

# Checklist – Course Organization

The following checklist is intended to help guide you in the development of your course as it relates to course organization. The goal is to create a course that is well organized and easy to access and navigate from the student’s perspective. Listed below are suggested guidelines to consider in relation to organization, navigation, accessibility, privacy, and copyright issues. Some courses may not need each of these elements, so please use this checklist as it best fits with your needs.

## ORGANIZATION & NAVIGATION:

- Course navigation and content should be “intuitive,” meaning:
  - Learners are intentionally guided from one course element to the next
  - Learners should know where they are in the course at all times
  - Learners can easily access online course materials from anywhere in the course without having to click too many times (no more than 3-4 clicks and less than 3 clicks is considered best practice)
  - Labels are self-describing and easy to identify
  - Links to external resources allow for quick and easy return to where the learners were before accessing the external materials/support (e.g., a link opens a new window so that when students close this window, they still have their original window open and can continue where they left off in the course)
- Course should be “well-organized,” which might mean one or more of the following:
  - Structure directly follows the course organization and/or schedule presented in the syllabus and/or Getting Started module (click here to see guidelines for developing a [syllabus](#) and/or a [Getting Started module/unit](#))
  - Organization is “logical” in that it follows the natural progression of learning across the course
  - Organization and formatting should be consistent across modules/units, beginning with the first module (click here for a [module/unit checklist](#))
  - Course headings and sections clearly delineate hierarchies and organization of content as well as the course in general

- Course content is divided into smaller modules, units, lessons, etc. and are easily identifiable and logically organized
- Each course module/unit, activity, assessment, content item, tool, etc. is introduced and its' purpose(s) and scope discussed
- Course formats utilize institutional logos, symbols, images, etc. to help embody the culture of the local institution
- Learners' progress through the course is easy to track from the learners' perspective (i.e., learners clearly know which activities are required and have been completed or not throughout the course – click here to see guidelines for a [Student Progress Tracking Sheet](#))

**ACCESSIBILITY:**

- Technology-related:
  - Technologies that support accessibility are clearly noted and linked where they are needed (e.g., eReaders, close captioning, etc.)
  - Low or no cost technologies are used wherever possible
  - Technologies used are accessible by learners using slow internet connections (e.g., use streamed videos, use the jpeg or gif format for pictures and images, large files are divided into smaller files if possible, etc.)
- Content and Support-Related:
  - Equivalent, multiple, and alternative means of accessing content is available (e.g., transcripts, descriptions of images, etc.)
  - Support resources (e.g., ADA support, tutorials, etc.) are located in the places in the course where they may be most needed and links to these resources are provided wherever possible
  - All links within the course are tested just before they need to be accessed by learners
- Specific American with Disabilities Act (ADA) considerations are accounted for, such as:
  - Hearing impairments – equivalent alternative text is provided for all audio content, including close captioning or transcripts for videos
  - Vision impairments – all course content is able to be used with eReader technologies (e.g., pdf files have selectable text and are not just images, use headings so that eReaders delineate organization more clearly, links are described with meaningful text, etc.) and all images are described with meaningful text for eReaders

- Color-blindness – course does not rely on colors alone to emphasize content, organize themes, convey meaning, etc.
- Additional course organization accessibility considerations should include the following (adapted from: Accessibility for Online Course Content, Portland Community College - <http://www.pcc.edu/resources/instructional-support/access/>):
  - Use properly formatted headings to structure the page
  - Create tables with column and/or row headers
  - Maintain a proper reading order in tables, forms, and slides
  - Ensure that any action that uses a mouse, can also be completed by keyboard alone
  - Eliminate or limit blinking / flashing content to 3 seconds
  - Label form fields and buttons clearly
  - Write math and science equations accessibly

**PRIVACY:**

- Privacy Policies
  - Institutional privacy policies are clearly stated and/or a link to these statements is provided (click here to view [CSM's Privacy & Terms of Use](#) statement and click here to view [CSM Notice & Disclosure](#) statements and links)
  - Course-specific privacy policies (e.g., confidentiality expectations) are provided and/or links to these statements are provided (click here to see a sample of a [general privacy statement](#) for a course)
  - Links to the privacy policies of all course tools and technologies is provided (click here to see a list of links to [privacy statements for commonly used educational software](#))
- Accessing, Sharing, & Protecting Private Information
  - Whenever possible, use sites that require a username and secure password to access course materials and complete required assignments (e.g., Learning Management System)
  - Do not access and also encourage students not to access sensitive course content (e.g., grades, email, assignments, etc.) via unsecured wireless networks (e.g., coffee shops, airports, hotels, etc.)
  - Wherever possible, do not require students to share confidential, personal, sensitive, etc. information on publicly accessible websites (e.g., Twitter, etc.)

- Wherever possible, do not require students to share information that is protected by law in any assignment (e.g., client health information, personal information of minors they are working with, [FERPA](#) protected information, [HIPAA](#) protected information, etc.)
- If personal, confidential, sensitive, etc. is shared, ensure that access to this material requires a username and secure password during the course and that this material is handled properly at the end of the course (e.g., shredded, electronically deleted without the possibility of being recovered, etc.)
- Ensuring Awareness & Compliance
  - Ensure that ALL multimedia modes (e.g., text, video, audio, photos, etc.) comply with these and other privacy standards, policies, laws, etc.
  - Ensure that students are aware of all users who may have access to course content (click here to see a statement regarding who may have [access to CSM's Learning Management System](#))
  - Ensure that students fully understand these guidelines and the risks associated with them

**COPYRIGHT:**

- Review and make sure that you are following your institution's policies as they relate to copyrighted materials
- Review [CSM's Library checklist](#) to see if the materials you are considering may be used in an online class
- Check with your institution to see if it owns, leases, or has the license for the material(s) that you are considering using
- If the materials are integral to the educational goals of the course and you would most likely use them in a face-to-face course then they are more likely to be okay to use under the "[Fair Use](#)" doctrine
- If materials used likely do not fall under the Fair Use doctrine, then take the steps necessary to obtain permission to use them in your course – when in doubt, ask!
- Consider using materials that are available under a "Creative Commons" license (<http://creativecommons.org/>) as well as other open source and public domain sites (e.g., <http://doabooks.org/>, <http://doaj.org/>, <http://www.merlot.org/>, <http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/links/clipart.html/>, <http://openflix.com/>, <http://www.pdmusic.org/>, etc.)
- Ensure that access to copyrighted materials is limited, meaning one or more of the following:

- Materials are stored on a site that requires a username and secure password to access
- Only students enrolled in the course can access the materials
- Access to the materials lasts for a set duration of time
- Ensure that students know which materials are protected under copyright laws
- Ensure that students understand the importance of properly handling copyrighted materials and the dangers of violating these laws
- Ensure that any materials gathered and used by students for course assignments comply with copyright guidelines, laws, policies, etc.
- Ensure that these and other copyright guidelines, laws, policies, etc. are applied to ALL multimedia materials (e.g., text, videos, audio, photos, images, etc.)

For more information and to see the references used to develop this template, click here to view the [Course Design & Development Guidelines](#).