

**Student Learning & Experience Committee**

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| **Guidance for Course Teams on the Design and Development of Teesside University Online Provision** |

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**GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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| **ATP** | Academic Transformation Programme |
| **FFL** | Future Facing Learning |
| **IPR** | Intellectual Property Rights |
| **OL** | Online Learning |
| **SLAR** | Student Learning & Academic Registry |
| **SITS** | Strategic Information Technology Systems |
| **SLS** | Student Library Services |
| **TU** | Teesside University |

# GUIDANCE: DEVELOPING HALLMARKS OF EXCELLENCE FOR ONLINE LEARNING COURSES

Where the course is being approved as a full-fledged Online Learning delivery course, where all modules are delivered online, there is an expectation the Course Team will evidence to the course validation Panel on the proposed pedagogic approaches to be adopted, including the alignment of the proposed module or course with Future Facing Learning (FFL). The Course Team would be expected to have undergone a Curriculum Design Event led by the Online Learning Designers to inform this presentation, the student experience and journey, course structure, Learning, Teaching and Assessment methodologies and general student support for online learning.

The Validation Panel will seek to:

* Assure the viability around a proposed structure for the course, structure in modules in line with active and collaborative pedagogic and design thinking.
* The skills and the expertise of the staff delivering the course via these methods.
* The alignment of the proposed provision with the University’s strategic approach to design and development and systems and processes of online learning.

**The Course Team will also normally be requested to provide:**

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| **Additional documentation of Online Learning (OL) course approval** |
| 1. **Project Initiation Document** completed by Course Leader, module leaders and online learning designer leading on the project. |
| 1. A clear course structure in the course specification for the various modes of study (part-time, 18 months, 24 months, 36 months and so forth). The structure will depend on the course team’s decision on the best method to deliver the course and the needs of their prospective students. This affords students a clear sense of their learning pathways and the order of modules to be studied and the duration of each module. This may already be contained in the course specification document. |
| 1. Clarify alignment with the Teesside University (TU) OL Development Roadmap including key dates for course launch and sequence of modules running order. Clarification can be obtained from the Assistant Director for Digital Transformation via email: [a.thanaraj@tees.ac.uk](mailto:a.thanaraj@tees.ac.uk) |
| 1. A clear idea of the sorts of activities for course-level induction during the online induction week in addition to the standard content available in the **draft standardised on-boarding pack for OL learners**, which your OL designer will provide you with. |
| 1. The resource implications should be clarified:  * for development of the OL provision – [a.thanaraj@tees.ac.uk](mailto:a.thanaraj@tees.ac.uk) * for delivery – School leads and TU OL Ltd. * A report from the Academic Librarian on the availability and accessibility of resources including an outline of the licensing requirements for existing resources and the need for different resources or a renegotiation of existing resources for OL use. |

# HALLMARKS OF EXCELLENCE FOR ONLINE LEARNING

## A: The checklist for online learning courses at course design and development stage and for course/review approval.

Elements from the following Hallmarks of Excellence contained in this checklist will form the discussions at the course approval/review event.

This checklist, together with the staff development guidance materials will be used as part of the course design and development phase between the course teams, relevant school representatives, guided by the Online Learning Team to design preliminary plans for course design during the course approval design and development phase.

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| **A: The ultimate objective is to unleash course team’s imagination to create courses that meet their highest aspirations with the student journey at the heart of the design strategy.** |

The overall aim of the curriculum development phase (prior to course approval documentation submission) is for all stakeholders to collectively create courses that are designed with a student-centric approach. This will be achieved through the intentional creation of a safe, supportive, and engaging learning experience for the student, with a consistent look and feel, clear instructions on how to progress through the materials, accommodations for multiple learning styles; opportunities for interaction and reflection; and community-building elements.

