

Balanced Teaching Periods 2017: Preparing for Orientation and Week 1



In the Balanced Teaching Periods 2017, there is an Orientation period and starting this year, preparation week has been relabelled Week 1 to better communicate to students their need to participate. Scheduled classes can begin from Week 1 for preparation activities, leading into Week 2 classes for regular subject learning activities, and you may also have mandatory online Week 1 preparation activities. The dates for Orientation and Week 1 can be found [here](#). The Orientation period and Week 1 are designed to give all students resources and tools that they need to be prepared for learning in their subjects.

There are some requirements for what must be provided to students in all subjects by the start of the Orientation period and Week 1. Not all students need to *orient* to study, but **all** are required to **prepare** during week 1.

We have characterised Orientation and Week 1 support that subjects are expected to offer at 3 levels:

- Bronze:** This is the basic level of welcome activity that is expected for all subjects under BTP2017. We expect your UTSONline site to be live, and for there to be some simple, interactive elements common to all subjects here for Week 1. These basics will help students gain an overview of what to expect in your subject.
- Silver:** This level of preparation for study activity will introduce some extra quality or interactivity over the base level. We have a few suggestions of good things you could add to your basic UTSONline site to get students better prepared for a good start with your subject in Week 1, and become more engaged and interested.
- Gold:** This level will have some best-practice elements to give the students the best possible start when you begin face-to-face interaction in your first week. Do not go too far with interaction of course! It is important that students are not overloaded with preparation activities, and come keen, enthusiastic and ready for study.

We do not want to add another checklist at this busy time, but instead to provide some helpful tips on how to ensure that your Faculty response is the best possible in 2017.

We are here to help - so if you need support or advice on this topic, contact your [IML Faculty learning technologist](#) or [IML Faculty liaison contact](#) or come to a [UTSONline drop-in session](#). For more information about the new academic calendar, access Staff Connect and search for Balanced Teaching Periods 2017.

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Bronze: Baseline

This 'Bronze' level guide outlines the minimum expectations. For a UTS Subject, we expect that most coordinators would do these things (and more) routinely as part of their subject preparation.

Some help links have been provided for those who are new to subject coordination or to UTS. For everyone who wishes to do more than the minimum, there are Silver and Gold guides with ideas for taking the basics further. We know that 'getting a good start' is critical to student success, so we would expect that most Subjects will aim for Silver level as 'a good preparation to study' rather than Bronze 'basic preparation', but it is important to know the **baseline**, so here it is:

What to do	Why?	Get help
Update (or set up) your UTSONline site.	<p>Students value the use of UTSONline. They like to see that the site has been updated for their class, and can be confused by out-of-date material.</p> <p>From Autumn 2017, all active subjects automatically have a UTSONline site.</p>	<p>You no longer need to request a site for your subject, the site will be created automatically. For more information about the process including dates, see this help page.</p> <p>If you have a site and would like ideas to redesign it, come along to a UTSONline drop-in session.</p> <p>Who can I ask if I have more questions? Your IML Faculty Learning Technologist</p>
Make sure the latest version of your subject outline is available in UTSONline: this process is automated so there is no need for you to upload the PDF. But do check the link is active.	<p>Students like to have the subject outline available online. Make it easy for them to find.</p> <p>The first day of the Orientation period is February 20 and Week 1 commences March 13 (or February 27, if your subject is on calendar B); All subjects must have their subject outline available to students by that time, which means finalising in CIS earlier according to your Faculty timeline.</p>	<p>Check with your Faculty APO about your Faculty's requirements and deadlines. Your Faculty deadline may be earlier.</p> <p>Did you know that there's a helpful user guide for creating subject outlines on CIS?</p> <p>UTS APO can also offer training.</p>

Post a welcome announcement for students in UTSONline

Students should be encouraged to engage in the subject from the start of the Orientation period, and know what they're expected to do in these weeks. A simple announcement is an easy way to do this. Introduce yourself, include a few lines about the subject and tell students what you expect them to prepare for their first class and why. You could include a link to the subject outline to take students straight there.

This [Blackboard help page](#) has a tutorial and information on how to post an announcement.

This UTSONline help page has information on how to add a link within your subject site.

Post at least one item of pre-work that students should do during the Orientation and Week 1 period

Students should be prepared to hit the ground running, and you can require them to do preparation work in Week 1. The minimum pre-work should be interesting, engage them with one or two key ideas in the subject and motivate them to go further.

A short video or an interesting (not too intense yet) reading could be starting points. There are further ideas for pre-work in the Silver and Gold guides. Use the pre-work outcomes in your first 'in person' class session.

If you want students to watch or read material from external websites, link to these from UTSONline.

Don't forget to use the library [Digital Resource Register](#) for all copyright material. The DRR can send you a link to include in your UTSONline site and put articles and chapters into eReadings.

