Virtual Learning Environment Course and Module Baseline Expectations

This document sets out the University's expectations in terms of the baseline information a student can expect to find in the Learning Environment (at both Course and Module Levels). It secures an improved approach, facilitating better support and ensuring a more consistent experience for users and should be read in conjunction with the 'Guidelines for Staff', USW Enabling Active Learning (EAL) principles, UKPSF dimensions of the framework and online support materials.

Author:	Version Number:	Effective Date:	Reason for Amendment:
Ioan Paval	4	June 2022	Reviewed and updated to align with expectations of USW EAL Principles.
Carl Sykes	3	June 2020	Reviewed and updated to align with expectations of USW DEAL Principles.
Carl Sykes	2	June 2019	Amendments to Original/Accessibility.
Approved by LTEC	1	2014	

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CELT-EAL-170-4.00-E

The University's Baseline Requirements Expectations.

Each baseline requirement has been mapped against EAL principles (see Appendix) and the UKPSF dimensions of the framework (in order to access the UKPSF documentation, please click on the following link: [Digital lens on the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) | Advance HE (advance-he.ac.uk)](#)).

Baseline Requirement number:	Baseline Requirement:	EAL Principles:	UKPSF dimensions of practice:
1. Course Organisations: These expectations should be read in conjunction with the University's Guidelines on the publication of a Student Course Handbook, and the Course Leaders' checklist on populating a Course Organisation. Additional guidance is provided via Blackboard. All course organisations in Blackboard should provide the following information to students, presented in a clear and consistent manner. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to providing the information in a choice of formats for ease of viewing or printing.			
1.1	Course information as outlined in validated course documents.	1, 3, 8, 9.	A1, A4, K1, K6, V1, V2, V4
1.2	Information about Course modules as outlined in validated course documents.	1, 3, 8, 9.	A1, A4, K1, K6, V1, V2, V4
1.3	Link to Course Handbook.	1, 3, 8, 9.	A1, A4, K1, K6, V1, V2, V4
1.4	Pre-recorded introduction video welcoming new learners to the course, and introducing yourself to learners so that they can get an idea of their leadership, course, and module teams.	1, 3, 7.	A1, A2, A4, K1, K2, K4, V1, V2
1.5	Information about Course Reps.	1, 3, 7, 8, 9.	A1, A2, K1, V1, V2
1.6	Information about the Course Team.	1, 3, 7.	A1, A2, K1, V1, V2
1.7	Response to feedback from students about the course.	1, 4, 7, 8, 10.	A1, A2, A3, A4, K1, K5, V1, V4
1.8	Information about External Examiners.	1, 3, 7.	A1, A2, K1, K6, V1, V2

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CELT-EAL-170-4.00-E

2

1.9	Course Level Communication to include, Announcements, a Course level discussion forum, E-mail and Blackboard Collaborate / Teams locations.	1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10.	A1-A4, K1, K2, K4, K6, V1, V2

2. Modules:

All modules should provide the following information to students, presented in a clear manner, with a consistency of layout and design (where appropriate).

Administrative Information:

2.1	Name(s) and contact details for teaching team.	1, 3, 7.	A1, A2, V1, V2
2.2	Pre-recorded introduction video welcoming learners to the module, and introducing yourself, for learners to access ahead of time.	1, 3, 7.	A1, A2, K1, V1, V2
2.3	Module descriptor.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5.	A1-A5, K1-K6, V1-V4
2.4	Assessment Type.	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10.	A1-A4, K1-K4, V3
2.5	Where to go for support (non-academic/study skills).	1, 2, 7, 8, 9.	A1, A2, A4, K1, V1, V2
2.6	Links to relevant student regulations and appropriate. information (e.g., academic integrity/social media).	1, 3, 9.	K6, V1, V2, V3, V4

Learning & Teaching Information:

Module learning experience to include:

2.7	Delivery schedule – summary of learning and teaching activities by week or by topic.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10.	A1, A2, A4, K1, K2, K3, K4, K6, V1, V2, V4
2.8	Up-to-date learning materials (including both synchronous and asynchronous activities) and including accessible and inclusive instructive digital material (e.g., videos, podcasts, etc).	1-10.	A1-A5, K1- K6, V1-V4
2.9	Online Reading List to include essential and suggested resources, including e-resources.	1, 3, 9.	A1, K1, K3, K4, K6, V1, V2, V3, V4
2.10	Assessment and Feedback Information as indicated on the Assessment.	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10.	A1-A5, K1-K6, V1-V4

