

Course Homepage Quick Guide

A custom course homepage provides you an opportunity to establish your presence as the course instructor, as well as increase student engagement and motivation.

HOMEPAGE ELEMENTS



Click elements for details



Instructor Presence

[1] WELCOME MESSAGE/VIDEO

Build engagement by introducing students to you and your course.



Engagement

[2] QUICK LINKS

Guide students toward important areas of your course.



Motivation

[3] FIRST STEPS

Increase student motivation by clearly laying out tasks at the beginning of the semester.

The screenshot shows a course homepage with a yellow navigation bar at the top containing links for MODULES, SYLLABUS, EMAIL, NEWS, ASSIGNMENTS, and GRADES. A red circle with the number 2 is placed over the GRADES link. Below the navigation bar, the page is divided into two main sections. The left section is titled 'WELCOME TO THE COURSE!' with a red circle and the number 1 next to it. It features a large video player with a play button icon and a person standing next to a screen. The right section is titled 'YOUR FIRST STEPS' with a red circle and the number 3 next to it. It contains three steps, each with a checkmark icon: STEP 1: Proceed to the [Getting Started Module](#) to complete pre-course tasks that will prepare you to succeed in the course; STEP 2: Read the [Course Syllabus](#); STEP 3: Make sure you are receiving course announcements - please see these instructions on how to check your [email notifications settings](#).

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

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WELCOME MESSAGE

Instructor
Presence



Initiate the course welcoming students to their new learning environment. Briefly help them become familiar with the course, the steps to begin, and how to contact you. This is the first step to creating a positive presence in your course. Student learning has been shown to be linked to facilitating discourse and to creating effective, direct instructions ([Shea et al., 2003](#)).

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INTRO VIDEO

Instructor
Presence



Create and post a course introduction video that introduces yourself, provides students an overview of what the course is all about, and communicates its value to them. The quantity & quality of instructor interactions with students is linked to student learning. ([Jiang & Ting, 2000](#))

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QUICK LINKS

Engagement

Design an accessible homepage that facilitates access to areas students will use most frequently in your course. Interactions with course interfaces are a real factor in learning; difficult or negative interactions with interfaces can depress learning. ([Hillman, et al., 1994](#); [Hewitt, 2003](#))

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YOUR FIRST STEPS

Motivation

Build a supportive learning environment by providing students a list of tasks they may use to begin the course (e.g., read the syllabus). Instructional guidance designed to support the cognitive processing necessary for learning is more effective than minimal guidance that does not provide clear steps. ([Kirschner, et al., 2006](#))

QUALITY MATTERS (QM) STANDARDS

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The DOE Course Sample Homepage addresses the following QM Standards:

- 1.1 Instructions make clear how to get started and where to find various course components.
- 1.2 Students are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.
- 1.7 The self-introduction by the instructor is appropriate and available online.
- 7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to access it.
- 7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's accessibility policies and services.
- 7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's academic support services and resources can help students succeed in the course and how students can access the services.
- 7.4 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student support services can help students succeed and how students can access the services.

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.

95% of the students surveyed stated a homepage was necessary to their learning. Review this homepage as a guide to your own homepage design.