

Lesley University Teaching Guide

Fall 2020

1. Getting Started

Here are a few things you can begin creating now, to be ready for your first week of class.

Setting the stage

Things to consider about our students as we plan our course

- Basics of food, shelter, and finances workspace
 - Internet Access and Learning devices
 - Engagement (limitations or opportunities)
 - Accessibility (Readings, accommodations) [ADD LINK](#)
 - Privacy and Family Dynamics
-

Create a welcome video

A welcome video will facilitate setting the tone for the class. Be real and bring in empathy. *This is not a personal introduction video of you as the instructor. We recommend a separate video for that purpose.*

Share with the students the logistics of how the class is going to run and setting your expectations of the students. Acknowledge what is happening at the school, changes to course, what the current times looks like external to school.

Recognize the importance of BLM uprising and its significance for Lesley and your course *together with your students*. End the video with an empathy piece, acknowledge the challenge for you and the students and the need for collective creativity and grace. Assure that we will make the most of the time together. Recognize that we are all responsible for creating community, a meaningful learning space, a place to have FUN. Remind them that you're available to contact anytime for any reason. Encourage constant communication and not go silent.

Let them know that you will be sending a survey that will help you support the students learning and encourage them to fill it out.

Suggested Tools: [Kaltura Capture](#), [VoiceThread](#) (Both these tools allow for captions making it accessible.)

Setup a pre-course survey

Gain insight and useful information from your students for this unique class. The survey will allow you to gauge the considerations mentioned above. Include questions that informally assess students' experience in online learning:

- Share their pronoun (optional) and preferred name.
- Is this your first time taking an online course?
- How are you accessing the course – private computer, public, tablet, mobile phone?
 - Access shared or limited?
- How is your internet connection?
- Are you in a different time zone?
 - If you plan on having small group activities – when are your available working times?
- What concerns do you have about taking this course and for your engagement with the content?
- How can I best facilitate and support your learning in this course?
- Any other concerns or information you would like to share with me that will allow me to better support you?

OTHER QUESTIONS:

- Would you feel comfortable acting as a group leader in breakout sessions or team projects?
- Please describe how the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on your personal and educational life may impact your current or future participation in the course and/or program.
- What is your current level of stress, on a scale of 1-10, where 1 is low and 10 is high?

ART/LAB SPECIFIC QUESTION EXAMPLES:

- Please list your operating system, processor, graphics card, and RAM specification.
- Do you have a 3-button mouse?
- Do you have the (specific software) installed? Do you need assistance with installing it?

- What size computer monitor or laptop screen are you working on?
- Can you stream a 1080p video reliably?
- What size tablet are you drawing on?
- Do you have a smooth surface you can draw on?
- Do you have access to good lighting?
- Do you have access to a printer?

Suggested Tools: [Microsoft Office 365 Forms](#), Google Forms, JotForm

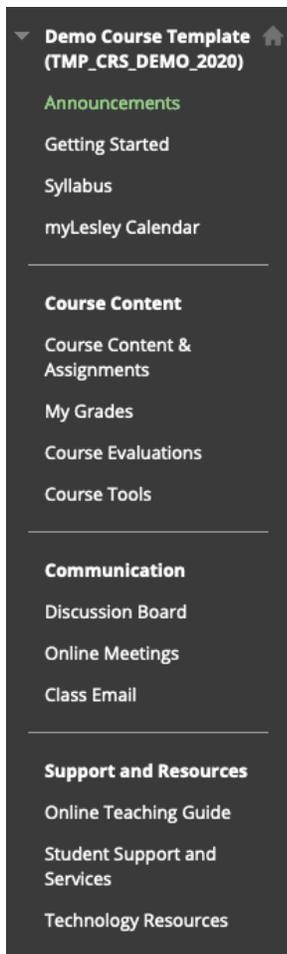
Send your first announcement

- [Create an announcement](#)
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2. Setting up Blackboard

One thing we know from the Spring semester is that the student experience was wildly different across classes. In order to help orient students to their courses in Blackboard, we've provided you with a course template, containing a suggested set of links where you can place your content. In this section we will walk you through the things you should consider adding to your course before the start of the semester.

As you prepare your content, [view your course as a student](#) to ensure that your content is visible and easy to navigate..



Announcements

Announcements allow you to post timely information and reminders to your students. This may include changes to your schedule or syllabus, regular course communications, weekly summaries, and more. When creating the announcement, you also have the option of sending it as an email to your students, allowing them to receive the information even if they are not logged into the course.

Watch the [Create Announcements tutorial video](#) for more information or view the step-by-step instructions: [Create an Announcement](#).

Getting Started

Use this section to introduce students to details that may be specific to your course. Let your students know what to expect, where to find materials, how to turn in assignments, how to contact you, and how soon to expect a response.

Syllabus

The syllabus area is a designated space in your course for your syllabus. [Upload your syllabus](#) to your course and let your students know where to find it. As a best practice, create your syllabus as a Word document and run the [Microsoft Office Accessibility Checker](#) to ensure that your syllabus is accessible.

The Syllabus area also includes a link to the current [Syllabus Statements](#), including:

- Learning Community Statement
- Disability Statement
- Equal Opportunity and Inclusion Policy
- Library Services
- Academic Integrity

Add your contact information in your Syllabus area so that students can easily find out the best ways to reach you.

MyLesley Calendar

Use the Calendar Tool to provide students with dates for course-related events, including due dates, special events, and more. Course items with due dates (ex. Assignments, Discussions, Tests) will appear in the calendar automatically. If students use the Blackboard Mobile App, calendar items will appear in their Activity Stream.

Watch the [Use the Calendar tutorial video](#) for more information or view the step-by-step instructions: [Use the calendar in Blackboard](#).

Course Content and Assignments

The Course Content and Assignments area is where you should organize your course content. You may choose to organize your content by week, unit, or topic. Whichever method you use, be sure to keep it consistent.

To begin, [create a folder to contain each unit's content](#). Name each folder with the week, unit, or topic information. For example, Week 1, Module 1, Unit 1.