To further aid this process, course teams, OL designers and other key stakeholders in Schools involved in the course design and delivery with colleagues in SLAR are expected to:

Develop a clear understanding of the features and functionalities of the TU Online Learning platform. With this understanding, course teams are expected to advocate for a pedagogically driven approach to the use of technology to deliver curriculum. Course teams will work collectively with the OL designers and other key stakeholders contributing to the curriculum design and development process, including Student & Library Services (SLS) and the Learning Development team to establish metrics that provide measurements of success and accountability within your modules. Course teams are encouraged to utilise the intelligent agent feature of the TU Online Learning platform to most effectively use the available analytics to measure success, progression and performance enablement and quality control.

**Critical reads and course approvals**

Course design is an important component in student success because it guides the experience for the learner. The following question sets, derived from the information in the [Online Learning Design Framework and Toolkit](https://unity3.tees.ac.uk/departments/058/SitePages/Online%20Learning%20CPD%20and%20Course%20Design.aspx?authToken=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJSUzI1NiIsIng1dCI6InJMYjVPQzlNeXYyeS1sektvQUtkbDRDR293USJ9..T9d8jXKWPm6lnHs0eTIXebA1wpe6lN0N5KvGWWWkHOHGMW3quaWd3wLe4s1pUjNU3E4EXRrpQF_zuPB3YUyB0P2xMLtQyl9n0Fts_r30jXLA0BZpWnIeGg2AGbLDN39sjtk5UBdgJOIHBKq68meXOfFoQh7nlWaQWDLDBRaVKxCfMqNrLxO8ptdfNTWyq-MwVd2-yBMPdTuI12mGG_rtGzov38WuwGuHYLVxVg-ik_Mdk8h6SbqU5tqoXIodwRPqhZ7XOpKGWv0kvwlriuHrZk89nARWY10VgmLoRMhmZvh56DCFQFU3m9v9JVpP30ieB61vQsMbkOk1y9pAA5n8ew&client-request-id=dbcbb3f0-cbf8-0000-7a7c-d0dbf8cbd901), with which Course Teams are expected to engage during the Course Design Briefing (CDB), are intended to provide guidance to Chairs and Panel Members.  Course Teams should be prepared to discuss their engagement with the [Online Learning Design Framework and Toolkit](https://unity3.tees.ac.uk/departments/058/SitePages/Online%20Learning%20CPD%20and%20Course%20Design.aspx?authToken=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJSUzI1NiIsIng1dCI6InJMYjVPQzlNeXYyeS1sektvQUtkbDRDR293USJ9..T9d8jXKWPm6lnHs0eTIXebA1wpe6lN0N5KvGWWWkHOHGMW3quaWd3wLe4s1pUjNU3E4EXRrpQF_zuPB3YUyB0P2xMLtQyl9n0Fts_r30jXLA0BZpWnIeGg2AGbLDN39sjtk5UBdgJOIHBKq68meXOfFoQh7nlWaQWDLDBRaVKxCfMqNrLxO8ptdfNTWyq-MwVd2-yBMPdTuI12mGG_rtGzov38WuwGuHYLVxVg-ik_Mdk8h6SbqU5tqoXIodwRPqhZ7XOpKGWv0kvwlriuHrZk89nARWY10VgmLoRMhmZvh56DCFQFU3m9v9JVpP30ieB61vQsMbkOk1y9pAA5n8ew&client-request-id=dbcbb3f0-cbf8-0000-7a7c-d0dbf8cbd901) at both the Course First Critical Read and Course Validation events, whilst contextualising to subject knowledge and PSRB requirements.

