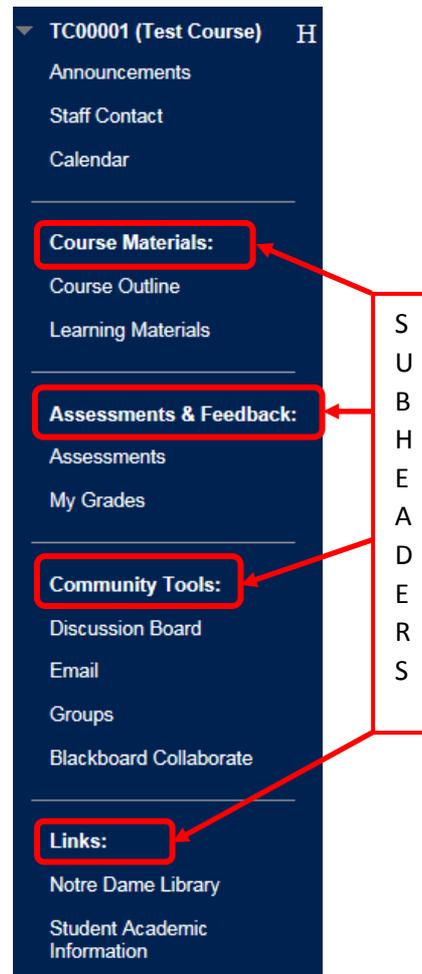


# Best Practice Blackboard Course Design

**Change of Terminology Note:** what used to be **Unit** becomes **Course**; and what used to be **Course** now becomes **Program**.

## Structure:

1. Organise your navigation panel based on learning experience (e.g., assessment area, communication tools, etc.) and consider using sub-headers to group similar resources together (please see example on the right);
2. Count the 'clicks' – how many clicks will it take for your students to locate what they are looking for? Try to keep it less or equal to 3 clicks;
3. Clearly explain what you want students to do with every resource you provide – please do not use Blackboard to just dump files;
4. Keep to established naming conventions and make sure that there is consistency of titles and presentation of resources across the whole Program;
5. Try to provide a mix of media in your materials (e.g., visual and auditory as well as text);
6. Try to provide multiple means of engagement. Ask yourself:
  - a. Instead of content to read, could a student learn through **undertaking an activity**?
  - b. Could students **collaborate** in learning the concepts?
  - c. Could students **test themselves** to ensure they have embedded the knowledge?



## Learning Instructions:

1. In addition to Course Learning Outcomes in the Course Outline, try to provide topic- or module-specific learning outcomes in Blackboard as well;
2. State your expectations of students (e.g., do you expect them to do pre-readings? Check their student email regularly? Post any Course-related questions into the Discussion Board instead of emailing them to the Lecturer? Help each other on the Discussion Board in between the times the Lecturer is available? Share resources? Etc.);
3. Clearly state what can be expected from the Lecturer (e.g., Discussion Boards will always be checked twice a week, new announcement will be posted every Monday, etc.)

## Support Mechanisms:

1. Provide information about Course Coordinators, Lecturers and Tutors, not forgetting to include photographs and some information, both professional and personal where appropriate;
2. Provide links to any useful additional information, such as student policies and industry professional bodies. It may also be useful to add a direct link to the Library and Student Academic Information from your Blackboard Course;
3. If your marking rubrics are not included in the Course Outline, make sure that you provide them to your students well in advance of submission deadline;
4. You may consider posting some of your content resources (such as useful academic papers) into the Discussion Board as the unit progresses, to provide them 'just in time' when the student attention is on the topic.

## Look and feel:

1. **Consistency** is the most important consideration. Make sure that the same icons are used consistently throughout the Course (and Program) for the same types of activities;
2. Consider a course banner and icons that both represent your discipline and would also appeal to your students;
3. Help your students by clearly labelling activities and resources.

## Learning Engagement Strategies:

1. Place emphasis on developing lifelong learning skills;
2. Allow students to make some decisions about what they learn (e.g., choice of activities or assessment topic);
3. Ensure appropriate level of scaffolding to help students build their skills gradually and with confidence;
4. Consider involving students in building course resources;
5. Consider involving students in evaluating their own assessments using your marking rubric;
6. Design activities around real world problems and industry practices;
7. Create collaborative and peer learning opportunities; and
8. Last but not least – enhance learning using **appropriate educational technology**.