

# Digital Excellence Impact Case Studies

2021/2022

Academic Induction for Online  
Learners and the Digital Campus

by *Caitlin Timlin*

Planning  
Your  
Module



Introducing  
Your Module  
to Students



Structuring  
Your  
Content



Design,  
Collaboration  
and  
Construction  
of Knowledge



Formative:  
Putting Your  
Learning into  
Application



Designing Your  
Summative  
Assessment



Concluding  
Your  
Module





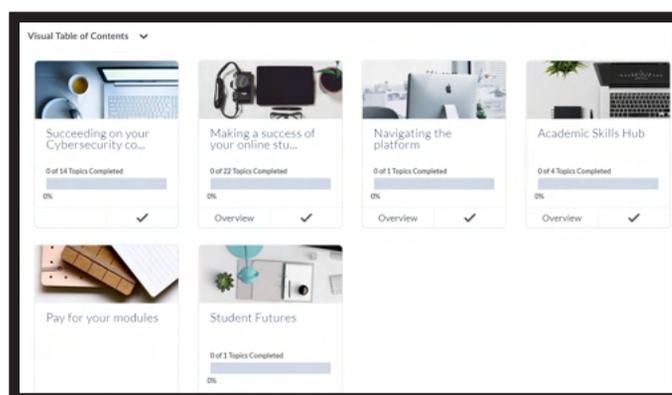
### Caitlin Timlin

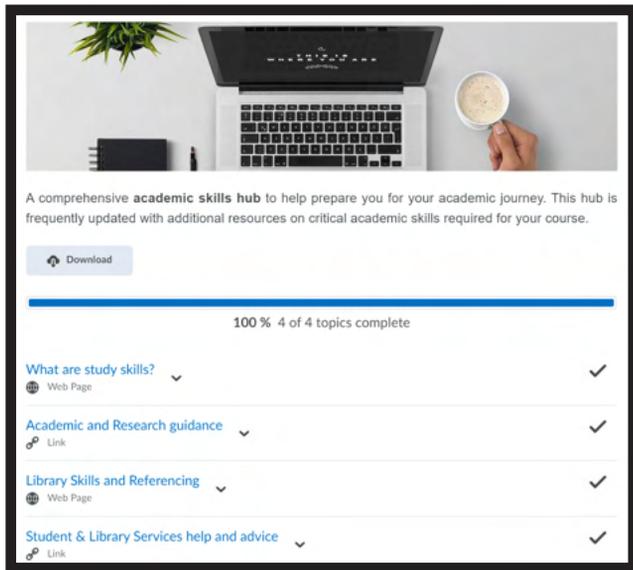
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I work on the TU Online VLE, Teesside University's online learning platform for courses ranging from Health to Business, to create the academic induction package for online learners. The induction is the first point of interaction and landing space for all online learning students and creates their first impression and expectation of the platform and the course they have enrolled on to. When going through the process of refreshing the induction space, a number of changes had to be considered.

The Making a Success of your Online Study section of the induction needed to provide a lot of information regarding the support that was available to students when studying online. In previous modules, I had noticed that there were several students that were struggling with or were intimidated by the technical aspect of online learning. This issue has become more and more relevant over the past year, where online learning has become the norm for many students. Therefore, to combat this, I decided to gather information on digital safety and wellbeing to present to the students. The learners that are on the online courses range in age and technical capabilities so I decided it would be useful for each student to be given information on the basics of learning online so that they all had the opportunity to start on the same level of understanding. Looking at the class progress in several induction spaces for different schools, many students had fully completed this section of the module. This gives a clear indication that students have found this section useful. Due to this section being based around online skills, it is vital that it is kept up to date as online trends and the way information is used can change quite rapidly.

The course specific information space within the induction was where I wanted to create a community hub for the students. To encourage students to communicate with each other, a discussion board was added to the space where students could introduce themselves and their interests as well as discuss the course and how they were finding it. These discussion areas were not only useful for the students, but also for the tutor as it meant that they could rectify any issues the students were having with the course as well as making it easier to highlight students who may not be contributing as much. It was vital that these students were contacted and encouraged to speak out in the boards, as it meant that they were less likely to feel alone during the learning experience. I was conscious of how learning online can be an isolating experience and so creating a sense of community was highly important. After looking through several different induction spaces for different schools, every single discussion board had been used by most, if not all, students on that course. The space had been used to ask questions to each other and the tutor, as well as sharing information about themselves. It was clear to see that a great sense of community had been created and this has been reinforced from members of the academic board at the university "Through collaboration, dialogue and interaction between learners and between subject experts and learners, designed using digital tools on the learning platform, this allows students to take active roles in the pursuit of knowledge, understanding and reasoning, whilst shaping their own learning, experience and best practice. This is underpinned by students establishing a community of learning fostering a sense of community and belonging." (QAV - Academic Registry, 2020).





It is clear to see that the developments that have been made to the induction package have been well received by students due to the various skills that it can provide and develop further. Students really enjoyed the sense of community it created, as well as how it became a landing spot for all the initial course information, meaning that it was all kept in one place for them to come back to if needed. The induction package and whole process of creating online courses has also received positive feedback from academics. Elaine Fryett, Associate Dean Learning and Teaching in Teesside University Business School said "We were anxious about how the onboarding process would work in the online space, particularly as the team in the School had limited experience of this. Caitlin and the Digital Transformation Team provided an excellent response to this concern and not only built an outstanding on boarding solution for our students but were also actively involved in the early stages of this at the approval events so the teams, and approval panel could see this critical stage and how it fit within the design and delivery of the courses. This helped a targeted and informed solution to be provided to meet the needs of our students. Retention data is a useful measure to understand the suitability of induction and the data for our students in this regard is incredibly positive. The Induction Package itself is comprehensive, intuitive and embedded within the student journey. It is recognised as excellent practice within the University and something the School is very keen to learn further from to support the enhancement of onboarding for other student groups."

“In my opinion, the TU Online induction should be held up as sector best practice!”

**Noel Dennis, Associate Dean Marketing and Recruitment, TUBS**

Noel Dennis, Associate Dean Marketing and Recruitment in Teesside University Business School said "The TU Online Induction is an extremely comprehensive package that has been very well designed to ease learners into their studies. The resources are extremely comprehensive and encourage active engagement. Induction can be overwhelming, but the TU Online team have created a package that allows learners to work at their own pace and transition seamlessly into their online learning journey. In my opinion, the TU Online induction should be held up as sector best practice!"

The induction space is updated on a yearly basis, considering research on online learning as well as looking at others across the sector. I plans on incorporating some more up to date information on digital skills and tools, taking inspiration from the skills I have learnt through the courses I have completed in Adobe and Microsoft. I also plan on ensuring that the content is fully accessible to a range of different people by considering the needs of the learners as well as considering the variety of skills that they will require before proceeding through their course.

