

Start-of-Term Guide

Please use this guide to prepare your courses before the start of the term. Following these steps in advance will help ease your work throughout the term and better ensure a good learning experience for students.

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Step 0: Merge Sections

If you teach more than one section of the same course (with the same delivery method), you may want to merge them into one course in Canvas by filling out the [Section Merge Request Form](#). This can save you time posting announcements, making changes, adding resources, etc.

Note: Student data and grades cannot be moved. Make sure you request the merge *prior* to copying/adding content into your course shells *and prior* to student enrollments.

You can create different announcements, assignments, and due dates for the sections. Though, assignments with multiple due dates will not show up on the Course Schedule in the syllabus.

Step 1: Copy Your Course

You can easily copy your course from one term to the next. Follow the steps below or visit the Canvas guide [How do I copy content from another Canvas course using the Course Import tool?](#)


1. Go into your new course shell (where you want the content to be). From the course “Home” page, click the “Import Existing Content” button on the right.
2. From the “Select Content Type” drop-down menu, select “Copy a Canvas Course.”
3. Click the “Select a course” drop-down menu or use the search box.
4. Select the “All content” option.
5. **Note:** Make sure you select the “Adjust events and due dates” option to move the dates forward for the new term; it cannot be done in bulk later.
 - a. Set the “Beginning dates” (leave “Ending dates” blank). Visit [How do I adjust events and due dates in a course import?](#) for details.
 - b. **Pro Tip:** To keep the due dates on the same day of the week (e.g., Friday) when moving from fall to spring and vice versa, always use the Monday of the start week for the “Beginning dates.” For example, to copy from Fall to Spring of 2025, select August 19, 2024 and January 13, 2025.
6. Click the “Add to Import Queue” button.

Tips

- **Be Patient:** Please wait for the “Content imports” area to show “Completed” before copying another course. Also address any errors if you see a “View Issues” button.
- **Multiple Sections:** If you teach more than one section of a course (and did not merge), copy the previous term’s course into one of the new sections, update everything you need to, and then copy that into your other section(s).
- **Oops:** If you accidentally copied in the wrong course, don’t worry! Contact an [instructional designer](#) to have the course cleared out so you can start over.

Step 2: Submit the Course Syllabus

Fill out the template provided in Simple Syllabus. When it's finished, make sure you submit it so students and your dean are able to see it.

Pro Tip: Click the “**Student Engagement**”  button in the upper-left corner of your syllabus to see which students have accessed it, how many times, and the last view.

Syllabus Copy (Import)

Since Simple Syllabus is a separate tool from Canvas, copying a Canvas course does not copy anything in Simple Syllabus. By default, your syllabus will be in edit mode and will only contain template information, including course details from Banner. To copy in a previous syllabus, click the “**Import**” button in the upper-left.

Course Schedule

The template includes a Course Schedule that will auto-populate based on published graded activities in the Canvas course. Please make sure it is comprehensive and the due dates are accurate (see [Check Due Dates](#) below). If any changes are needed, make sure you adjust them in the Canvas course and do not edit the schedule in Simple Syllabus.

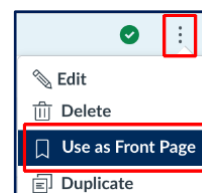
Note: If the Course Schedule assignments aren't listed correctly by due date, you can reset that component. Edit the syllabus and click the “**Reset**” button at the top. Select only “**Course Schedule**,” click “**Next**,” confirm that is the component you want to reset, and click “**Reset**.” After it's done, you can submit your syllabus again and the dates should be in the right order.

Step 3: Add Your Instructor Information

The course Home page contains a template for you to update.

If you want to use the Home page from a previous course (that wasn't copied in Step 1 above), go into that course, click the “**Options**” three dots in the upper-right of the Home page and choose “**Copy to**.” Select the new course and then click “**Copy**.”

Pro Tip: To use the previous Home Page that was copied in, go to “**Pages**” and click the “**View All Pages**” button at the top. Find your page, click the three dots on the right, and choose “**Use as Front Page**.” You may want to check your office hours for accuracy.



