

Moodle Templates

At Kwantlen Polytechnic University, you have access to one of five different templates for your Moodle course shell. While all of these pre-templated formats can help you with the organization and layout of your course, you might find one is particularly better suited to your needs than others. KPU's Moodle installation is WCAG 2.1 AA compliant, though optimizing accessibility for students using Moodle is dependent on the approaches KPU instructors use when creating their courses, including the design of Moodle resources and activities, which directly impact the accessibility of individual courses.

This resource provides an overview of each Moodle template format, its alignment with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, and some suggestions for addressing potential accessibility challenges to support faculty in the design of their Moodle course site(s).

Weekly Format

This format, which organizes content on a weekly basis with defined start and end dates, offers a structured and predictable learning path. This format benefits consistency-loving learners, supports scheduled live sessions in synchronous courses, and allows self-paced progress in asynchronous ones. This clear structure and timeline not only aid students in time management and planning - key executive functioning skills - but also cater to those who require a stable routine. While this clear structure aids time management and planning, it may challenge students needing extra time to grasp concepts due to its fixed nature. The weekly format is user-friendly and accessible, though scrolling through weeks could be a minor hurdle for some students.

Onetopic Format

The Onetopic format organizes each subject into individual tabs, reducing cognitive load by allowing learners to focus on one topic at a time. In asynchronous courses, this aids independent exploration. On the other hand, in synchronous and blended courses, it necessitates instructors to steer learners to the appropriate tab during live sessions. The Onetopic format focuses on one topic at a time, reducing cognitive load and benefiting students with attention difficulties. It encourages in-depth exploration, potentially enhancing comprehension and retention. However, switching between tabs may pose a challenge for some students.

Tiles Format

This format organizes topics as interactive tiles within a grid, creating a visually structured method for learners to navigate course content. It effectively supports all course types (synchronous, asynchronous, and blended) by providing an orderly and visually stimulating way to access diverse learning materials. While highly advantageous for visual learners, it also reduces cognitive load by displaying one tile at a time. Incorporating images or icons further enhances memory and comprehension. However, to ensure accessibility, alternative text should accompany each tile for students with visual impairments.

Collapsed Topics Format

This format allows toggling topics on and off, minimizing clutter and cognitive load. In asynchronous courses, learners can focus on one topic at a time. For synchronous and blended courses, instructors guide learners to expand relevant topics during live sessions. By permitting collapsible topics, this format caters to overwhelmed students and facilitates focused study. However, it necessitates an additional

action - clicking to expand - to access the content, which could potentially pose a challenge for some students.

Topics Format

The Topics format arranges course sections as individual topics within a list. This approach allows learners to explore content in a structured manner. It aligns with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles by offering flexibility, non-linear learning paths, and versatility across different course types. However, if a course includes numerous topics, extensive scrolling may pose a challenge for some students. Thoughtful design and clear navigation aids can mitigate this potential issue.

Remember, the choice of format can significantly impact the learning experience. It's essential to incorporate multiple methods of engagement, representation, and action/expression, as advocated by UDL principles. Depending on the course type - be it synchronous, asynchronous, or blended - each format has its unique advantages and potential challenges.

From providing a structured timeline to minimizing cognitive load, or offering a visually engaging approach, the choice of format should cater to the diverse needs and preferences of your learners. This not only enhances motivation and engagement but also promotes effective learning. While considering the specific requirements of your learners and the nature of the course content, remember to offer flexibility where possible. Regardless of the chosen format, ensure your course design fully embodies UDL principles, providing an inclusive and effective learning environment for all. For example, all courses should provide content in multiple formats (videos, readings, audio casts) to engage diverse learners and ensure the content is accessible by providing corresponding transcripts, captions and alternative text for visuals that convey or complement information.

The following table provides a summary and overview of the previous content, as well as some UDL-based suggestions associated with potential challenges specific to a given format.

Template Format	Supporting UDL	UDL Stretches	UDL Suggestions
Weekly	This format provides a clear structure and timeline, which aids in time management and planning. It's especially beneficial for synchronous courses that have scheduled live sessions.	However, it's less flexible for students who need more time. This format involves linear scrolling to navigate content which can be a challenge for some students.	Provide alternative timelines or pacing guides for students. Consider using a progress bar or checklist to help students track their progress through the course (enabled through activity tracking)
Onetopic	This format focuses on one topic at a time, reducing cognitive load and allowing for an in-depth exploration of each topic. It's suitable for asynchronous courses.	However, it requires students to navigate between tabs, and instructors must guide learners to the appropriate tab during live sessions. This might be difficult for students who prefer to see the “big picture” or the connections between different topics.	Provide clear navigation instructions or alternative ways to access content. Provide a course map or conceptual framework at the beginning of the course that outlines how each topic is interconnected. Consider posting a video “tour” of the site, and/or giving a “tour” of the site in class.
Tiles	This format is highly visual, which can be advantageous for visual learners. It reduces cognitive load by presenting one tile at a time and can enhance memory and understanding through the use of images or icons.	However, this format might not be as effective for students with visual impairments due to its reliance on visual cues.	Use alternative text (alt text) for each tile to ensure accessibility. Consider using descriptive labels or audio descriptions for each tile.
Collapsed Topics	This format reduces clutter and cognitive load by allowing topics to be collapsed, enabling students to focus on one topic at a time. It's ideal for asynchronous courses.	However, it requires an additional action from users (clicking to expand) to access content. Plus, instructors must assist learners in navigating through expanding relevant topics during live sessions.	Provide alternative ways to access content or clear instructions on how to navigate the course. Consider using expand-all/collapse-all buttons or keyboard shortcuts for easier navigation.
Topics	This is the most flexible format that allows for diverse content representation. It supports UDL principles by providing multiple means of representing information.	This format enables learners or instructors to select topics in non-linear ways but may result in long scrolling pages if there are numerous topics within the course. This could potentially pose challenges for some students.	Provide a table of contents or clear navigation instructions. Consider pagination or a search function to help students find specific topics more easily.