Within each folder, include:

- **Overview.** This will serve as your guide for the week. [Create an item](#) and include a summary of the content, learning activities, or goals.
- **Content.** This could include information on readings, links to readings or resources, videos (that you create or that you embed from the web), web content, and more. Use the [Accessibility Checklist](#) to ensure that your content is accessible to all users.
 - [Create an item](#)
 - [Upload Documents and Files](#)
 - [Add a web link](#)

- **Activities and Assignments.** This could include various types of student activities or assignments, including Discussions, Assignments, Blogs, Journals, Tests, and more.
 - [Set up and manage a discussion board](#)
 - [Create and manage assignments](#)
 - [Create and manage blogs and journals](#)
 - [Create and manage tests and quizzes](#)
- **Checklist.** [Create an item](#) and include a bulleted list summarizing what your students should accomplish, including assignments and deadlines.

[Run the Ally Course Report](#) to ensure that your content is accessible to all users.

My Grades

The [My Grades tool](#) allows students to view their grades, as well as any feedback you have provided. Please note that all final grades must be entered in LOIS.

Course Evaluations

The Course Evaluations area provides a link for your students to fill out course evaluations, as well as information for you regarding evaluations.

Course Tools

The Course Tools area provides a link to all available myLesley course tools.

Communication

This section contains links to communication tools within myLesley.

Discussion Board

The Discussion Board serves to replace or augment classroom discussions in a digital format. Discussions can serve as an online meeting place, a medium for collaboration, or a way to demonstrate the understanding or application of course material. A Discussion Board forum is an area where participants discuss a topic. Within each forum are threads (or discussion topics), which contains each participant's post and replies to the post.

Watch the [Use Discussions tutorial video](#) for more information or view the step-by-step instructions: [Set up and manage a discussion board](#)

Online Meetings

You may choose to hold online meetings with your students. Lesley offers different ways of meeting online with your students, including Zoom and Blackboard Collaborate, both which can be accessed from within your myLesley course. Having trouble deciding which online meeting tool to use in your course? The [Online Meeting Skills and Tutorials](#) document will walk you through how to perform common tasks in each tool.

At this time, neither Collaborate Ultra nor Zoom provide automated machine captioning in live meetings, though recordings can either be captioned or have a transcript made available. If you need captions available in a live meeting or an ASL interpreter, please reach out to Disability Services.

Class Email

The Send Email tool allows faculty and students to quickly and easily send emails to other users in the course. Email individuals, groups of individuals, or the entire class directly from your course. Please note that the Send Email tool does not contain an inbox. Instead, it sends an email from your Lesley email to the recipient's Lesley email.

Watch the [Send Email tutorial video](#) or view the step-by-step instructions: [Send email in Blackboard](#).

Support and Resources

The support and resources area contains support resources for you and your students.

- **Online Teaching Guide:** This link brings you directly to this online teaching guide.
 - **Student Support and Services:** This section provides information for your students. This includes the myLesley Student Orientation, Library services, Disability services, Lesley's online writing center, online tutoring from Brainfuse, and counseling services.
 - **Technology Resources:** This link will bring you directly to the IT and eLIS support site. Find answers to your technical issues or put in a support ticket.
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Mobile Friendly Content

As you work in your course please keep in mind that what you see on your screen may not always appear the same to students. In some cases, students may be accessing from mobile devices or smaller screens. The following tips will guide you in [creating mobile friendly content](#).

3. Your First Week of Class

These are some recommendations for a smooth start of the semester.

Have you student list at hand

When you are online it will be hard to keep tab between students logging in and speaking. Keeping a list handy with their pronouns and some notes on the questions they answered in the intro will allow you to use their names, their pronouns and affirm them by making a positive comment on their responses.

Create a brave and safe space for your classroom community

Establish ground rules for your class. This is a place where everyone has a voice and everyone is heard.

A guide to creating a safe space for your class is below.

(<https://medium.com/@trainertribe/9-effective-ways-to-create-safe-spaces-in-your-classrooms-6cdfcc60a364>)

Plan a personal welcome/introduction activity

Welcome students to the class with an icebreaker introduction activity.

This is different from the welcome video suggested in “Getting Started”. This personal welcome will offer an opportunity for you and your students to all get to know each other. Bring yourself, make it personal, make it your own. You can frame it around 2-3 prompts and model it. You can be specific about how long the intros could be and flexible.

Your introduction activity can be adapted based on the results from the pre-course survey.

Suggested tools: [VoiceThread](#), [FlipGrid](#), [Padlet](#), [myLesley Discussion Boards](#), [myLesley Blogs](#)

Provide an overview of course content

The course overview is something we would do in a face to face class. Creating a video will save your synchronous time with the students and give them a way to connect with the content before the first class. They can then clarify questions related to the syllabus in your first synchronous session. You may want to ask the student to bring their questions or post them on the discussion board. Creating the video; Share your screen and narrate the content of the course and show the tools on myLesley that will be used. Highlight student support services.

Go over syllabus, how to find materials, demos, resources. Preferred methods of communication.

Suggested tools: [Kaltura Capture](#), [VoiceThread](#)

4. Ongoing Communication with Your Students

Reach out to students proactively without waiting for them to come to you. Give encouragement and identify problems quickly. Answer questions like these transparently and proactively: “What will it take to be successful in this course? What resources (campus services, websites, study guides, etc.) will best

facilitate my learning?” Traditionally under-represented students are likely fighting bias so that positive reinforcement is a necessary part of student empowerment.

Weekly Announcements

Regular and consistent announcements help to create a strong teaching presence. Announcements show that you are actively engaged and committed to supporting student success. You can share more than just reminders and large group feedback.

Consider customizing regular announcements. These are on the so-called landing page of the course – the first thing that the student sees. It’s a great space for presence. Example ideas: Recognize a holiday with a message or image for Halloween or Mother’s Day; congratulate students on the previous week’s assignment, include a seasonal photo, i.e. fall foliage, posts to anchor your message as you post reminders and information for the week ahead.

You can also be intentional about a theme you want to carry through in the announcements or in the banners for the course, i.e., supporting the uprising against anti-Black racism, or other areas of social justice. Each week you could add another relevant image.