We recommend adding at least one photo of yourself so your students can “see” you – it humanizes you and helps them connect. You can also add a photo to your Canvas profile. Visit [How do I add a profile picture in my user account as an instructor?](#) for details.

Step 4: Post a Welcome Announcement

Make sure you have a welcome announcement that informs students how to get started (i.e., where and when). A template announcement has been provided if you would like to update it. To have your name listed as the author, copy-and-paste the information into a new announcement (and then delete the template announcement).

If you are **meeting virtually**, provide clear instructions on accessing the virtual classroom, including the days, time (noting Central time zone), and location. Kaltura Classroom is our official virtual meeting tool and guides are available from “Help” > “DMACC Instructor Resources and Support” and “DMACC Student Resources and Support.”

Pro Tip: We strongly encourage you to include a welcome video and post housekeeping/update announcements each week.

Step 5: Review Assignments and Materials


Link BryteWave Textbook

If you order your books through Follett, you will need to add a link in your course for students to access the book through single sign on.

1. Go to the “**Modules**” area in your course.
2. For a “Getting Started” or first week module, click the “**Add**” + sign button.
3. Click the Add drop-down menu at the top and choose “**External Tool.**”
4. Select “**BryteWave Deep Linking**” from the list.
5. When the pop-up opens, select “**My Shelf**” and then click “**Create Link.**”
6. Click the “**Add Item**” button.
7. Move the link up in the module if you want and then publish it so students can access it.

Double-Check Modules

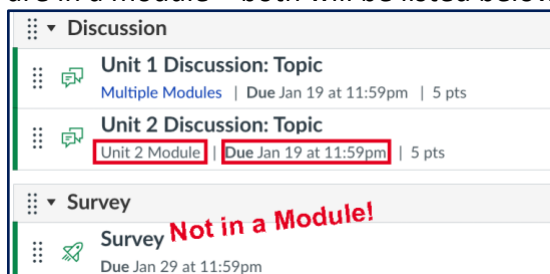
Ideally, your entire course should be set up and ready to go prior to the start of the term. At the very least, make sure everything for the first week is ready and published.

- **Publish Status:** Verify modules/materials/assignments are published  so students can see/access them.
 - Add/Update **module Lock Until dates** to time-release material to students. Visit [How do I lock a module?](#) for details.
- **Dates in Titles:** If your module titles contain dates, make sure you update those.
- **Subscribe:** If you have a Questions & Answers discussion, don’t forget to subscribe. Visit [How do I subscribe to a discussion as an instructor?](#) for details.
- **Best Practices:** Refer to the [Online Course Checklist](#) for other best practices.

Check Due Dates

Please check every due date for accuracy. **All graded activities should have the due date specified in the settings** (per [DMACC's Gradebook Expectations](#)). This helps students succeed in the course; they always know when things are due and can take advantage of notifications.

1. Check the “**Assignments**” area to make sure *all* graded activities have a due date and are in a module – both will be listed below the assignment title.



2. Click the “**Assignment Settings**” three dots in the upper-right corner of the Assignments area and choose “**Edit Assignment Dates**” to view/adjust all due dates.

Note: We do not recommend using availability from/until dates on graded activities. If an assignment is in a module that’s locked until a certain date, students will not be able to access it until the module is available. Instead of adding availability end dates on graded activities, we recommend setting a Late Policy (see [Verify Gradebook Setup](#) below).

The due date will be shown in lots of places, including Modules, Grades, Calendar, and the Dashboard.

Validate Links

Periodically check your links, videos, etc. to make sure they all still work. You can check your Canvas and external links if you go to “**Settings**” and choose “**Validate Links in Content**” in the menu on the right. Visit the Canvas guide on [How do I validate links in a course?](#)

Verify Integrated Tools

If you use third-party integrations, they may require attention.

- **Publisher integrations:** Don't forget to link your new Canvas course with your new publisher course.
- **Respondus LockDown Browser (LDB):** If you copied in quizzes that use LDB, you need to go to the LDB dashboard to initialize the tool and verify there aren't any errors.
- **Turnitin LTI 1.3:** Update the Turnitin dates. If you copied in Turnitin assignments and shifted date(s) in the Canvas assignment settings, they will conflict with the Turnitin dates and prevent the Turnitin assignment from working. Remove the Canvas assignment dates so you can access the Turnitin settings and update those dates.