**The Validation Panel members will seek to:**

* Be satisfied that course teams have engaged with the [Online Learning Design Framework and Toolkit](https://unity3.tees.ac.uk/departments/058/SitePages/Online%20Learning%20CPD%20and%20Course%20Design.aspx?authToken=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJSUzI1NiIsIng1dCI6InJMYjVPQzlNeXYyeS1sektvQUtkbDRDR293USJ9..T9d8jXKWPm6lnHs0eTIXebA1wpe6lN0N5KvGWWWkHOHGMW3quaWd3wLe4s1pUjNU3E4EXRrpQF_zuPB3YUyB0P2xMLtQyl9n0Fts_r30jXLA0BZpWnIeGg2AGbLDN39sjtk5UBdgJOIHBKq68meXOfFoQh7nlWaQWDLDBRaVKxCfMqNrLxO8ptdfNTWyq-MwVd2-yBMPdTuI12mGG_rtGzov38WuwGuHYLVxVg-ik_Mdk8h6SbqU5tqoXIodwRPqhZ7XOpKGWv0kvwlriuHrZk89nARWY10VgmLoRMhmZvh56DCFQFU3m9v9JVpP30ieB61vQsMbkOk1y9pAA5n8ew&client-request-id=dbcbb3f0-cbf8-0000-7a7c-d0dbf8cbd901) to inform the learning design of their module and course holistically.
* Determine the necessary staff development initiatives which derive from the [Online Learning Design Framework and Toolkit](https://unity3.tees.ac.uk/departments/058/SitePages/Online%20Learning%20CPD%20and%20Course%20Design.aspx?authToken=eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJSUzI1NiIsIng1dCI6InJMYjVPQzlNeXYyeS1sektvQUtkbDRDR293USJ9..T9d8jXKWPm6lnHs0eTIXebA1wpe6lN0N5KvGWWWkHOHGMW3quaWd3wLe4s1pUjNU3E4EXRrpQF_zuPB3YUyB0P2xMLtQyl9n0Fts_r30jXLA0BZpWnIeGg2AGbLDN39sjtk5UBdgJOIHBKq68meXOfFoQh7nlWaQWDLDBRaVKxCfMqNrLxO8ptdfNTWyq-MwVd2-yBMPdTuI12mGG_rtGzov38WuwGuHYLVxVg-ik_Mdk8h6SbqU5tqoXIodwRPqhZ7XOpKGWv0kvwlriuHrZk89nARWY10VgmLoRMhmZvh56DCFQFU3m9v9JVpP30ieB61vQsMbkOk1y9pAA5n8ew&client-request-id=dbcbb3f0-cbf8-0000-7a7c-d0dbf8cbd901) to support staff in their learning design and digital empowerment.
* Be satisfied that the engagement with the toolkit has resulted in the creation of a curriculum that spans the learning ecosystems, engaging meaningfully with classroom and digital tools to afford learning.

## B: Universal Design Principles for Course Content and Learning Resources

Integrating principles of inclusivity into FFL developments across TU aligns with the University’s strategic aim to provide a ‘stimulating learning environment and innovative curricula that provides an outstanding student experience’.

As such, the Course Team is expected to be familiar with:

* Principles of Inclusivity:

The adoption of a [**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**](https://blogs.tees.ac.uk/lteonline/principles-of-inclusivity/) approach will assist Schools, Departments, and the University to plan for diversity.

* Inclusive Curriculum Design in Higher Education:

[These resources](https://blogs.tees.ac.uk/lteonline/learning-and-teaching/guides/inclusive-curriculum-design-higher-education-subject-guides/) available from the Higher Education Academy focus on thinking creatively about inclusive curriculum design from disciplinary perspectives.

1. Can the target population access the necessary hardware and software to engage with the learning, teaching and assessment delivery?
2. Are there a variety of mediums used to provide learning materials in alternative formats?
3. Is there an appropriate and varied assessment strategy that will not disadvantage students?
4. How will flexibility in the provision of learning materials be offered to students to provide an inclusive approach?
5. What provisions are to be made to maximise accessibility to learning?
6. Have the Course Team considered developing/revising the additional documentation 2(b), 2(c) and 2(e) to provide students with a course overview for the whole course providing details of the types of activities to expect e.g., pre-session reading, group work?
7. How will the Course Team make expectations clear from the beginning of a learning activity and let learners know exactly what will be required from them?
8. What mechanisms are in place to encourage students to provide feedback on their experiences?
9. What mechanisms are in place to ensure effective student representation?