Strategically sharing publicly with your whole class can lead to individual, more intimate conversations. But even as a way to show you’re there, paying attention, saying hello - and that this is a real week not a computer-generated anonymous week.

Suggested tool: [myLesley Announcements](#)

Office Hours

(Other names: Coffee Hour, AMA aka Ask Me Anything)

Office hours are important for student learning and engagement. Keeping regular and consistent office hours provide greater access to you for the students. Giving an opportunity to “meet” or “drop-in” with you helps to provide clarity and security.

Remember, office hours do not have to be a passive activity. Keep in mind that students may not always take advantage of office hours because of a perceived “distance” in the online setting. Being mindful of time and knowing that it won’t be possible for everyone, consider how you can “lay a foundation” by making an initial office-hour meeting a small class requirement. It is more likely that students will take advantage of office hours and see you as a resource if they have prior experience with it.

Suggested tools: synchronous - [myLesley Collaborate Ultra](#), [Zoom Video Conferencing](#), [Microsoft Office 365 Teams](#); asynchronous - [myLesley Discussion Board](#). If you have access to [Calendly](#), consider putting a link in your email signature.

Sign-up Students to Meet with You

You can use part of class hour to meet with individual students or small groups. Or make it an expectation that students will meet with you. Encourage them to do it.

Consider a calendar app like [Calendly](#) so that students can make a date that works for you and the student.

Take Advantage of Open Zoom

Open the Zoom class before class time: Let the students know that you will open the zoom room 10 minutes before for schmooze time. Let it stay open for 10 minutes after. (That's what usually happens in real classrooms, too)

"Cup of Coffee" space

Imagine meeting your classmates in a café, dining hall, or a lounge to chat. Providing a space where everyone can get to know one another, discuss ideas, and share resources.

Suggested Tools: [myLesley Discussion Board](#), [Microsoft Office 365 Teams](#)

Emails

Emailing students from Blackboard

Make sure you have the Blackboard tool for sending email on your navigation bar. Point it out and remind students several times in the early part of the course that to reach others in the class as well as you, they don't need to know or look up email addresses. Students simply click the Send Email link and then select who they want to email.

(It's a good thing to also remind students early and often that myLesley will only email to the students' LESLEY.edu email. This means that they either need to check their Lesley email often and/or forward their Lesley email to the email address they do keep current.)

5. Using Class Time Strategically

There are two ways to think about your weekly sessions with students. They will either be meeting synchronously or working asynchronously. In this section, we will mostly describe ways to keep your synchronous course sessions manageable while continuing to build community.

However, we ask that you give thought as to how exactly you would like to balance synchronous and asynchronous course elements. Here are some considerations:

1) One major concern is that of accessibility, and that some students will be unable to attend synchronous class sections with regularity due to external obligations that would not be present if they were on campus. Establishing a synchronous class element is important, as it promotes community among the students and it is something that most students will expect now that we have been given more time to figure out the logistics. However, the creation of any synchronous class elements must be done with sensitivity to individuals who may not have the same level of access. (How will synchronous course elements be provided after the fact? Will there be methods for students with more limited access to participate and engage regardless?)

2) Also, one should be wary of “Zoom fatigue,” and that the experience of being in a classroom is not equivalent to the experience of staring at a computer screen. As such, consider how to best use your “assigned time.” For example: A) You do not necessarily need to use all of your time! B) You do not necessarily need to have all students present for the entirety of class time, and/or portions of class time can be devoted to smaller groups. C) Finally, consider what portions of your course would actually benefit from a synchronous format. It will likely be easier for both you and your students for any “lecture content” to be communicated via asynchronous means. Synchronous class time should really prioritize interactivity, as much as possible.

Getting things started

Every week of class- Make available to all a class roster each week. Have the pronouns and preferred name easy to access and use. Point out the email tool on myLesley. It’s recommended to use it directly on navigation bar so everyone can easily email each other, the instructor, etc.

In terms of inclusivity, consider that students have differing levels of comfort revealing their pronouns. Therefore, from the first week onwards, one should consider setting a climate in which everyone includes their pronouns along with their names when they log into Zoom sessions, e.g., “Firstname Lastname (he/him/his),” so that there is no undue pressure on any individual student. (With that said, there may be unique circumstances to consider, e.g., students who have not come out to their parents, etc.)

Have a connecting activity planned before moving to the content for each class. This can sometimes be asynchronous work and does not always have to be done via videoconference. It is suggested here in the spirit of student engagement best practices (rather than academic content per se.) While not all faculty will be inclined, consider trying something that makes sense in your context and see how it goes.

Some strategies might be to utilize multimedia tools like VoiceThread or Kaltura Video Quizzes. With the necessity for more connection via remote strategies, many organizations are offering webinars, etc. What institutions can one connect with to enhance, challenge, and reframe the subject matter before coming together again as a group to discuss?

Opening class early and staying late

Let the students know that you will open the meeting room 10 minutes before for schmooze time. Let it stay open for 10 minutes after. (That's what usually happens in real classrooms too)

Suggested tools: Zoom, Collaborate, and Teams

Setting a routine

(Examples- A quote, sharing your intention for the class inviting the students to do the same, a brief check in question- "One Thing activity- One thing different about the summer, one thing meaningful, one thing challenging, one thing memorable... you could invite students to share photographs of the summer. You could also use One thing to elicit responses on concerns; one thing you are concerned about, one thing you are excited about in this course, one question you have about the content today Grounding exercises, like Mindfulness breath, stretch, body scan, or just tuning into the senses can be really helpful in refocusing attention. Remind students they can always come back to these anytime during the class.

Opening activity can also be connected to class content, i.e. a poem, a song, a photo to share and/or respond to. Or it can be something else, even very brief. like a collective deep breath. Consider asking your students to take turns on the responsibility of an opening gesture of some sort.