Enable Attendance Tool

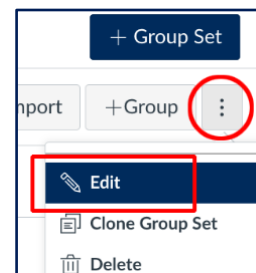
If you want to use the Attendance tool in Canvas, you will need to enable it. Go to **“Settings”** > **“Navigation,”** move **“Attendance”** up below **“Kaltura Media Gallery,”** and then click the **“Save”** button at the bottom. Students will not be able to see it in the course menu, but it must be enabled for you to access it. Visit [How do I use the Roll Call Attendance tool in a course?](#)

Pro Tip: If you don’t want attendance to count toward grades, go to the **“Attendance”** area in your course menu, click the **“Settings”** ⚙ gear icon in the upper-right corner, and choose **“Roll Call Settings.”** Click the checkbox for **“Do not count attendance toward final grade”** (also adjust the late percentage if necessary) and close the settings box. Leave the default setting for 100 points possible; do not change it to zero because then you won’t see a percentage in Grades.

Recreate Groups

If you had a group set in your previous course, it will be renamed **“Project Groups”** during the copy and all the groups within it will be removed. Group assignments will still be tied to the groups set, so you just need to create groups within that set.

1. Go to **“People”** and click the **“Project Groups”** tab at the top.
2. In the upper-right corner, click the three dots and choose **“Edit.”**
3. In **“Edit Group Set”** window you can rename the group if you’d like.
4. Then adjust the settings as needed, such as allowing self sign-up and limiting the number of members per group.
5. Click the **“Save”** button.
6. Then click the **“+Group”** button in the upper-right corner, type in a name (such as **“SDV108 Group 1”**), and click **“Save.”** Repeat this step to create as many groups as you need.
7. If you will be assigning students to the groups, you can drag-and-drop their names from the **“Unassigned Students”** list into the appropriate group. Visit [How do I manually assign students to groups?](#) for details.





If your course had multiple group sets, those will be assigned to the one **“Project Groups”** set. You will need to create new group sets as needed. Visit [How do I automatically create groups in a group set?](#), [How do I manually create groups in a group set?](#) or [How do I create self sign-up groups in a group set?](#) for details. After you’ve created the necessary group sets, you’ll need to edit the corresponding assignment settings to switch the group set.

Step 6: Verify Gradebook Setup

Visit [DMACC's Gradebook Expectations](#) to ensure your course complies.

- **Grading Scale:** Make sure your course is using the correct grading scale. Go to course "Settings," scroll down to the "Grading Scheme" area, and click the "View/Edit" button.
 - Courses are created with a plus/minus scheme of 7-3-0 (i.e., 93, 90, 87, 83...), so you may need to switch the scheme to match your syllabus (do not adjust it to "round up"). Visit [How do I add a grading scheme in a course?](#)
- **Weighted Grades:** If you use weighted grades, go to "Assignments" to make sure everything is in the correct Assignment Group. Go to "Assignment Settings" (three dots) in the upper-right and click "Assignment Groups Weight" to verify the percentages match your syllabus. Visit [How do I weight the final course grade based on assignment groups?](#)

Work Smarter, Not Harder

Feature	What to Do
Column Order	<p>In Grades, the "Default Order" view is based on the order in the Assignments area. Click the "Gradebook Settings"  icon > "View Options" tab > "Arrange By" to view columns in a different order, such as by "Due Date - Oldest to Newest" or "Module – First to Last." Visit How do I arrange columns in the Gradebook?</p> <p>While in View Options, you can deselect "Unpublished Assignments" to hide those columns from your gradebook view.</p>
Missing/Late Policies	<p>Click the "Gradebook Settings"  icon in the upper-right corner of Grades to set/check your missing and late policy deductions. Visit How do I apply a Missing Submission policy in the Gradebook? and How do I apply a Late Submission policy in the Gradebook?</p>
Filters	<p>You can use the "Apply Filters" button in Grades to filter out columns/rows, such as viewing only one module or assignment group at a time, ungraded submissions, resubmitted assignments, etc.</p> <p>You can also use the "Assignment Names" (or "Student Names") search field to quickly view a specific assignment (or student).</p> <p>Visit How do I filter columns and rows in the Gradebook? for details.</p>


Step 7: Review Accessibility

We are required by law to ensure all learning materials are accessible, but more importantly, we should *want* to remove barriers to learning and ensure all students have an equitable opportunity to learn. This starts with the material and information we provide to students.

