Threshold Standards for Supporting Learning with Technology

These standards set out the minimum good practice for online support and delivery of all modules, whether delivered wholly online, face to face, or a combination of the two. Through consultation, they have been established to enable a consistent student experience and create a high-quality foundation for learning across SHU[1]. These Threshold Standards complement the 'Common language for the student teaching and learning offer (2021/22)' and 'Course Delivery Principles (2021/22)' by providing the consistent, baseline digital learning experience on which to build the distinctive experience for specific disciplines.

1. Every taught module has a Blackboard module site

To ensure a consistent student experience, every module should be supported by a Blackboard module site. Where other online tools are used to support learning activities, they should be integrated with or linked to from the Blackboard site.

2. Sites are easy to navigate and provide access to core information

Consistent approaches to the structure and presentation of module sites across courses help students and staff to engage with sites quickly and effectively. With this in mind:

- Check the site's main structure corresponds to the standard module site template
- Name content areas, folders and items meaningfully, and organise for easy navigation
- Ensure that essential module information (e.g. module descriptor, assessment schedule, etc.) is easy to locate
- Upload learning materials such as lecture notes and handouts and make them available to students at least 24 hours before the session to which they relate
- Link to the Resource List Online for the module
- Keep resources and links up-to-date
- Store recordings within the module, not personal folders or accounts (e.g. not in a personal Panopto folder or YouTube account)
- Add past feedback about the module to the Student Voice area

3. Communication is clear, and sets expectations for engagement

A successful and rewarding student learning experience is underpinned by an understanding of how to engage with the module online, its content and learning activities. Specifically:

- Use a welcome announcement to introduce the module & signpost essential content
- Articulate how students should engage with the module, and how often. Throughout the site, make it clear what they are to do with content and how to engage with learning activities
- Provide the appropriate practical support and guidance needed for students to participate in learning activities, e.g. use of social media, or specialist online tools
- Inform students how they will be told of things such as last minute room changes, instructions for lecture preparation, or deadline reminders
- Include contact and availability details for all staff appropriate to their role on the module

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[1] In addition to these institutional standards, any additional faculty-specific standards must also be followed.

4. Assessments and feedback are clearly presented

Students expect assessment briefs and grading criteria to be readily available for all assessments, and have immediate, flexible access to feedback and marks when they are released. To achieve this:

- Provide the assessment criteria and arrangements for coursework submission at the start of the module
- Articulate how, when and in what format students can expect to receive feedback on their work
- Ensure submission points are correctly set up in Blackboard for coursework assessments and they match the type and number of assessments in SITS
- Provide an interactive question and answer facility via a blog, discussion board or similar for each assessment
- Use Grade Centre to publish provisional marks to students
- Provide feedback on each coursework assessment task to students through Blackboard

5. Materials are accessible

Legislation means that all materials posted online must be made as accessible as possible. This is to ensure that potential barriers to participation are removed for all students, not just those with declared disabilities. To do this:

- Follow the SCULPT model to create more accessible materials from the outset
- Make use of the accessibility checking tools in Microsoft Office to reduce the number of issues as you are creating materials
- Use the Blackboard Ally accessibility checker to find and correct issues
- Upload files in their standard file format, i.e. don't convert to PDF before uploading
- Ensure video and audio recordings have a transcript or subtitles available