

# Getting Started Quick Guide

A “Getting Started” course module reduces student cognitive load by scaffolding pre-course tasks. It furthers your instructor presence, ensures students know technical requirements in order to access and engage in your course, and builds social presence by encouraging students to introduce themselves to the class.

## GETTING STARTED ELEMENTS



Click elements for details



Cognitive  
Load

**[1] [START HERE](#)** - pre-course tasks in your course orientation.



Instructor  
Presence

**[2] [INSTRUCTOR INTRODUCTION](#)** ensure students know about you and encourage them to reach out.



Motivation

**[3] [TECH. REQUIREMENTS](#)** do students have the right technology, and do they know how to use online tools in your course?



Engagement

**[4] [STUDENT INTRODUCTIONS](#)** provide a place for students to get to know one another.

▼ GETTING STARTED	
1	<a href="#">START HERE: Course Orientation</a>
2	<a href="#">Instructor Introduction &amp; Email</a>
	<a href="#">Course Technical Requirements (IMPORTANT)</a>
3	<a href="#">Zoom Help Resources</a>
	<a href="#">How to View Instructor Feedback</a>
4	<a href="#">Introduce Yourself (Student Discussion Forum)</a>

**[STANDARDS & RESEARCH](#)** – from Quality Matters and online students at Iowa

[Back to Overview of Elements](#)

## START HERE

Cognitive  
Load



Create a course tour video and pre-course tasks to scaffold learning and build stronger student understanding and independence. Communication that includes the instructor and clear directions are effective ways to engage students. Lack of instructor-student communication early on will create a negative learning community thus disabling the learning process. ([Bischoff, 2000](#))

[Back to Overview of Elements](#)

## INSTRUCTOR INTRODUCTION

Instructor  
Presence



Introduce yourself to your students to establish a comfortable learning environment that encourages collaboration between you and your students. Teaching presence is seen “as a significant determinant of student satisfaction, perceived learning, and sense of community” ([Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007](#)).

[Back to Overview of Elements](#)

## COURSE TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

**Motivation**

Provide recommended technical specifications for your online learning course in ICON to ensure students are able to access and engage in your course. Accessible content and online tools are required to meet federal and state guidelines to ensure content is accessible to a wider range of participants. ([Caldwell, et al., 2008](#))

[Back to Overview of Elements](#)

## STUDENT DISCUSSION FORUM

**Engagement**

Build student confidence and promote social interaction and communication by encouraging students to introduce themselves. [Muilenburg and Berg \(2005\)](#) reported in their study of 1,056 participants that the single most important barrier to students learning online was lack of social interaction.

## QUALITY MATTERS (QM) STANDARDS

[Back to Overview of Elements](#)



The Getting Started module addresses the following QM Standards:

### Start Here Page

- 1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.
- 1.2 Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.
- 1.6 Prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated.
- 4.4 The instructional materials are current.
- 5.4 The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.
- 6.1 The tools used in the course support the learning objectives and competencies.
- 6.2 Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning

### About Your Instructor Page

- 1.8 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate and is available online
- 5.3 The instructor's plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.

## Course Technical Requirements Page

**6.3** Technologies required in the course are readily obtainable.

**6.4** The course technologies are current.

**6.5** Links are provided to privacy policies for all external tools required in the course.

## Introduce Yourself (Student Discussion Forum)

**1.6** Prerequisite knowledge in the discipline and/or any required competencies are clearly stated.

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

## 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.

**70%** of students stated interaction with their peers enhances their online learning experience. See the discussion forum as an example of this interaction.