Accessibility Tools

- **Ally** is a tool we license to check accessibility and provide alternative formats to students. Visit the [Ally Quick Start for Instructors](#) webpage for more information.
 - Check Ally meters that appear on individual course materials for ADA compliance. Click on the Ally meter to learn about issues and how to fix them.
 - Click the “**Ally Course Accessibility Report**” link in the course menu to view information about your course. That link is visible only to you, not to students.
- The **Accessibility Checker** ⓘ below the Rich Content Editor will help you fix issues. Visit [How do I use the Accessibility Checker in the Rich Content Editor as an instructor?](#)

Best Practices & Usability

What to Check	What to Do
Course Menu	Do not change the course menu in Canvas, except to enable tools that you need to use (e.g., enabling/moving “Attendance” or “LockDown Browser” below “Kaltura Media Gallery”). The default menu is required per DMACC’s Accessibility Policy.
Fonts	Do not change default font colors and types. Changing the font can hinder readability. If you want fonts to be larger or smaller, adjust your computer’s system settings or zoom in/out in your browser. Remove unnecessary formatting or multiple fonts/font sizes. Select your text and click the “Clear Formatting” button  on the toolbar.
Unique Titles	Make sure there aren’t duplicate titles for content or graded activities. All titles should be short, descriptive, and unique to avoid confusion (e.g., not two pages called “Overview”).
Link Text	If you have hyperlinks, make sure the link text (i.e., what the student clicks on) is short, descriptive, and makes sense out of context (e.g., not “click here” or “this link”). Do not use the full web address as the link text unless it is short and easy to read/hear, such as “www.dmacc.edu.”
Video Captions	Check the captions on your Kaltura videos to make sure they’re accurate. Instructions can be found by going to “Help” > “DMACC Instructor Resources and Support” > “Software” > “Kaltura.”
Student Perspective	Use the “ Student View ” tool in the upper-right corner to get a fresh look from a student’s perspective. Here are some questions to ask yourself: Is it obvious what students should do each week? Are instructions clear and detailed? Is everything available that should be?

Step 8: Clean Up Your Dashboard

You can remove clutter from your Dashboard by hiding past courses.

1. Click the **“Courses”** button in the global navigation menu and then click the **“All Courses”** link at the top.
2. Click the **“Favorite”** star icon to the left of the courses you want displayed on the Dashboard and quick courses list (when you click the “Courses” button).
 - The star icon will be a solid orange color for your favorites and just an outline of the star for other courses.
 - When courses are added for next term, they will automatically be favorites.

You can go to “Courses” > “All Courses” to view past courses that aren’t favorites. Visit [How do I customize my Courses list?](#) for more information.

Pro Tip: Add a “nickname” to the course card in the Dashboard if you teach more than one section of a course (e.g., “SDV108 M 11:15”). It will display only for you, not your students. Visit [How do I view my courses in the Card View Dashboard?](#) for more tips like changing the color or rearranging the course cards.

Expectations and Resources

From the **“Help”** menu in Canvas you can quickly access the **“DMACC Instructor Resources and Support”** page in the *Instructor Training and Resources* course. It contains links to DMACC’s expectations documents, accessibility resources, information on software/tools available to you, and other resources.

Need Help?

If you have any questions or need help with your courses, please reach out to the [instructional designers](#) in Distance Learning. They can help with Canvas issues, course design improvements, and using educational technology, such as Kaltura for lectures, Kaltura Classroom for synchronous online meetings, etc.

Distance Learning offers a variety of training sessions online on a regular basis. Check the [Online Learning Catalog](#) in EDGE for upcoming training sessions.

As the term draws to an end, please refer to the [End-of-Term Guide](#) (PDF) to help wrap up the course and prepare to submit final grades.