Norms for online sessions

Together with the students collectively create classroom norms for online conversations. (Some norms that can be useful for the online platform: take space, make space; confidentiality and non-attribution; chat to be used only for questions and comments to the whole class (you could switch of chat function for individual chats and let the students know that you are doing that to allow them to stay with the class process) You can use Wordclouds for that. <https://www.polleverywhere.com>

Opportunities for teamwork/group work

Built in team/group work each session so students get to share in small groups. Use Zoom breakout groups. You can assign groups or create random breakout rooms. Ask students to pick roles and rotate so everyone is engaged, depending on the number in each group, possible roles could be; note taker, timekeeper, vibe watcher, reporter...

www.thesafezoneproject.com has activities and facilitator info (sexuality, gender, LGBTQ+ resources) that could be redesigned for breakout rooms very easily and their learning methods could be adapted for many subjects. Many are geared towards intersectionality.

Practice in advance using the Breakout Rooms tool in Zoom so that you can comfortably put students in groups and also move between them to check in. Small group activities, even brief discussions, are highly recommended for online community and learning.

Enhance engagement using wait time, think, pair share, chat

These are popular classroom techniques and can be very handy on the online platform to increase participation and allow more students to engage. When you ask a question give more time than you usually do. You could also ask students to pause after your question; reflect or write their thoughts. Give options to share on chat or speak. You could also break them into pairs. They can reflect, share in their pair, and report back. Allocate a grade and provide a rubric for class participation. Make a note of students you don't hear from during class and reach out to them via email after class framing it in a way that you are interested in hearing their perspectives.

Setup a support system – learning buddies

Set up learning buddies. You could rotate these pairs every two weeks to enhance connection. These pairs could support each other with readings, discussions, etc. You could also assign responsibilities to the teams for posting discussion questions on a reading on the discussion board. If you make this a part of your grading, students will be invested in the process, and commit to taking the time to engage with each other.

Take a stretch break

You can keep the screens off when the music is playing to give a feel of a real break.

Summarize the class content

In the last 15-20mts provide a summary or bullet points of the topic or better ask your students to summarize the key points of the class.

Asynchronous teaching tips:

Discussions:

- Provide clear prompts, due dates and rubrics for discussion posts
- In addition to their posts, students can be required to respond to two or three classmates' posts. Provide clear rubrics for these posts- number of words, quality of the response.
- Set up small groups for discussion. Groups can meet on their own time.
- Build the small group work into the assignments and grading.
- Be specific with due dates and expectations for group work.
- Create a discussion tab titled Café to encourage community conversations on related topics
- Use different tools in addition to discussion board to maximize participation – Voice Thread allows for asynchronous participation as individuals and groups.

Additional tips:

- Provide videos to complement the readings to address students' learning needs.
- Provide recordings of the synchronous sessions (lectures, activity), whenever possible.
- Post power points and other handouts you are using for class, a couple of days before class.
- Breakdown longer projects into chunks.
- Journals- Create an assignment for students to do a biweekly post on the Journal. This is to connect on with students on a one-on-one and have an opportunity to gauge their learning process or any additional support they may need.
- Don't forget- You can still use emails to connect and check-in with the students 😊. Especially those who you notice are regularly late in their postings or those who have not posted for a while.

A Note on Assessments:

- Create a self-assessment for the course which also gauges the group work. This will help in students taking responsibility in their group work.
 - Creating an assignment map with due dates and details of the assignment.
 - Learning buddies can be encouraged.
 - Check in's and Check outs. Students are required to post one question/comment on the reading/work for the week. And a check out post on one key learning or question.
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Some Possible Models of Hybrid Course Design to Consider

The **flex model** would be managed concurrently with an established course schedule to help breakdown some of the barriers that occur due to social distancing constraints. Students and faculty could meet in spaces that allow for face-to-face conversations and support safety. The focus is on building community, trust, and getting to know each other and not on the content of the course.

Lab models vary greatly depending on the discipline and the learning objectives of the course. Scheduled labs should be informed by the necessity of the learning experience. Students may learn material in advance and attend lab in a virtual or hands-on environment or if required, attend a lab in person that is mindful of social distancing considerations.

Using an **online model** necessitates engagement with students in active learning. One should make choices about synchronous and asynchronous activities. It is important to balance the needs of your students, building community, trust, and the learning objectives, as you structure the content around the asynchronous and synchronous activities.

A **face-to-face model** should be offered when there is no other creative alternative. The instructor facilitates learning through classroom activities. *This model is not recommended under the current pandemic.

6. Content & Assignments

myLesley offers tools that allow you to transition your course from a face-to-face format to an online and/or hybrid format. We know the options can be overwhelming, especially to those who have less familiarity with online instruction, so please focus on the tools that will be most useful to you. If you have questions about other tools not detailed in this guide, do not hesitate to reach out to elis@lesley.edu.

As you create your assignments, you should be mindful of the fact that not everyone learns optimally in a virtual environment, and that a lack of a face-to-face component further limits opportunities for students who demonstrate their learning through non-traditional means. In particular, in the feedback that we received about online transition during the previous spring, many students informed us that they felt overwhelmed by the number of writing assignments that they suddenly had to complete, as most instructors (understandably!) chose to go that route when reconceptualizing the components of their course. With more time, we ask that you consider how you may utilize different assignment formats to better promote student engagement.

In particular, it may be helpful to consider the principles of Universal Design and Learning, which is an empirically-based framework meant to optimize teaching practices so that all students feel empowered in the classroom, virtual or otherwise. Please consider reviewing the framework at this website, which has condensed the information for easier consumption:

<http://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

Creating Content in Blackboard

Within myLesley, there are many options for adding content to your course. You can create content directly in myLesley, upload documents, and share links to content on other sites. Your students can also submit assignments in many ways such as uploading documents, discussing coursework on the discussion board, writing blog and journal posts, and taking short quizzes to check for understanding.

Previous sections of the guide have already given you tips on how you can organize your course. To reiterate, we recommend creating separate folders to clearly organize your course into smaller sections line with what is indicated in your syllabus (e.g., sections, modules, weeks, etc.). However, even within these smaller sections, it is possible – with proper forethought – to organize your course in a way that minimizes confusion among your students as much as possible.

You may also find it useful to refer to the Using Class Time Strategically section of this guide for more information on creating a balance between synchronous and asynchronous work for your students. Also, check out the Library’s guide on [Including Underrepresented Perspectives in Your Course](#) for ideas on creating more inclusive content.

