

# Course Modules Quick Guide

Course modules ensure alignment of objectives, assessments and instructional strategies by sequencing and scaffolding student learning to foster a student-centered learning environment.

## COURSE MODULE ELEMENTS



Click elements for details



Alignment

**[1] OVERVIEW** - introduce students to objectives and learning activities.



Cognitive Load

**[2] LESSON** - readings, recorded lectures, and links.



Motivation

**[3] QUIZ** - students check their understanding with timely feedback.



Alignment

**[4] ASSIGNMENT** - provide a place for students to get to know one another.



Engagement

**[5] DISCUSSION** - students make deeper connections in response to your questions prompts.

The screenshot displays a course module interface for 'Module 1'. It features a list of items with red numbered callouts (1-5) corresponding to the elements described in the guide:

- 1** Module 1: Overview
- 2** Module 1: Lesson
- 3** Quiz: Module 1 Quiz (0 pts)
- 4** Assignment: Module 1 Application Assignment (10 pts)
- 5** Discussion - Analysis of Topics (0 pts)

**STANDARDS & RESEARCH** – from Quality Matters and online students at Iowa

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## MODULE OVERVIEW

**Alignment**

Ensure learning objectives, assessments, and instructional methodologies are aligned to provide student-centered learning and ease of use. When objectives, assessments, and teaching methodologies align, students see what they are learning is relevant and connected to how they will be assessed. They begin to understand they are required to put learning into practice ([Biggs, 2003](#)).

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## LESSON

**Cognitive Load**

Add lectures, readings, activities, and links in consistent format. Chunk content into smaller, weekly modules. [Mayer and Moreno \(2003\)](#) showed that better transfer of knowledge occurs when content is presented in segments rather than as continuous unit. It is especially beneficial if the learner has control of the content such as a pause or stop button for a lecture.

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## QUIZ

**Motivation**

Provide formative quizzes and exams to review and assess student knowledge. Make sure to include timely feedback. It is one of the most powerful influences on learning achievement ([Hattie & Timperley, 2007](#))

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## ASSIGNMENT

**Alignment**

Add assignment descriptions, rubrics, and submission details to give students a clear picture of expectations. Teaching methods, objective and assessments should align to provide deeper learning for students ([Meyer & Nulty 2008](#)).

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## DISCUSSION

**Engagement**

Create question prompts that require students to make deeper connections, problem solve, and share ideas. [Gilbert and Dabbagh \(2005\)](#) noted discussion forums that include relevant topics and require deeper thinking increase student motivation to engage with the content and thereby increase transfer and retention of knowledge.

## QUALITY MATTERS (QM) STANDARDS

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The course modules address the following QM Standards:

### Overview

**2.2** The module/unit learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies.

**2.3** All learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly and written from the learner's perspective.

**2.4** The relationship between learning objectives or competencies and course activities is clearly stated.

**5.4** The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.

**Lesson**

**4.1** The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies.

**4.2** Both the purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained.

**4.4** The instructional materials are current.

**4.5** A variety of instructional materials is used in the course.

**4.6** The distinction between required and optional materials is clearly explained.

**Quiz**

**3.1** The assessments measure the stated learning objectives or competencies.

**3.3** Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners' work and are tied to the course grading policy.

**3.4** The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and suited to the learner work being assessed.

**3.5** The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress.

**5.1** The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.

**5.4** The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.

## **Assignment**

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**5.1** The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.

**5.4** The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.

## **Discussion**

**1.3** Etiquette expectations (sometimes called "netiquette") for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are clearly stated.

**1.9** Learners are asked to introduce themselves to the class

**5.1** The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.

**5.2** Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning.

**6.1** The tools used in the course support the learning objectives and competencies.

**6.2** Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.

## DOE: ONLINE LEARNING RESEARCH

At the University of Iowa, Distance and Online Learning (DOE) conducted research regarding students' preferences for online learning. One of the goals was to gather data to develop stronger, user-center design for our online course templates. The results of the study are shared within this guide.

**86%** of the students surveyed stated a consistent format used throughout the course was important to their learning needs. The student-centered design of this page, implementing an introduction, objectives, and checklist, which is repeated in the additional modules, provides this consistent feel and ease-of-use.

**85%** of the students surveyed stated interaction with their instructor enhanced their online experience. Instructor presence and interaction are provided through the module overview video and the discussion forum.