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## Structuring your FLO site

Layout, structural, and visual consistency in FLO allows students to quickly and easily feel confident. When students can see what is available within their topics, know what the expectations are and feel comfortable moving between topics, they are more likely to engage in a positive way.

The [digital learning guidelines](#) are designed to provide guidance for teaching staff to achieve a high level of consistency across and within FLO sites. There are many ways the guidelines can be woven into your topic, including leveraging the [FLO starter site](#) which has been designed to unify the layout and structure of topics across courses, disciplines, and colleges. The FLO starter site is a semi-pre-configured 'starting place' and can be customised to work with the needs of a course or topic. A great starting place is to check with your colleagues to see if this work has already begun in your area. If not, why not suggest you all get started together? This is the perfect project for collaboration and collegiality.

Consider the big picture along with the detail to ensure your solutions are scale-able, sustainable, and engaging. Determine a plan of action to ensure you have a clear vision and attainable timeframe for implementation. We suggest choosing one or two changes at a time, across all topics within a course. This will provide the biggest positive impact for your students and a realistic workload for yourselves.

Remember consistency is key, as inevitably the majority of students study more than one topic at a time. The focus is on creating a better learning experience for your students, and a more efficient teaching experience for you and your team. The following tips should help you review and structure your FLO topic site into a resource where information is easy to find and valuable to your students.

- Tip 1: Consider what your topic is linked to
- Tip 2: Group the information your students will need into modules
- Tip 3: Know your students
- Tip 4: Arranging and sequencing learning resources and activities

If you have any questions or would like some advice, please contact your local [Learning Designer](#). They can work with you and your team to develop a plan of action and provide guidance as you implement your changes.

### Tip 1: Consider what your topic is linked to

- Does it belong to one course or span multiple courses?
- Does it sit within a single college or span multiple colleges?
- Is there already a standardised structure for this course/s you should follow?
- Has your college put together guidelines to follow?
- Are there other availabilities running at the same time?
- Should multiple availabilities be shared or kept separate?

Take a step back and look at the **bigger picture** to see how your topic fits with others your students will be studying as part of their course.

- If it sits within a single course, collaborate with the Course Coordinator (CC) and other Topic Coordinators (TCs) to determine agreed design principles and a structure for all topics within the course.
- If it integrates with multiple courses, try to agree on some common themes that can be implemented across all of them with relevant stakeholders.

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This approach will provide students with a familiar interface, making it quicker and easier to locate information. Visual clues, standard modules and consistent headings build familiarity and confidence for users. Be aware that there may be some standardisation your colleagues have already agreed upon. Speak with the CC and your fellow TCs to find out. If not, it would be a good idea to collaborate to create a set of agreed principles. Your local [Learning Designer](#) can help coordinate design collaborations.

If you have **multiple availabilities** running at the same time, it's possible to share them together in FLO to create a single FLO site for both sets of students to use, keeping the following in mind:

- Are the learning outcomes and requirements for students for each topic consistent and aligned?
- If students need to complete both topics, we recommend keeping them separate.
- If students only complete one of them, they can probably be shared. If, for example, you have two availabilities from different locations (on campus and online) running on the same dates they can be shared, as the teaching content and assessments will be the same.
- If you have undergraduate and postgraduate students studying the same teaching content it may be appropriate to share them together, but you must ensure all activities and assessments are at the appropriate AQF level for each cohort. This can be achieved using restrictions on items within FLO to ensure students only see the activities and assessments applicable to them.

If you would like advice regarding sharing topics or structuring a topic using restrictions your local [eLearning support team](#) can help.

## Tip 2: Group the information your students will need into modules

- How will you welcome your students and give context to the topic?
- How will you orient them to the FLO topic, so they know what information they can find and where to find it?
- How will you use the themed modules in the starter site to group information together (topic information and resources, assessments, communication)?
- Is information duplicated across topics which could be centralised on a course FLO site and linked to?

Look at the information you are presenting to students across multiple topics within their course. Chances are each topic will contain a welcome and some context as to how it fits with the curriculum. The [FLO starter site](#) suggests that a welcome is located as a video, text or image in the top module. You'll most likely have topic information and resources, assessment information, and communication expectations too. The finer details may be different, but locating these items in the themed modules provided in the FLO starter site will begin to introduce **consistency** across topics in a course and across colleges.

If you have information that's repeated within multiple topics, it may be more efficient to locate it on a course site and link to it from each individual topic. This will ensure correct information is always available to your students whilst allowing you to make updates once rather than needing to remember everywhere the information is located (saving time). It's possible to add navigation buttons at the top of each FLO topic to link to this content (ask your local [eLearning support team](#) how).

With your CC and fellow TCs, think about how best to group the information you have within the topics to keep associated items together. This approach will help keep items in context to promote visual clarity. This clarity helps students feel comfortable navigating your topic as they can clearly see where to find the information they need, when they need it. This approach will also serve as a fast path to key information as your students become familiar with this consistent interface, speeding up many commonly performed tasks within any of their topics.

