



Best Practices and Requirements for Designing Blackboard URMIC Employee Education Courses

Section 2. Course Design and Quality Assurance

This document outlines standards established by the SMH Steering Committee regarding overall course design and quality.

Clear Overview and Instructions

- Please Provide “estimated time to complete” on each content page or section.
- Provide instructions on the page where the activity occurs. Users may forget instructions from a previous page, so having instructions on the same page as the content will allow users to refer back to instructions as needed.
- Provide very clear step by step instructions and expectations on each content page.
- For presentations or computer based training modules that do not have a set narration time, please indicate how many screens or pages in total.

Course Checklist and Time Estimates

If the course has multiple modules, it is recommended that you create and attach a PDF document that users can print out with a checklist and time estimates for everything that the user needs to complete for the course. For large courses this step will help to ensure that the user does not lose track of what has been completed and what has not been completed. This recommendation is in addition to the “module complete” adaptive release messages on each module page.

Course Objectives

- Provide course and module objectives. Learner centered objectives state the behavior or skill that the learner is expected to do after completing the module.

Use Course Links rather than Copies

- For tests or information that is used more than once within a course or used for different learning paths, for example, different unit requirements, it is recommended that you use course links to shared content folders rather than duplicating tests or content items. From shared content folders it may be useful to provide course links back to the different learning path folders.

Course Quality Assurance

Unit Test

It saves a lot of time if the course designer can find issues before other testers. Before sending your course out to be tested by others, be sure to log in as a test student and go through all functions and workflow for your course, making any fixes and changes as needed.

Pilot test your course and your self - enrollment instructions

After you make the course available, but before notifying the wider target audience about your course, please ask a small group to follow your instructions and take the course. This will help to ensure that both the instructions and the course content and workflow are correct. Allow time to make updates based on usability feedback.

Adding Content

1. Please do not use Microsoft Office documents in your Employee Education courses. Those are not Web standard, they are modifiable, and security warnings will appear in Blackboard version 9. Instead, please use PDFs. Microsoft Office has an option to save Office files as a pdf file under the Save As menu, when saving your files. If your version of MS Office does NOT offer this option, contact your IT desktop support team regarding a tool to convert Office documents to PDF. There is also a free tool called "Cute PDF" that can be downloaded (Google search on "Cute PDF").
2. To attach documents, it is recommended that you use the Section 2 attachments section, and browse to the location of your file on your computer.
3. When adding a URL, it is recommended that you specify, "**Open in new window**". That is not the default, so this needs to be set explicitly.
4. For either of the above, provide textual cues, as in the following picture:



Article - History of the Stethoscope

Read this article describing the [History of the Stethoscope](#). This PDF document will open in a new window or tab. After you have read the article, close the window to return to this Blackboard page, and click "Mark Reviewed". [Mark Reviewed](#)

5. **Note that the recommendation to open attachments and URL's in a new window does NOT apply to tests or surveys.** Please do not open tests or surveys in a new window because adaptive release rules based on test or survey in one window will not automatically trigger in another window.