



Drexel University Course Baseline Practices

The Drexel Course Baseline Practices establishes a shared foundation for engaging, effective, and student-centered learning experiences across all courses. Grounded in research, student feedback, and institutional experience, these minimum, yet high-impact expectations support student success while remaining adaptable across disciplines, teaching approaches, and course modalities. By implementing these practices, faculty help create a consistent and supportive learning environment for students throughout their Drexel experience. They also strengthen the university's ability to maintain instructional continuity and adapt to changing circumstances when needed.

The main criteria for selecting these baseline practices include:

- high impact on student engagement, learning, and overall satisfaction
- minimal burden to faculty (some practices will improve time efficiency)
- applicability across disciplines, contexts, and course modalities
- alignment with research-based standards and student survey data

While these baseline expectations apply to all Drexel courses, there is a range of teaching contexts and many ways to create meaningful learning experiences for students. Therefore, it is recognized that exceptions to the baseline may exist. Leadership and faculty at all levels are encouraged to use sound judgment, be guided by research, and seek collegial advice when implementing these practices across diverse teaching contexts.

Course Baseline Practices

Practice	Rationale	Resources and Recommendations
Canvas is used as the official course learning management system (LMS) and should be utilized for all courses whether online or face-to-face.	Provides students with a more consistent, structured and transparent experience, reducing barriers to learning.	Instructor Getting Started Resources Getting Started with Canvas as an Instructor Flowchart Checklist for Creating Your First Canvas Course

A downloadable, accessible course syllabus, that includes expectations for participation, is provided in Canvas within the Syllabus tool. All graded assessments and their instructions and/or grading expectations are added using the Assignments tool with due dates and weights (if applicable).	Expectations for student participation range widely from course to course. Providing clear expectations, requirements, and instructions reduces confusion, frustration, and logistical questions, allowing students to spend more time on the work of learning. Canvas courses are open to students one week prior to the start of classes. Whenever possible, the course syllabus should be posted by then.	Drexel Syllabus Checklist. How do I use the Syllabus tool as an instructor? How do I create an assignment?
Course materials within Canvas are clearly organized in weekly, unit, or other instructional modules.	Students report that the absence of a logical organizational method results in challenges finding assignments and course materials. Providing modules organized by week, unit, or another time-based structure helps students navigate and progress through the course and can reduce confusion, frustration, and logistical questions.	What are Modules in Canvas? How do I add a Module? How do I add course content to Modules?
Course assignments and learning activities incorporate regular and substantive interactions between students and other students, and students and the instructor.	Decades of research have established that teacher-student interactions are an essential component of learning. It is assumed that in-person classes inherently include these interactions. For online courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that students who receive federal financial aid experience “regular and substantive interactions” with and initiated by their instructor.	Research and examples of student and instructor interactions. Research and examples of interactions between students and other students.

	Student–student interactions have also shown to increase engagement, a sense of belonging, build community, and help students achieve key learning goals such as critical thinking, analytical thinking, and problem solving.	
The Canvas Gradebook is used to share grades in a timely manner with students throughout the course and to share students’ final banner grades. Students should have an adequate idea of their course grade prior to the last date to withdraw.	Feedback is critical to student learning and growth. The longer the delay in receiving feedback, the longer the delay will be for students to apply that feedback and the more students will struggle to connect to the feedback in meaningful ways. Students report that having a consistent way to keep track of and check their grades leads them to improve their performance. Not knowing whether they are meeting course learning goals and standards increases anxiety and limits the student’s ability to improve their performance. One way to accomplish this is to offer multiple low-stakes assessments early in the course. Low-stakes assessments enable students to seek help as needed and have been shown to increase the likelihood that students will attend class and be active and engaged.	How do I use the Canvas Gradebook? How do I provide feedback to students with SpeedGrader? Best practices and tips for grading and providing feedback.

Training and Professional Development Opportunities

All instructors at Drexel University are encouraged to register and participate in technology trainings and teaching workshops. A list of technology trainings and resources are available on [Drexel University's Instructional Technology Group's Workshops and Training page](#). Recorded versions of the Canvas offerings are available on the [Canvas Workshops and Training page](#). A list of workshops provided by the Teaching and Learning Center is updated quarterly on their [website](#). To learn more about additional resources, programs, and development opportunities contact teaching@drexel.edu.

Additional Recommendations

As a means to improve student accessibility within our courses, instructors are encouraged to use both Canvas' built-in accessibility-checking features, as well as Ally, a 3rd-party tool installed in Canvas. Both of these features will provide information about existing accessibility issues and provide instructions on how to resolve those issues. Ally will also automatically convert text-based course content into alternative formats such as audio, electronic braille, and HTML. Support for using Ally is available from [Drexel University's Instructional Technology Group](#).

Final Considerations

These baseline practices represent the minimum expectations for all courses and were established to support engaging, positive, and effective learning experiences for students across instructional modalities. They reflect practices that are widely recognized as beneficial to student success and align with the expectations of Drexel University. In addition to enhancing the learning experience, these baseline practices help ensure that courses can adapt more effectively to instructional disruptions or emergency situations that may require a shift in modality or instructor. Steps to adopt and implement these practices should be determined at the department, school, and college level. Departments, schools or colleges may want to include additional course baseline practices that are specific to their discipline or teaching context.

Revision Notes

Drexel University Course Baseline Practices were developed in 2020 to support clear, consistent, and student-centered learning experiences across courses and modalities during the transition to remote teaching.

The original document can be accessed [here](#).

Baseline Working Group Members (2020)

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- Ludo Scheffer, Director of the Undergraduate Psychology Program and Teaching Professor, College of Arts and Sciences and Faculty Senate Representative
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In 2026, the document was updated by the LMS Implementation Task Force in coordination with Drexel's transition to Canvas as the university's learning management system (LMS). The baseline practices themselves were not revised; rather, references, examples, and resources were updated to reflect Canvas processes and tools.

LMS Implementation Task Force Members (2026)

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