

## Develop an Orientation Module

Students taking online courses often underestimate the time and effort required to succeed in this format (Bawa, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of an orientation module is to make sure that students understand how to be successful online, how to use the different features of the course, and how to meet course expectations (Stavredes, 2011). It can also be an opportunity for students to start to get to know one another and build community through syllabus activities.

### Key Components of an Orientation Module

**General information about online learning.** This section offers students who may have little experience with online courses a list of proven suggestions, such as creating a plan that includes a weekly schedule of where to work, when to work, and the tools and technology they will need.

**Weekly communication expectations.** This section describes the weekly patterns students might follow to be successful in the course, such as “Each Monday, review the recorded micro-lecture and take the quiz. Each Wednesday, participate in the online discussion and every other Friday, submit your reflection paper.” Also, let students know where in the syllabus they can find the weekly schedule.

**Navigating your online course.** This section can include a recorded brief introductory video, with you narrating as you navigate through the key elements of the course, including important tools such as the gradebook, instructor contact information, course syllabus, supplementary materials, course calendar, course email, video chat tools, assignment uploading tools, collaboration tools, and where to go for technical assistance.

**Syllabus activity.** Try a syllabus activity to help students learn how to engage in the online platform and understand course expectations.

**Open discussion/Q & A forum.** Include an open discussion forum and encourage students to post any questions or comments about the course, the syllabus, or anything else in the orientation module. Keep this forum open throughout the course and continue to encourage students to post questions. Remind them that if they have a particular question, it is likely that other students do as well, so asking and answering questions in the open forum is helpful to everyone.

### Sources

Bawa, P. (2016). Retention in online courses: Exploring issues and solutions—a literature review. *SAGE Open*, 6(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015621777>

Stavredes, T. (2011). *Effective online teaching: Foundations and strategies for student success*. John Wiley & Sons.