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2.11	Cover Sheet (where appropriate) and Feedback guidelines.	1, 3, 7, 9.	A1-A3, K1, K3, K4, K5, K6, V1-V4
2.12	Links to interactive content such as blogs, wikis and other collaborative tools (e.g., Module Discussion Forum, Collaborate, Panopto, Vevox).	1-10.	A1-A5, K1-K6, V1-V4
2.13	Module Evaluation (LOOP).	4, 9, 10.	A1, A4, A5, K3, K4, K5, K6, V1-V4

Business Continuity:

Teaching content should be uploaded in advance. It is agreed that at least three weeks of content and learning materials should be uploaded.

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CELT-EAL-170-4.00-E

4

Appendix 1: The USW Enabling Active Learning (EAL) Principles.

Active Learning is a pedagogy through which learners engage critically and meaningfully with learning opportunities, activities, and resources (typically ones they have had the opportunity to inform, contribute to or choose) that enable them to learn, challenge, reflect on their previous understanding and develop and share new frames of reference and outputs.

Active Learning enables a flourishing and vibrant academic (staff, learners, and our partners) community when it:

- Respects and involves all voices and knowledge, thus widening and challenging the world views of learners and staff.
- Supports learners' sense of belonging and identity as authentic members of the USW community.
- Builds a sense of learner wellbeing through enhanced sense of place, value, and empowerment.
- Provides routes to success to meet the aspirations of all students with a wealth of opportunities for development of apposite graduate attributes.
- Affords individuals and collective university communities opportunities to reflect on the value and appropriateness of the learning, and its potential impact.

The core elements of an inclusive accessible and digitally-supported Active Learning pedagogy (consistently applied but locally adapted) include:

a. Authentic building of communities (academic and social) that foster a sense of belonging whilst valuing and recognising individual differences.
b. Comprehensive support for dialogic student involvement in their learning experience including how to learn in an active learning environment and contribute to curricula co-creation.
c. Scaffolded learner voice development and transparent opportunities for giving feedback and receiving responses to that feedback.
d. Scaffolded, inclusive, culturally responsive, and accessible learning experiences, designed using Universal Design for Learning principles, that offer stretch and opportunities for all students to exercise critical and meta-cognition skills regardless of previous attainments.
e. Learning experiences that are student focussed, purposeful, spark curiosity, encourage question-generation and problem-solving and are challenge-based.
f. Scaffolded opportunities to make learning gains visible to learners and staff in real time.
g. Authentic, embedded culture of peer: peer and learner: staff collaboration, cooperation, and reciprocity.
h. A culture of critical enquiry with staff modelling this through local adaptations to curricula informed by, and with, learner voice.
i. A value-base where staff and learners are present and committed to EAL in practice.
j. Central and local support for learners and staff to develop EAL teaching and learning/learning support skills.

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CELT-EAL-170-4.00-E

k. Carefully designed assessment strategies that enable assessment and feedback literacy, equity, transparency, and validity with EAL ethos.
l. Transparent, easy to access/navigate student support/regulations.

The USW EAL 2022 Principles:

EAL at USW is underpinned by the following principles. Please note the letters in parenthesis map the principles to the respective points above. EAL at USW will:

1. Build inclusive, accessible, and supportive social and academic learning communities. (a, b, j)
2. Offer appropriately challenging active learning opportunities both individually and with peers. (b, e, f)
3. Provide inclusive, accessible, and flexibly accessed learning opportunities and resources that build understanding and engagement. (b, d, i)
4. Create opportunities for students to contribute meaningfully to the learning resources that are being used. (c, e, f, g)
5. Scaffold learning and use informal assessment to make learning progress visible to students as they develop. (b, k)
6. Facilitate enquiry and discussion over instruction during learner/tutor interactions in the physical learning environment. (d, h)
7. Provide regular high-quality personal interactions with academic tutors, personal coaches etc. (a, c, h, j)
8. Seek, listen, and respond to students' feedback about their teaching, learning and support experiences. (a, c)
9. Ensure access to high-quality support services. (l)
10. Embed opportunities for individual and collective reflective spaces to consider critically how individual and collective learning contributes to meeting local, regional, and global needs. (b, g, h)

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CELT-EAL-170-4.00-E