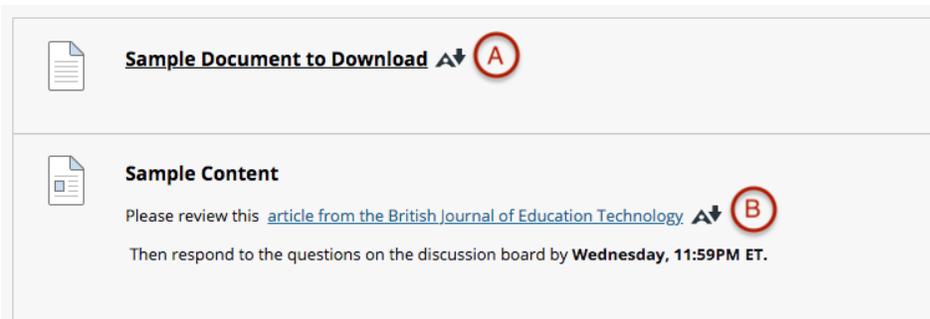
Create an Item or File

When you first go to “**Build Content**,” you will see that you can create either an Item or a File.

An **Item** allows you to write a text entry that all students will see, and is the most flexible tool that you will have at your disposal. (For example, you could use one Item to remind students of the assigned reading for a particular week, and then use another Item to communicate additional insights about the reading that you want the students to consider.) Keep in mind that you can embed images, files, and videos (both online and self-uploaded) within any Item that you create.

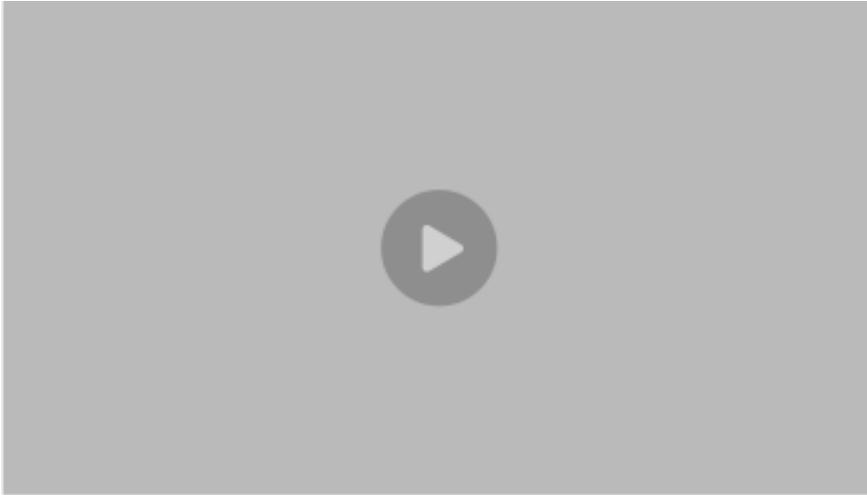
Meanwhile, a **File** will provide a straightforward link to any file that you choose to upload, without the opportunity to provide an additional description.

In short, there are two ways to add documents to your myLesley course: as a separate file by creating a File (example A) or embedded in a larger piece of content using the text editor by creating an Item (example B). The first option brings more attention to the file in case it is especially important for students to know of its existence. The second option allows you to provide context for the file that you are adding.



The screenshot displays two examples of how documents are added to a course. Example A, labeled with a circled 'A', shows a document icon next to the text "Sample Document to Download" with a download icon. Example B, labeled with a circled 'B', shows a document icon next to the text "Sample Content". Below this, it says "Please review this [article from the British Journal of Education Technology](#)" with a download icon, followed by "Then respond to the questions on the discussion board by **Wednesday, 11:59PM ET.**"

FOR MORE DETAIL: **Review the [step-by-step instructions for adding documents and files](#) or watch the [video tutorial](#).**

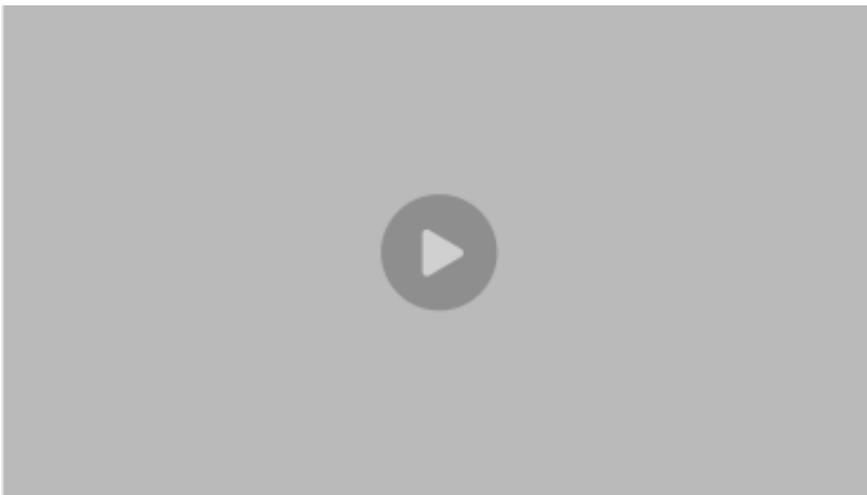


Create an Audio, Image, Video, or Web Link

There are options to upload your own audio, image, or video files. Although it is likely much easier to embed these files within existing Items, these options are available to you, in case you find them useful.

There is a lot of content available on the internet and you can easily link to it using your myLesley course to curate content and provide context. Again, links to web content can also be added as separate items or you can [add a link within another item of content by using the text editor](#).