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### Tip 3: Know your students

- Undergraduate or postgraduate students?
- 1<sup>st</sup> years, 2<sup>nd</sup> years etc?
- On campus or online students?
- Can the teaching material be shared across all of these cohorts?
- Are there new concepts that need to be introduced or skills to be scaffolded?

These considerations will begin to inform the **structure** of the actual teaching content. Who your students are will determine the level at which to pitch your teaching content. If you have 1<sup>st</sup> year students, more guidance will be required compared to a topic aimed at 4<sup>th</sup> year students. You may like to review previous feedback from students about the topic, or questions students have asked during previous iterations of the topic and use this rich information to help inform what you include in your teaching modules.

The [FLO starter site](#) has some prompts about what you could include in your teaching modules, however the format is flexible and should be designed according to the topic, the discipline and the needs of the student. Overall, consider adopting a consistency layout within each of your teaching modules throughout your site and if possible, across all topics within the course(s) your topic resides within.

- Acronyms and University processes will need to be explained, and links added to ensure clarity for students new to Flinders University. Be aware of the terminology you use and do not reuse words in a different context that are already in use across the University.
- Students at later years will also require instructions for assessments and specific tasks; however, they may not require the same level of introductory information as new students.
- Giving students a sense of freedom to explore and familiarise themselves with the layout of their topics from the beginning will increase their confidence and remove any fear of exploring their FLO topics fully.

If your FLO topic is aimed at online students, regardless of if it is online only or shared with on campus cohorts, the whole topic should be **designed for online**. Ensuring students have adequate guidance and instruction within the topic will assist their learning experience and success. Remember that these students do not have the benefit of in-class discussions, may be studying in isolation and so do not have the benefit of their peer's insights. It's helpful to create supports and opportunities for social learning in the online space where possible.

When planning your teaching materials think about where your students have come from, and the knowledge they will bring with them. If they are postgraduate students they most likely have industry experience in their chosen field but undergraduate students, especially 1<sup>st</sup> years, may have no knowledge or experience in their area of study.

- Consider how best to introduce concepts to your students and allow opportunities to practise and consolidate new knowledge before high-stake assessments.
- Write clear lead-in text to explain what's happening in your topic so it's clear when something new is being introduced, explain the importance of understanding the information, where it will be used in the real world, and how they will build upon it in your topic or future topics. This helps to give relevance to tasks and makes students see value in the topic material.
- When writing text, write as if you're talking to the student. This personal approach will help them feel connected and involved.
- Detail how long tasks should take, bearing in mind these are often new skills for students so will take longer for them than for you. This will help them plan their workload and not get lost spending too much time on something that's not of major importance.

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- Consider the amount of information you include and be as concise as you can. Keep everything relevant and don't clutter up your topic with unnecessary information. Clutter makes the important things less visible, whereas clarity and relevance remove the need to add shouting capitals, bright colours or coloured boxes to highlight information.

It's also great to seek feedback from your students at regular intervals to check that the implemented structure is working for them. Do they find your topic intuitive and easy to navigate, or are some things confusing or cumbersome? Often our familiarity with an environment means we take things for granted so fresh eyes and ideas should always be welcome.

#### Tip 4: Arranging and sequencing learning activities and resources

- How will your teaching content be broken up into small, manageable chunks?
- Is there anything your students need to do before they come to class?
- How will their classes be structured?
- Is there any follow-up work they should do after class?
- How does the teaching content fit with the assessments?

These questions are about considering how best to present your actual **teaching content**. FLO topics consist of multiple sections, each containing information. These sections can be formatted to give a different look and feel to your site. The format used to set up a topic is important to consider across the entire course to maintain consistency as students move between topics.

- The FLO starter site uses **collapsed modules** which makes it easy to add new or rearrange existing modules if needed. This format allows students to open and close each module (ie section), and reduces the amount of scrolling needed to find information. The modules can be named however you like, but avoid adding specific dates to module headings within this format to reduce the amount of maintenance you'll have each time your topic is rolled over.
- Some people are drawn to the **grid format** where an [image](#) can be added to represent each module.

As per tip 3, the [FLO starter site](#) has some prompts for what should appear in teaching modules, but really there is no right or wrong way to arrange your teaching modules. Within each module, think about how you would like your students to interact with the teaching content and activities. If they have preparation to complete before coming to class, call it out. Outline what will be covered in class or a laboratory session. Are there follow-up activities or readings you would like them to engage with?

- Separating the teaching content into distinct sections and adding clear headings helps your students to easily see what the expectations are.
- Chunking and sequencing the work for your students reduces the cognitive load required to make sense of your topic.
- Repeating this same format in each teaching week brings consistency to the entire topic, making it intuitive to use.

When constructing activities and assessments, plan the instructions your students will need. **Functional consistency** generates familiarity and removes frustration because students aren't receiving different or conflicting information.

- Keep all instructions and associated documents together with the activity or assessment to make the task clear for students.

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- Text and documents should be added into the assignment tool, thus reducing the number of actions the student needs to complete to gather the required information.
  - If you have a task that's repeated, either in a single topic or across topics within a course – a weekly quiz or a placement for example – consider writing standardised instructions to use for each instance of the activity. This will ensure students learn how to complete this type of task and know what the expectations are. It also reduces the amount of text you need to write and maintain.