

Topic Outline Template

Style

Most of the elements in this first section are subjective in their nature; this will allow you to make them relevant to your students.

It is worth noting that number 9 will require coordination and consensus across courses in the same programme and should be discussed as part of your early planning processes.

1. Is the first impression positive and welcoming?

- Will your students feel that their online learning environment is one in which they would choose to spend time?
- Is the layout of the Topic/Weekly Outline as uncluttered as possible?
- Will your students find the first impression of the course encouraging and motivating?

2. Is there an attractive, professional format and layout?

- Has the text been presented in the standard format (all text black, body Arial 12pt and main titles no larger than Arial 18pt)?
- Has a consistent hierarchy of headings been applied?
- Are there adequate graphics or resources to break up the text?
- Does the page appear well spaced out and easy to read?
- Are numbers, bullet points and indentations used to make meaning clear?
- Is the overall presentation consistent throughout the site?

3. Is there a tutor photo and welcome message?

- As per the Topic Outline Template; the tutor photo should be recent and should be approximately 100px x 100px wide. For more information on resizing your photo, go to **Getting Started** in the **Help Centre** and select **Completing the Topic Outline Template**.
- Is your welcome message framed in a manner that is suitable to your audience?
- Does your welcome provide your students with a brief overview of how to use the site?
- Have your students been introduced to the Help Centre and its function?
- Has appropriate language been used?

4. Are the graphics interesting and relevant to the course?

- Do the graphics have direct bearing on the subject matter of the course?
- Are the graphics consistently labelled?
- Are the graphics in close proximity to the text that they illustrate?
- Are the graphics of a suitable/reasonable size? This will obviously come down to a case by case decision, but graphics should not overwhelm the text, as a general rule.
- Do all graphics have an image description that will make sense if they are used in conjunction with text to voice functionality?

5. Is a friendly supportive tone of voice evident?

- Has the audience been identified?
- Is plain English/Maori used (ie language that is clear, precise and easy to understand)?
- Are short sentences used?
- Is the style of language consistently used throughout the course?
- Will a student using the course feel that it is easy to access help and support?

6. Is the full course page of a reasonable size?

- This will vary but in general terms the idea is to avoid what has become known as the 'scroll of death'. This can be easily avoided by using the Onetopic format which is highly recommended (**Settings > Edit settings > Format then Save**) although it is still necessary to ensure the topic is not overloaded with text and resources.
- Aim to have your topic fit approximately within your own browser window and, although different browsers are different sizes, this approach will work better than using the long scroll of content; if students have to scroll a little it will be fine.

7. Have you avoided including anything in the course presentation that could be found annoying or distracting?

- Is there excessive use of bold text or all caps text?
- Are there any animations in the course which play automatically and cannot be easily and obviously turned off?
- Are there excessive numbers of external links, requiring students to navigate away from the page frequently?

8. Has all text been checked for spelling, grammar, punctuation and consistent use of terminology?

- Have you checked all text-based resources, including Word documents, PDFs, PowerPoints etc?
- Has your course been thoroughly proof read?
- Is the use of terminology consistent, not only within your course but also across all related courses?

Moodle has a built in spell checker, but this will only work for text created within Moodle.

NOTE: If your course content has been successfully internally or externally moderated, it is reasonable to assume that you need check only new content.

9. Is the course presentation style consistent with others within the same programme?

- Does the overall style of the course closely resemble that of other courses in the same programme?
- Are Topics/Weeks introduced to students in a similar manner across the programme?
- Are resources and activities presented in a similar manner across the programme?
- Where practicable, has a consistent approach to the manner in which the course is used been adhered to across the programme?

Administration

Most of the items listed under number 10 are included in the topic outline template and so following the standard format will mean that your courses will meet these standards.

It is not expected that the Senior reviewer will check each and every resource for copyright compliance; they will ask you to confirm this and then check a small random sample.

10. Does the course contain the following information in an easily accessed location?

- Course name?

- This should be in the standard format as per the template but the course name does not have to be the same as the Arion generated code and name. This is particularly relevant if the Moodle course represents content from a number of different Arion courses.

- Learning outcomes?

- It is obviously important that this information be available to students but it is not vital that they be listed in the main body of the text. Given that many courses will have a large number of learning outcomes, doing so would create a text heavy course.
- Alternatives could include;
 - listing all learning outcomes together in the Course Outline
 - stating the learning outcomes in topic by topic format, as long as this is not done in too repetitive a manner

- Course Outline?

- The inclusion and position of the Course Outline is dictated by the topic outline template but the format in which it is presented will vary from school to school.
- It is important to remember that the purpose of the Course Outline must be clearly explained in the template as per the instructions.

- Assessment Schedule?

