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Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

# D2L Course Set-up Checklist

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<https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/resources/online-course-design-checklist>



## Introduction

This D2L Online Course Set-up Checklist is intended to guide instructors of online or blended courses in D2L through components of effective course setup. The checklist is organized into nine key areas, from course information and navigation to reflective practice and continuous improvement. Each section includes actionable items aligned with [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) principles, accessibility standards, and best practices in online pedagogy. Use this resource as a guiding tool during course development, a self-audit tool before course launch, and/or a reference tool for ongoing course improvements.

### 1. Course Information & Orientation

- Post a detailed course outline, including course learning outcomes, assessment methods, technology requirements, and schedule.
- Include an instructor [welcome video or message](#).
- Provide a "Start Here" module with orientation materials, including links to student support services (e.g., [library](#), [Student Success Centre](#), [Student Accessibility Services](#), [Information Technologies](#) [IT]).
- Include UCalgary's [Land Acknowledgement](#) to honor Treaty 7 territory and demonstrate commitment to the ii' taa'poh'top'p Indigenous Strategy and Truth and Reconciliation.
- Include an [EDIA statement](#) in your course Content that articulates your commitment to inclusive learning. Consider adding reflection questions or co-creation opportunities for community agreements.

### 2. Course Organization & Navigation

- Organize modules by topic or week, with clear start/end dates and intuitive navigation. Consider adding a course roadmap or visual overview showing how modules connect.
- Each module should list learning outcomes, activities, assessments, and clear student expectations/instructions.
- Use consistent headers, subheadings, and visual design for clarity. If time permits, consider exploring [HTML Templates](#) and [Accessibility and custom layouts](#) to enhance your course design.

- Create a structured landing page with a welcome message and "[Getting Started](#)" directions.
- Streamline the course menu, hide unused tabs, and maintain updated links.

### 3. Instructor & Student Support

- List instructor and TA contact details, office hours, and communication expectations (such as 24–48 hour response time for emails, preferred contact methods, when to reach out to TAs vs. Instructor).
- Provide department contact info.
- Link to student support services such as: [Writing Support](#), the [library](#), [Student Accessibility Services](#), [Student Wellness Services](#), and the [Student Success Centre](#).
- Include tutorials or [quick-start guides for D2L tools](#) and course-specific technologies and [IT support](#).

### 4. Interactions & Community Building

- Create a low-stakes introductions [discussion board](#) where students can share their backgrounds, learning goals, and what they hope to contribute to the class community. Consider providing prompts to scaffold participation.
- Build a [respectful, inclusive, and compassionate learning community](#).
- Provide opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction, [group work](#), and/or [collaborative learning](#).
- Use strategies for large class management, such as breaking into smaller groups.
- Maintain regular instructor presence through brief announcements or discussion participation, to foster connection and engagement.

### 5. Assessment & Feedback

- Align assessments with learning outcomes and provide a [variety of methods](#) (formative, summative, peer/self-assessment).

- Include [transparent instructions](#), rubrics, grading criteria, and examples of exemplary work.
- Scaffold assignments and sequence them to build skills progressively. See this [course example of constructive alignment](#).
- Promote [academic integrity](#) and [clearly state policies](#).
- Offer timely, [constructive feedback](#) and opportunities for self-assessment.
- Communicate feedback timelines and [methods](#).

## 6. Instructional Materials & Accessibility

- Use a variety of media to ensure all materials are [accessible](#) (alt text, [captions, transcripts](#), contrast, descriptive links).
- Provide [copyright information \(e.g., APA style\)](#) and guidance on intellectual property.
- Promote use of [Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#) and free/low-cost materials.
- Support opportunities for students to customize the display of information.
- Represent a diversity of perspectives in authentic ways, such as including multiple sources of information and authors with different perspectives.
- Cultivate multiple ways of knowing and making meaning, such as including examples from different disciplines.
- Apply [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) principles.

## 7. Technology & Media Integration

- List minimum technical requirements and [supported tools](#); provide guides for software and hardware use. See also: [technology requirements for students](#).
- Ensure technology choices support learning outcomes and are accessible to all students.
- Leverage D2L features that enhance learning (e.g., Discussions, Quizzes, Grades) and [hide unused modules](#) to simplify navigation and reduce cognitive load.

- Use short, thematic videos and purposeful images/graphics; link media to activities and assessments.
- Ensure [copyright clearance](#) and accessibility for all media.

## 8. Course Delivery & Time Management

- [Preview the course as a student](#) to ensure clarity and [accessibility](#).
- Ask someone to go through the course and provide feedback on navigation, clarity, and completeness.
- Prepare all required resources before the course start date.
- Clearly [communicate expectations](#) for participation (frequency, quality, synchronous vs. asynchronous), deadline policies (late work, extensions), and instructor/TA availability (office hours, response times, preferred contact methods).
- Use [announcements and reminders](#) to keep students on track.
- Make the [D2L course shell active](#) in accordance with your department or faculty guidelines.

## 9. Reflective Practice & Continuous Improvement

- Gather student feedback through [surveys](#), mid-course evaluations, and end-of-term reviews, including the [Universal Course Experience Survey](#).
- Revisit course content and links prior to each course launch.
- Document changes and rationale for future reference.

## References

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