FOR MORE DETAIL: *Learn more about [creating and adding content via the myLesley text editor](#) or [watch the video tutorial](#).*



Assessing Student Learning through Tests and Assignments

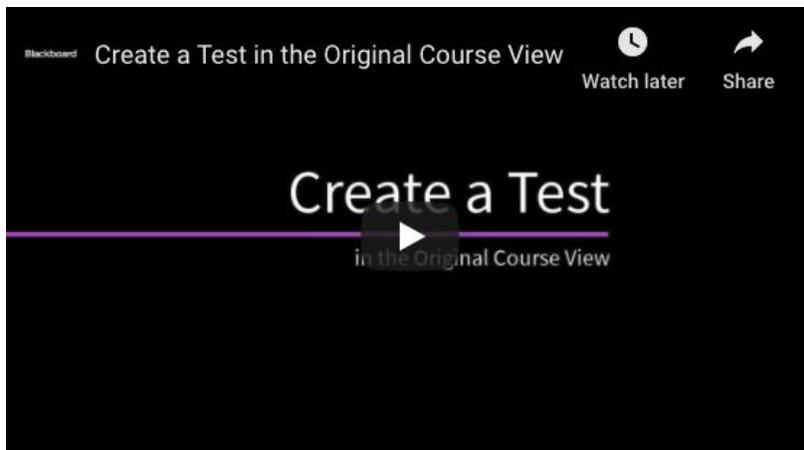
Under **Assessments**, there are two options that will likely be most commonly used among instructors: Tests and Assignments. (You may also wish to collect anonymous student feedback using the Survey feature.)

Create and manage tests and quizzes

myLesley supports a large number of test formats including multiple choice, essay, short answer, calculated numeric, and more, all which may be taken online. Create a full midterm exam or a series of smaller knowledge checks to ensure everyone is mastering the content or to discover gaps. Test options can be modified to account for individual students with accommodations such as extra time.

Please note that you must create a new test before being able to add the test to your module. If you click on “Test” from the Assessment menu, you will see the link to create a new test, so the process should be relatively straightforward.

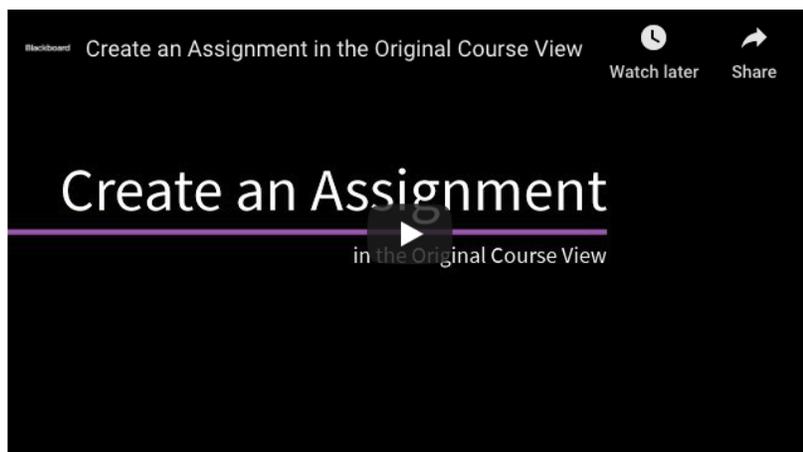
FOR MORE DETAIL: [View the step-by-step instructions for creating tests](#) or [watch the video tutorial](#).



Create and manage assignments

Assignments allow students to view instructions and any related documents or content, and then submit their work all in one location. Once an assignment is created, a column is automatically added to the Grade Center where the instructor can review submissions, assign grades, and provide feedback. The Assignment tool also includes [SafeAssign](#), a plagiarism detection and prevention tool that compares a submitted assignment against a set of academic papers to identify areas of overlap.

FOR MORE DETAIL: View the step-by-step instructions for creating assignments **or** watch the video tutorial.



Additional Tools

More information on these tools is provided under the section in this guide titled **Discussion**.

Set up and manage discussions

The Discussion Board serves to replace or augment classroom discussions in a digital format. Discussions can serve as an online meeting place, a medium for collaboration, or a way to demonstrate the understanding or application of course material. The discussion board is also a great tool for peer review. Students can post their work to the discussion and receive feedback from their fellow classmates.

A Discussion Board forum is an area where participants discuss a topic. Within each forum are threads (or discussion topics), which contains each participant's post and replies to the post.

FOR MORE DETAIL: [View the step-by-step instructions to create a discussion](#) or [watch the Use Discussions video](#).



Create and manage blogs and journals

Blogs and journals allow students to complete reflective, research, or reporting assignments while practicing their communication skills.

MyLesley blogs and journals are only viewable to those in the course environment, however each tool is designed a bit differently. You may choose to create a class blog, individual blogs, or journals. The chart below details the privacy options of each tool.

Blog Type	Who Can Post?	Who Can View?	Who Can Comment?
Class Blog	Everyone in the course	everyone in the course	everyone in the course
Individual Blog	Each student can post to their own blog	everyone in the course	everyone in the course
Journal	Each student can post to their own journal	private between individual and instructor	private between individual and instructor

[FOR MORE DETAIL: Learn more about creating, viewing, and grading blogs and journals in myLesley.](#)

Creating student groups and promoting collaboration

[myLesley Groups](#) provide a private space for students to work together that only they and the instructor can access. Groups may collaborate using group discussions, blogs, wikis, Collaborate Ultra online meetings, and file exchange.

[View the step-by-step instructions for more information on creating myLesley Groups.](#)

(Note: The Groups tool is not currently supported within the [Blackboard app](#). However, students may use the browser on their mobile device to access their group.)

Best practices for group work

<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/instructionalstrategies/groupprojects/index.html>

Flexibility and alternative assignments

Heads-up considerations—in conversation with needs of students.

Based on learning outcomes, essential learning, design around that. Restructure the activities for same outcome.

7. Lectures & Demos

The scope of this section is for creating video content, such as pre-recorded lectures, presentations, demonstrations, and adding video for your course.

Captioning and Transcripts

Accurate captioning of audio and video content ensures that people who are Deaf and hard of hearing can understand the content. Additionally, captions are very useful to non-native English speakers, viewers watching in a sound-sensitive environment such as a library, can help viewers with learning disabilities or attention deficits maintain concentration, and can help all learners improve comprehension. [The following video effectively explains the importance of captioning.](#)

Both Kaltura and VoiceThread use automatic speech recognition (ASR) to create captions. However, ASR captions are only 80% accurate, and may vary depending on the audio quality, clarity of speech, background noise, etc. You can edit captions right in your web browser – no additional software is needed! For more information and detailed instructions, see [Review and Edit Captions in Kaltura](#) and [Review and Edit Captions in VoiceThread](#).