## C: The Course Team should incorporate and contextualise, as necessary, the following narrative in approval/review documentation

**Sample narrative to shape pedagogic designs**

The Online Learning offer is designed through an academically rigorous quality and benchmarking standards for online courses that is robust and challenging and one which provides a meaningful learning experience for students. This is achieved through:

1. **A guided academic learner journey structure of the curriculum and just-in-time personalised support for learners planned into the learning environment.**

A structure helps students to plan around their busy schedules and commitments and tailored to help students retain on the course, whilst achieving and progressing through their studies in meaningful and successful ways. Through the online offer, students are afforded the opportunity to learn using a variety of learning materials, digital content, through mobile and other electronic devices, both on-and-offline, guided by analytics which help students stay on track, maintain progress and successful completion of the module of study. Through our online offer, students are enabled to return to study, at a time convenient for them and when there is a demand for them to professionally equip themselves with cutting-edge knowledge and learning.

The guided academic learner journey is mapped onto the learning environment. It has personalised and meaningful learning at the heart of its design to meet the needs of students. It sets a clear learning journey ranging from orienting learners to the importance and relevance of a topic of study through clear learning aims and objectives, establishing linkages and relationship between topics and wider module, help them to see its relation to other topics in the course, instructions for a study task, to interactive course resources promoting active learning and self-assessment resources, allowing learners to maximise the potential of the learning resources to the best of its intended use for learning. The learner journey is supported by academic and pastoral provision, with access to the same support services as on-campus students, with access to millions of learning resources, including e-books and journal articles, available 24/7.

1. **Collaborative approaches to the construction of knowledge and building communities of practice**

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. Learners benefit from a wealth of experience, professional expertise, and knowledge from a variety of different countries and organisations, from other students on their course, and the academics delivering the course.

The opportunity for sustained discourse between learners, and between learners and subject experts enables learners to develop learning through inquiry, questioning, discussion, sharing of perspectives from multiple sources and instructor feedback. The subject expert has a critical role as guide, facilitator, and assessor of the learning, reviewing, and providing personalised feedback on student’s collaboration that is meaningful and relevant to the learner and the community in which the learning is taking place. Digital tools are used purposefully so that auto-generated feedback on computerised quizzes and tests are provided on individual students’ learning. Collaborative learning as an underpinning pedagogic approach affords students to engage with content in meaningful ways to ensure that knowledge is applied, understood, critiqued, and debated in their online community of learners. Online learning communities afford a sense of belonging, increased student engagement and interdependent learning, which helps students stretch their learning beyond simply assimilating content and study materials provided.

1. **Flexibility and autonomy towards increased student control, choice, and independence**

The combination of a guided academic learner journey course and a community of practice developed through collaboration, together creates a design that is rooted in putting students in control of how they learn, when they learn and the pace in which they successfully complete their studies, underpinned by the academic and pastoral support in place throughout the course of study. Personalisation is in the form of control, choice, and independence in learning, with academic or peer support and feedback available at the time of need.

Further, the approach towards studying the course allows for a learning-in-demand approach fitting with the needs of many professionals who require the flexibility and support for successful study. The modules are designed to be accessible via a variety of electronic devices including access through mobile and available both on-and-offline. In encouraging students to gain autonomy in their learning, become future ready and empowered professionals, many of the modules are designed with reflective online learning, requiring students to contribute to portfolios, blogs and journals which help students analyse, synthesise, and evaluate their learning and use of the learning in their professional development.

1. **The following sets out the support in place during the OL development journey.**

The Online Learning team (OL) are members of the Digital Transformation section within Student Learning & Academic Registry (SLAR). The team works under the leadership of the Assistant Director for Digital Transformation. The team occupy an ultimate ‘bridging’ role, between the technology and academic practice, to structure and support the necessary fundamental changes to learning designs. Through this collaboration, academics who are subject matter experts in their discipline and the OL team who are experts in the art and science of designing L+T online, work together to create online spaces and learning activities that achieve student success through transformative learning opportunities.

