Using Modules to Structure Your Online Course

Most learning management systems (LMS) offer the ability to build modules to organize course content into packages of information and activities. These modules resemble the structured units of a face-to-face course. Modules can be built as weeks or as units, depending on your needs.

When setting up modules, keep the following in mind:

* **Organize modules and items linearly**, such as by due date. This encourages students to complete tasks sequentially, especially if scaffolding assignments between and within modules.
* **Title your module clearly and specifically**. For example, consider using the number of the week, the dates for the module, and a title that indicates course content. For example: Week 3: Finding & Evaluating Sources.
* **Create a learning guide** that sits at the top of the module with the words “read this first” in it. In the learning guide:
  + Identify the learning goals for the module
  + Identify required reading(s), including page numbers and chapter titles
  + Indicate tasks, assignments, and their due dates
  + Share any other information or resources that may be useful to students
* **Design modules consistently** so students learn what to expect and where to go to access information, resources, discussions, and assignments. Be sure to use the same terms and language in each module so as not to confuse students.
* **Use section headers** to organize chunks of course content. For example, you could use them to separate direct instruction (reading, resources, videos, presentations) and active learning (discussion boards, quizzes/exams, projects).
* **Use indenting or nesting** to convey the module structure.
* **Title each module item** to describe what kind of activity it is; this lets students know what to expect. For example,
  + Video: Library Introduction
  + Discussion: Library Scavenger Hunt
  + Quiz: Finding & Evaluating Sources
* **Provide instruction about how students can navigate your course**. For example, provide an orientation that previews the module structure.

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