If you are using video resources from outside sources, including YouTube, Vimeo, or resources from the Lesley Library Databases, please ensure that captions or transcripts are available.

Pre-Record Video Lectures and Presentations

You may wish to use video to introduce a new topic, explain a concept from the readings, or provide additional information about an assignment. [Teaching Presence in Online Courses: The Role of Instructor-Created Video](#) will walk you through some of the benefits of creating your own video content for your course.

As a best practice, keep each of your videos short (under 10 minutes). Shorter videos increase student engagement and allow students to easily go back and review materials.

[Video Recording Tips](#) will walk you through some best practices for recording video content, including lighting, sound, and more.

Recorded Lecture:

- Use your computer's webcam to [create and post a short video lecture using Kaltura Media](#). Uploading your video into Kaltura media allows you to easily embed it in your course. Additionally, [Kaltura will automatically caption your content](#).

Narrated Presentation:

You can create a presentation for your students, including slides, images, video, narration, and more. Below are a few suggested resources for creating your own narrated presentations. Please note that uploading your content to Kaltura or VoiceThread will ensure that your materials are properly captioned.

- **PowerPoint:** [Record a narrated PowerPoint and upload to myLesley.](#)
- **Kaltura Capture:** [Use Kaltura Capture to create a narrated presentation.](#) Kaltura Capture will allow you to record any combination of your microphone, webcam, and computer screen. Additionally, [Kaltura will automatically caption your content.](#)
- **VoiceThread:** [Use VoiceThread to create and collaborate on online presentations.](#) You and your students can add text, audio, or video comments to your VoiceThread slides. [VoiceThread will automatically add captioning](#) on all audio and video slides as well as audio and video comments.

Recorded Class Meetings

If you recorded a class meeting, you can share the recording with your students for review. Recordings are only for the use of the instructor and students in the course. They cannot be shared outside the class or reused for future class sections.

Find and Use Existing Video Content

Do you typically show videos in your course? If your video or a similar video exists online, embed it in your course or post a link if an embed code is not available. Are you looking for training or tutorial videos to replace or enhance your lecture? Many great resources already exist online.

Before including any video, make sure that closed captioning or a transcript is available.

- **YouTube, Vimeo, and other web-based content:** If the website allows it, [embed your video content into myLesley](#) to allow students to view it without having to leave the site. If there isn't an embed option, [link to online content from myLesley.](#)
- **Library Media Databases:** The Library offers many different [streaming media resources](#), from large streaming video databases to specialized collections.
- **Khan Academy:** [Khan Academy](#) offers instructional videos and practice exercises on a number of subjects.
- **Hoonuit:** [Hoonuit \(formerly Atomic Learning\)](#) features resources and tutorials on distance and blended learning, student success, instructional strategies, accessible instruction, software and technology tutorials, and much more. You can easily curate a playlist of tutorials and [add Hoonuit content directly into your myLesley course.](#)

Not finding a video that meets your needs? Use [Kaltura Capture](#) to create your own online tutorial or demonstrate a process.

8. Feedback & Assessment

Letting students know how they're doing and giving them opportunities to ask questions and connect with classmates is essential to keeping them engaged throughout the semester. Here are a few ways you can do this creatively and efficiently.

Checking in with your students

Weekly 1-minute/1-point Feedback:

As assignment or a journal. Optional ask a course week question but definitely prompt students' feedback on how they are doing. Recommend assigning a point value to give an incentive for students to fill these out.

Why: Students should be actively involved in classroom assessment. Student responses help us to make course corrections; the quick feedback helps flag if students are having problems or concerns; it demonstrates a weekly connection to students, and it is recommended as equity-minded teaching to pro-actively reach out to students. It is a quick but useful form of formative assessment.

For example: There are two questions to this assessment: what you learned and what you're puzzled about. Take about a minute for each question to respond with what is "on the top of your head" regarding the question. Please be straightforward in your responses; this is a small but important.

Opening with Entry ticket or questions: One learning, question: Closing with a reflection or take away, could be an "Exit ticket: comment, question, reflection, learning." You could create a zoom poll for each session.

Invite students to collaborate on revising/fine tuning policies, assignments, and grading

Check in with students' mid semester. You could create an anonymous poll for this or a survey. Zoom also allows you to do that for each session.

Establishing a culture that supports peer review processes

The goal of peer review is formative feedback to help students improve and grow. The ability to give and receive effective feedback is a valuable skill. For this reason, we recommend scaffolding peer review sessions so that students; (1) learn to recognize the qualities of effective feedback; (2) practice giving and receiving feedback, and; (3) reflect on and implement feedback in a revised version of the assignment. Finally, we recommend that faculty assess/grade the feedback itself, not just the revised assignment, to further incentivize students to emphasize the importance of the peer review process and improve this skill.

Benefits of Peer Review

- Develops high-level, transferable skills, required in any field
- Enhances thinking, writing, and communication; motivation and self-confidence; subject-matter expertise
- Enhances metacognitive skills (reflective abilities)
- Enhances empathy: helps us connect to and understand one another
- Exposure to other points of view

Challenges of Peer Review:

- Students may be of differing levels of preparation and engagement
- Students are not sure if they can trust peer feedback
- Students find it difficult to provide feedback and don't understand the benefits
- Effective peer review takes time

Three-part protocol for establishing an effective peer review/critique structure:

