An Introduction to Tutorial Teaching at Oxford \(Sciences\)](#).
- Centre for Teaching and Learning website: [Flexible and Inclusive Teaching](#), [Accessibility](#), [Key principles of inclusive teaching](#), [Guidance on writing effective learning outcomes](#), [Inclusive feedback](#), [Peer feedback](#), [Introduction to Evaluating Your Teaching](#), [Designing effective reading lists](#), [recordings of lectures](#).
- University website: [Study skills and training | University of Oxford](#).
- Bodleian Libraries website: [ORLO](#), [SOLO](#), [Accessible Resources Unit](#), [ORLO list in Canvas](#), [Getting started - Oxford Reading Lists Online \(ORLO\) - Oxford LibGuides at Oxford University](#), [Bodleian Libraries: Reading Lists](#), [OII MSc SDS Foundations of Social Data Science MT](#), [Bodleian digitisation service](#).
- Other: [Readability Principles for More Productive and Actionable Documents and Presentation.docx](#), [Five most common accessibility issues and how to prevent them.docx](#).