Stage 1A: Onboarding staff onto the OL Development roadmap

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| **Roles** | **Description of responsibilities** |
| OL team in SLAR | On-boarding onto the Online Learning roadmap, processes, support in place and project planning.   1. This phrase usually takes place with the Course Leader and key point of contact in schools (Head of Department or Associate Dean). The aim of this phase is to introduce the strategic transformation and change project to the Course Team and School, together with the processes in place for course approvals, and the support in place to enable the development of these courses. 2. This phase explores the systems and processes including the setup of modules on SITS for development. 3. It is also an opportunity to understand the proposal from the School and offer insights into how the features and functionalities of the technologies can help bring the proposal to fruition. 4. This phase concludes with the completion of a Project Initiation Document for OL development between the OL designer and the course team. |
| Schools | 1. To engage with the OL team in SLAR to understand the need for timely set up of modules on SITS to facilitate the team to undertake OL Developments. |
| TU OL Ltd. | 1. To notify the Assistant Director if a course falls into the remit of delivery by TU OL Ltd. 2. Courses being delivered by TU OL Ltd. will receive support around online shop details, marketing and recruitment and resourcing. |

Stage 1B: Prior to course approvals for new courses:

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| **Roles** | **Description of responsibilities** |
| OL team in SLAR | 1. Work with course teams to help them learn and understand the uniqueness of online learning and how it differs from their campus-based course design and delivery – the OL learning and teaching aspects. 2. Supply the relevant course approval OL materials to course teams and support them to complete these documents that are required as part of the OL course approval requirements. 3. Work with course teams to support them in completing their course specification documents, in particular the section on learning, teaching and assessments to draw out the uniqueness of OL learning and teaching philosophy. 4. Work with the course teams to support them in completing their course specification documents, particular around student support – onboarding and Academic Induction programme which we design.   Academic Transformation Programme (ATP) for stage 1: Designing outstanding online learning experiences and portfolio.  The team delivers an ATP to coach and mentor teaching staff on excellence in online learning design, development, and delivery. This phase is delivered in tandem with course approvals or typically within a week after course approval process: Empowering learners through authentic learning activities for better transfer of knowledge, create personalisation and actively engaging learners; implement teaching and learning initiatives online through collaboration, assessment strategies, continuous feedback on progress and forward planning using adaptive functionality via intelligent agents and interactivity within designs. |
| Course teams in Schools | 1. Course teams to work with OL designer assigned to the project to co-create the course approval documentation, particular the section on learning, teaching and assessments to draw out the uniqueness of OL learning and teaching philosophy. 2. Course teams to develop a solid understanding of how an OL course differs from their campus-based course design and delivery and be able to articulate these during course approval event. 3. Course teams to co-complete the relevant OL documents that are required as part of the OL course approval requirements. 4. Work with the OL team to understand the OL processes already in place to support students to onboard a course and the customised Academic Induction programme for all OL students. 5. Course teams to engage in all correspondences including in the ATP stage 1 programme. 6. Customisation of the onboarding pack for all new students including instructions to Schools for sharing with students. |
| Other responsibilities for Schools | 1. The timely set up of modules on SITS. 2. The correct set up of module leaders and teaching staff against each module on SITS. 3. Provision of relevant access to modules on TU Online VLE. 4. The timely sharing of information for each module to FCD to be set up via the Online Shop. 5. The timely sharing of onboarding pack for students received from the OL team with new starters once customised by the school. |

Stage 2: Post course approval for new courses

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| **Roles** | **Description of responsibilities** |
| OL team in SLAR | 1. Support course teams to address any conditions or recommendations which they have receive during the course approvals relating to online content and delivery. 2. Work with relevant module leaders to design and develop modules in preparation for launch date. During this time, you will upskill teaching staff on best practices to help them supply the relevant content and activities for their modules. 3. Customise and develop the Academic Induction Hub including course level induction with content provided by the course team for new courses and/or refresh content for new iterations of a course. 4. Work with relevant module leaders to gain feedback and sign off for modules prior to launch date.   ATP Stage 2: Designing user experience for learning  This phase is delivered during the school’s phase of updating their content prior to sharing with the OL team for online design. The intention behind this phase is to encourage academic teams to consider:   * Creating meaningful spaces through collaboration as a means to deep learning (includes social learning to empower learners and create a sense of belonging). * Using the online learning platform for inclusively and meaningfully crafted learning and social spaces online. * Creating meaningful weekly study plans and structures by balancing flexibility for learners balanced with TU academic guided learner journey to help learners participate and progress. * And for tutors to offer personalised and timely guidance for learners when gaps in understanding are made apparent.   A key feature of this phase is discussion and showcase of the integrated whole digital campus approach to design and experience through the co-creation of TU Online Induction materials, course specific induction materials, creation of academic and research skills hub (generic and course relevant). |
| Course teams in Schools | 1. Work with the OL team to address conditions and recommendations relating to online learning, teaching and assessments of the proposed course, raised at course approval process and report. 2. Drawing on the learning gained from the ATP stage 1, course teams to provide module content to the OL team for design in a timely fashion for development by the module launch date. This will include raw content, formative assessments, student engagement activities and assessment titles with associated instructions for learners. 3. Work with the OL to supply relevant content and customise and develop the Academic Induction Hub including course level induction for new courses and/or refresh content for new iterations of a course. 4. To check and confirm and sign off each module that has undergone design and development by the OL team prior to the launch date for the module. |