- 1. Pre-Peer Review:** Establish supportive environment to develop a commitment to the process.
 - **Build student trust** to develop commitment to their partner/s and classmates. This is critical and should be developed through activities that allow sharing of insecurities around the peer review process.
 - **Discuss the Benefits and Challenges** of Peer Review/Critique (assume students are skeptical of the value of peer review).
 - **Emphasize that crafting of original work** (art, written paper, design, presentation, etc.) **is an iterative process:** drafting and revision based on feedback strengthens the final product and knowledge/skills in the subject area. Effective peer review supports revision and iteration, which are critical to producing creative work. Peer review does NOT rely on intelligence/skill level of reviewer, but rather, on students' commitment to the process.
 - **Discuss peer review in the context** of assignment and course goals, and assignment grading rubric.
 - **Explain, demonstrate and practice effective peer review** via examples, exercises, and modeling of effective peer review. Emphasize "review" as a holistic approach, examining areas of substance, and de-emphasizing less important or insignificant aspects of the work. Have students practice by commenting on effectiveness of example peer review comments, and revise for improvement.
 - **Determine assessment** of the assignment and discuss assignment goals and grading rubrics with students. Emphasize value of peer review by grading some aspect of the process. For example, grade students' feedback, ask students to grade their peers' review comments, or grade their own review comments of peers' work.
- 2. Peer Review Session:** Scaffold "Discovery Mode" dialogue (probing and collaborative interaction style) and reflection on feedback. Students start with draft of the work, an outline, brainstorming notes, etc., completed prior to class.
 - **Students review their assignment and write their goals for peer review**, identifying areas they want targeted, which may come from the assignment's grading rubric. Then they share goals with peer partner, which partner writes down.
 - **Students engage in oral and written feedback.** Note: If oral only, have author write down what they heard from peer during discussion that was most helpful before end of session.
 - **QUALITY FEEDBACK...**
 - i. Addresses the author's stated needs, questions and/or concerns*
 - ii. Describes the WORK as opposed to the reviewee*
 - iii. Focuses on issues of substance, using examples to support comments*

- iv. *Uses encouraging and supportive language*
 - v. *Includes strategies for improvement*
 - vi. *Provides a reason or argument for suggestions*
 - During discussion, **encourage students to aim to understand** a) the author’s intentions, and b) any gap between the author’s intentions and the work. Guide students in use of “discovery mode interactions” and use of growth mindset strategies.
 - **Students write the feedback received, as they understand it.** This encourages processing of the feedback.
 - **Students evaluate the feedback received,** deciding how and if they plan to incorporate it in their work.
3. **Post-Peer Review Session:** Support processing of feedback and reflection on feedback used in revision.
- **Students revise the assignment**
 - **Students submit final draft of assignment to instructor,** along with the following: Draft used in peer review session (including any notes/revisions)
 - Students note if/how they implemented feedback in the final draft and reasons why specific feedback was used or not
 - **Students complete peer-and self-assessment**
 - **Instructor assesses student feedback**

For questions, contact Liv Cummins, Kimberly Lowe, Summer Clark or Lisa Spitz

[Grading assignments in Blackboard](#)

[Grade Center](#) and [myGrades](#) info

[Grading and annotating submitted assignments](#)

Formative feedback examples: [Formative Assessment](#) (video)

9. Discussion

Discussion boards provide a way for students and faculty to talk, discuss, or debate any topic. In asynchronous classes, the discussion board may offer the best parallel to a face-to-face class discussion.

[Designing and facilitating online discussions](#)

Online discussions require thoughtful design to engage students in rigorous and interactive learning. Without effective design, it’s more likely that a discussion fails to achieve intended learning objectives. As in a face-to-face discussion, the professor asks questions to give the discussion a clear direction.

Students respond to the professor and to each other. The professor probes and guides the students to a conclusion or an understanding.

Suggestions for successful discussion facilitation

1. Have clear directions for your students for each discussion.
2. Make sure that all students have a voice on the discussion board. You may need to require a minimum number of posts and to speak with students who are posting too frequently.
3. Make sure your students are safe on the discussion board. Provide a clear policy of expectations. Stress that tone is important, and offensive or disrespectful posts will not be accepted.
4. Allow students to respond in a way that is comfortable to them. Students can respond by text, by audio/video, via PowerPoint or other media.
5. Do not overuse the discussion board.
6. Provide a rubric for discussion board assignments.

[Designing and facilitating online discussions](#)

This is a tutorial on setting up a discussion board on Blackboard

Discussion board rubric examples

- [From ACUE \(Association of College and University Educators\)](#)
 - [From Utica College – samples from 6 colleges/universities](#)
-

10. Additional tips and resources

<https://hbsp.harvard.edu/inspiring-minds/you-can-still-engage-your-students-when-teaching-online-heres-how>

Elements of online teaching, including techniques and features that can support classroom engagement for students.

<https://hbsp.harvard.edu/inspiring-minds/virtual-classes-dont-have-to-be-a-bore>

Tips on making connections during an online course

<https://coralearning.org/>

The mission of the Center for Organizational Responsibility and Advancement (CORA) is to support the development of educators in advancing their capacity to serve historically underrepresented and underserved students.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzfia71ZxMOW-UM4rfBboxA/about>

These videos have research and strategies on addressing issues around racial bias in the classrooms.

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/5-Ways-to-Connect-With-Online/249077>

[Why connecting early is vital and how to do it](https://www.chronicle.com/article/5-Ways-to-Connect-With-Online/249077)

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/8-Ways-to-Be-More-Inclusive-in/248460>

[Strategies for inclusive teaching](https://www.chronicle.com/article/8-Ways-to-Be-More-Inclusive-in/248460)

Engaging Learners in and Online Utilizing Universal Design for Learning. *eLearn*, 2019(2), <https://elearnmag.acm.org/featured.cfm?aid=3310383>

Principles and Practices of Inclusive Teaching

https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/20190719_inclusive_teaching

How to talk to students about Racism <https://www.chronicle.com/article/We-Can-t-Ignore-This/249001>

Accessibility

Accessibility vs Accommodation

<https://accessibility.umn.edu/what-accessibility/accessibility-vs-accommodation>

Accessibility Checklist <https://support.lesley.edu/en/support/solutions/articles/4000135905-accessibility-checklist>

Creating Accessible Communications

<https://support.lesley.edu/en/support/solutions/articles/4000151731-creating-accessible-communications>

Using Ally in myLesley to create accessible documents

<https://support.lesley.edu/en/support/solutions/articles/4000127483-creating-accessible-alternative-formats-of-documents-in-your-mylesley-course-blackboard-ally-for-instructors->