- The inclusion and position of the Assessment Schedule is dictated by the topic outline template but the format in which it is presented will vary from school to school.
- It is important to remember that, as with the Course Outline, the purpose of the Assessment Schedule must be clearly explained in the template as per the instructions.

- Any relevant policies that students may require?

- You may feel that you wish to include a number of other documents, such as Programme Regulations or lists of software or books that students should purchase. These should be included in the topic outline with the Course Outline and Assessment Schedule.
- As with the Course Outline and the Assessment Schedule, if you include additional documents, you must provide a clear explanation as to their purpose or a set of instructions as to how they should be used.
- If you intend to add a significant number of resources (more than 3) in addition to the Course Outline and Assessment Schedule, you might consider using a Book or a Web page to prevent the topic outline from becoming cluttered. If you choose to do so, you will again need to apply the same principle of providing clear explanations or instructions with these resources.

11. Do learning materials comply with Wintec copyright and licence agreements?

- Have you checked that all of your content is copyright compliant?
- Have you used consistent referencing techniques throughout the course and content?
- Do you have the right to use **all** images, diagrams and graphics?

If you require more information about copyright compliance, please visit the Library site.

12. Has a student evaluation of the Moodle course been included?

- This is not a standard course evaluation; what is required is that an opportunity is provided to the students to evaluate the Moodle-based part of their course.
- Several options are available using Moodle core functions such as the Feedback, Survey or Choice functions for example.

Organisation, Structure and Navigation

It is not expected that large numbers of resources be listed on a course page without clear instructions. This section deals with the way in which resources are presented to students.

Although all resources will need to be clearly introduced and students provided with instructions, each resource does not require an individual introduction unless you deem it necessary. It is acceptable to present resources in small, related groups that can then be introduced together.

13. Are there clear instructions on how to work in this environment?

- Have students been provided with clear and consistently structured explanations of how to use the course?
- Have the instructions been provided at appropriate points throughout the course?
- Are the instructions presented in an easily understandable manner?
- If the course has any particularly complex features, have text instructions been supplemented with appropriate resources such as screenshots or screen capture videos?

14. Are the instructions clearly separated from the teaching content?

- Do the instructions always precede the teaching content?
- Is there sufficient space between the instructions and the teaching content for students to easily identify which is which?
- If necessary, have Labels been used to contain the instructions?

15. Do the instructions include an estimate of time required to complete?

- Have you provided, within reason, an approximate estimation of how long you expect they will need to spend on each activity or task?

16. Are the navigational pathways obvious?

- Will your students be able to intuitively find their way through the course?
- If it is unavoidable to use navigational pathways that are not intuitive, have clear directions been included?

17. Do hyperlinks all work and can the learner return to the appropriate place in the course after following an outside link?

- Have you tested all of your hyperlinks, both internal and external?
- Do you have a system in place for regularly ensuring that external hyperlinks are current and functioning correctly?
- If a student follows an external hyperlink from the course, can they easily return to the correct place in the course? For instance, all links could open in a new window meaning that students only have to close that window to return to the point in the course which they navigated from.
- Is the method for returning to the course after following a hyperlink explained to the students?

18. Is the course organised in a logical manner?

- Is the course organised into easily identifiable chunks?
- Does the content flow in a logical progression through the course?
- Do the activities and tasks progress from simple to more complex?
- Are resources and activities located in close proximity to the content/topics that they relate to?

19. Is the use of words/icons consistent with other courses/modules within the same programme?

- Have you made use of a standardised vocabulary, particularly in relation to discipline specific jargon, across the whole of the programme so that students are presented with concepts in a consistent manner?
- Will students be able to recognise and identify a consistent set of icons in all courses in any given programme?
- **Resources and Activities**
 - This section is relatively self-explanatory. One point worth making in relation to external resources is that you must regularly check that they are still there and that the instructions on the site are still relevant and fit with the explanation and level of detail that you have included in the course.

20. Are there are clear instructions on the links to other resources outside the course area?

- Have you provided clear instructions on how students should access external activities or resources?
- Will students understand exactly what they are expected to do on the external site?
- If the external site does not have adequate explanations, have you made allowances for this in your own instructions?
- Have you included instructions on how students will navigate back to the course?

21. Are course materials provided in commonly available file formats?

- Course materials should, in general terms, be available in a variety of common formats, such as;
 - Microsoft Word Documents
 - PDF
 - Microsoft PowerPoints

The format you chose will largely depend on what it is to be used for. For help with converting less common file formats, contact [Paddy Ward](#) or log a job with the ITS Servicedesk.

22. Are appropriate tools used for each activity?

- Are the activities or resources used most likely to achieve the specific learning outcomes of the course?
- Are the activities appropriate for your course and your students?