Stage 3: Post-launch

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| **Roles** | **Description of responsibilities** |
| OL team in SLAR | 1. Support course tutors to navigate the TU Online VLE including administering best practice tips on teaching online, harnessing the platform most impactfully for teaching and engaging learners. 2. Undertaking agreed content refresh and updates for future iterations at the request of Schools. (More detail in Stage 4 below).   ATP Stage 3: Facilitation of learning on the learning platform.  This phase aims to induct a tutor around how to teach online, key principles around high-quality student support, academic presence, importance of timely support/feedback (adaptive release functions); setting up tools for learners to plan and monitor their learning, role of the personal tutor; report generation on progress and achievement monitoring; effective use of a data-driven technology environment. |
| Course teams in Schools | 1. Undertake course delivery with responsibility for student engagement, teaching, assessments. 2. Drawing from student feedback and subject discipline needs, to request refresh to content and assessments from the OL team. |
| TU OL Ltd. | 1. Undertake course delivery with responsibility for student engagement, teaching, assessments. |

Stage 4: Modules being rolled over for new iterations

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| **Roles** | **Description of responsibilities** |
| OL team in SLAR | 1. Amend the platform and modules to reflect any content changes to lecture/assessment and teaching material. 2. Work with Academics to create accessible content under new guidelines and how to source images/video copyright. |
| Course teams in Schools | 1. To forward any new content or lecture material to the OL Designers. 2. To update, if required, any specific assessment requirements. 3. To inform the OL Design Team the new assessment and resubmission dates. |
| TU OL Ltd. | 1. To notify the Assistant Director for Digital Transformation if a course falls into the remit of delivery by TU OL Ltd. 2. Courses being delivered by TU OL Ltd. will receive support around online shop details, marketing and recruitment and resourcing. |

[**Other support available**](https://blogs.tees.ac.uk/lteonline/slar-cpd-offer/digital-transformation-dx/)

**CPD ‘refresher to online learning’** is available as a refresher for tutors already on the OL journey and an introduction for tutors who are onboarding the OL journey. Syllabus:

* What is online learning?
* How is it different from campus or blended modes of study?
* Perceived barriers and what we have done with our designs to address these.
* Gold standard design principles.
* Gold standard student support and experience.
* Navigating the TU Online platform.
* How to engage in discussions.
* Creative ways of facilitating learning.
* Role of course tutor in induction pack(s).
* Role of personal tutor and aid of progress bar.

**Head of Department Training**

To deliver comprehensive training around the OL roadmap, process for module content design and creation, process for course development and impact on resources across schools, offering an in-depth understanding of managing an OL project from a school’s perspective.

**Course Leader Training**

To consolidate the various staff support training through the lens of a Course Leader, including the enactment of a course leader’s role and responsibilities on an online course, daily business delivery of a Course Leader on an online course, the features and functionalities of the platform which enable a highly data-driven resource to support team members and students on courses.

**Module Leader/Tutor Training**

To consolidate the various staff support training through the lens of a Module Leader, including enabling strong user experience through the design and delivery of online courses; the importance of social presence and the significance of the role of the academic in the online space to enable successful participation, progression and learning of online students.