23. Are any additional resource requirements clearly identified and explained?

- Have additional resource requirements been clearly identified to students either in the topic outline or at the relevant points throughout the course?
- Have clear explanations of additional resources been provided in a timely manner?
- Have instructions on how and when to use any additional resources been provided for the students?

Support

Numbers 25 and 27 are covered in the topic outline template.

24. Will an introductory online or face-to-face orientation activity take place early within the course?

- Has an adequate introductory Moodle sessions been included in the orientation?
- Has an orientation been organised early in the course?
- Have representatives of the Student Experience Team, the Library, Te Kete Konae and any other relevant support areas been invited to attend?
- Has the date, time and location been clearly communicated to the students?
- Have students been told what, if anything, they will need to bring with them?
- Have resources been prepared, or arrangements made, for students who cannot attend the orientation?

25. Are tutor contact details, including office location, office hours, telephone number and email address presented in an easily accessed location within the course?

- This information is included as part of the topic outline template and generally appears at the bottom of the topic outline.
- If you have multiple teachers on the course, you may alternatively include tutor contact details below each of the tutor photos.

26. Are students provided with a statement of expected response times with regard to enquiries in various formats (eg email, phone call, discussion forum)?

- It is important to provide students with realistic expectations of how long it will take to get back to them if they make enquiries in each of the contact methods listed. On the whole it is better to err on the side of caution and then reply earlier if possible. Schools will have general guidelines and expectations for this; contact your Team Manager for details.

27. Is there provision for a clearly defined area for tutors to post announcements and news?

- Moodle provides the News Forum as a default in all courses. This is the preferred method for posting announcements and news.
- Other methods such as Facebook are also acceptable, but this must be clearly communicated to the students in the topic outline and details provided.

Teaching and Learning

Items 28 to 30 relate to the three areas of compulsory Blended Learning Elements; **all courses must contain at least one example of each of these three.**

In order to comply with this part of the checklist, the students must be **required** to participate in the chosen activities or tasks.

NOTE; these elements are **in addition to the Introductory Forum** that forms part of the topic outline template.

28. Are students required to interact with other students or with their tutors or to collaborate online?

- Do you have **at least one** activity in your course which **requires** students to **either** interact online with each other **or** with their tutors **or** to collaborate online in some manner?
- Have you provided the students with a clear explanation of what they are required to do?
- Have you clearly communicated to students that this is not an optional activity and that they must participate?
- Have you decided on a strategy for ensuring your students do participate and for monitoring their participation?

29. Are students required to participate in activities that provide them with opportunities to either apply and practice their new learning/skills in current situations or to integrate and transfer their knowledge?

- Do you have **at least one** activity in your course which **requires** students to **either** apply and practice their new learning/skills **or** to integrate and transfer their knowledge in an online environment?
- Have you provided the students with a clear explanation of what they are required to do?
- Have you clearly communicated to students that this is not an optional activity and that they must participate?
- Have you decided on a strategy for ensuring your students do participate and for monitoring their participation?

30. Are students required to complete activities that provide them with opportunities to review and reflect on their learning or which allow them to realistically prepare for assessments?

- Do you have **at least one** activity in your course which **requires** students to **either** review and reflect on their new learning **or** to realistically prepare for assessments in an online environment?
- Have you provided the students with a clear explanation of what they are required to do?
- Have you clearly communicated to students that this is not an optional activity and that they must participate?
- Have you decided on a strategy for ensuring your students do participate and for monitoring their participation?

31. Are the linkages between the teaching and learning activities and the learning outcomes clearly communicated to the students?

- Have you identified how each activity relates to the relevant learning outcome?
- Will the students have a clear understanding of the course context of each activity?

32. Does the learning environment meet the needs of a bi-cultural and diverse student group?

- Does the course contain any content that needs to be explained from a cultural perspective?
- Does the course avoid undermining the students' cultural safety?
- Is your course content, material and communication culturally sensitive?

Assessment

The inclusion of a section on assessments does not mean that you are required to include them in your course. If you do however, they will need to conform to these criteria.

33. Are assessment activities and tasks easily identified?

- Is each assessment activity preceded by a set of instructions?
- Does the name of the assessment activity clearly identify it as an assessment?
- Have you used a consistent manner to identify assessments throughout the course?

34. Are assessment instructions clear and easily understood?

- Have you used plain language and unambiguous phrasing in your instructions?
- Are the instructions written in a manner that is relevant to your audience?

35. Are there clear instructions for submitting assessments?

- Have students been provided with instructions that are specifically relevant to the type of assignments they will be expected to submit?
- Has training and support for submitting assessments been offered to students who require it?

36. Is the submission process consistent with the type of materials to be assessed?

- Have you selected a submission process that is appropriate for the type of assessment?