Creating a clear introduction to your subject, welcoming your students, and providing some simple preparation activities are important to help your students make a good start to their learning in your subject. In 2017, you can also use Week 1 to run face-to-face preparation sessions that complement your online activities.

Be sure to plan Week 2 to make use of the preparation work.

These are the minimum expectations across the university. Your Faculty may require additional preparation, have additional time constraints, or have a standard template for you to use. Make sure you know the Faculty expectations.

If students contact you about difficulty accessing learning materials due to disability, please refer them to special.needs@uts.edu.au, ph 95141177, suggesting they make an appointment with a Disability Services Officer.

For help with UTSONline, contact your IML [Faculty Learning Technologist](#) or book in for a [UTSONline drop-in session](#).

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Silver: Good Practice

This guide is one of three designed to give you ideas for activities you can provide for your students in Orientation and Week 1. Bronze activities are the required minimum. Silver provides a range of 'extended' ideas that might make a superior preparation for Week 2. There is also a Gold guide to show you some more sophisticated best practices in preparing your students for study under the new Balanced Teaching Periods. Contact your IML [Faculty Learning Technologist](#) or IML [Academic Liaison](#) for further information and guidance.

What to do

Why?

Get help

Pre-flight self checks and diagnostic tests

Students benefit from knowing whether they really have the prior knowledge and skills needed for the subject. Use some questions from prereq subjects, or skills diagnostics then point students to self-help resources.

These could be especially good for testing understanding of plagiarism.

[This help page provides more information about setting up a quiz in UTSONline.](#)

Past students, alumni or an industry perspective

Students are keen to hear from others who value the subject and its outcomes. Create a short video (2-3 minutes) with either a past student or someone who can explain how the subject links into the workplace.

Questions to answer in this video could include:

- What was an enjoyable aspect of the subject?
- What was difficult?
- What tips can you recommend for success in this subject?
- How does this subject link to the real world?

Think about the navigation structure of your UTSONline site

Students often say they can't find information in their UTSONline site. Think about reducing the number of clicks a student needs to make to find your content.

A left hand menu item called Subject Documents or similar may help them.

[This help page describes how to change the left hand navigation menu.](#)

Contact your IML [Faculty Learning Technologist](#) if you need more help.

Create a screencast of your subject outline

Students may have questions about your Subject Outline. Think about the questions they usually ask you.

Create a voice-over or screencast presentation talking them through your subject outline.

You could also follow it with an online quiz to check they have got all the important information.

[This website provides an overview of screencasting and examples.](#)

What software do I need?

[Echo360 Personal Capture](#) is available to all UTS staff or if you have a Mac, [Quicktime is easy to use.](#)

[How do I get Echo360 installed on my computer?](#)

[This help page](#) will tell you more about creating a simple quiz in UTSONline.

Introduce others from your teaching team

The students will be interested to hear from tutors, lab assistants, guests or anyone else who they will come into contact with.

You could write a very short piece about who each of you are, and try to capture some of your feelings about the subject from a more personal perspective, or perhaps create a short video where each person explains their role or if the person is not available, a photo with voice-over.

[This webpage provides the basics for shooting your video.](#)

[This webpage provides more information on video.](#)

Student Introductions

Encourage your students to post a welcome message in a discussion forum. Perhaps they could post a video or an image along with a written description.

This helps build rapport and collegiality early and helps you get to know them sooner.

[This Tutorial](#) describes different uses of Discussion Forums and how to set one up.

Make the introductory reading for your subject more collaborative

Put up an (easy) A.nnotate subject reading and have students engage in a conversation that you will continue in your first class. It doesn't have to be an academic paper but perhaps an article from the news or an online blog/magazine. Something that gets them interested in the subject but also links the subject to the real world

[This web page introduces A.nnotate and describes how to use it.](#)

[Use the UTSONline Discussion Forum. Instructions can be found here.](#)

For help with UTSONline, contact your IML [Faculty Learning Technologist](#) or come along to a [UTSONline drop-in session](#).

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Gold: Best practice

This guide offers some further ideas on preparation activities you might like to discuss with your IML [Faculty Learning Technologist](#) or IML [Academic Liaison](#). Do remember not to overload your students with preparation, but some of these ideas might inspire you to move beyond basic interactions to give your students the very best start under the new Balanced Teaching Periods.

What to do	Why?	Get help
Link to a UTSONline preparatory quiz	Setting up a multiple choice quiz in UTSONline is a fantastic tool for the students to gauge their knowledge coming into the subject. It is also a really useful way for you to assess the level of knowledge of the new cohort. Don't forget to link your quiz to self-help resources for students.	Instructions on how to create a quiz Instruction on how to deploy a quiz Linking a quiz to a graphic tile Contact your IML Faculty Learning Technologist if you need assistance.
Link to frequently asked questions (FAQs)	Creating a frequently asked questions section will save you and your students a lot of time and frustration. FAQs allow the students to self manage common problems and will reduce the amount of email you receive from students.	There is a variety of ways to approach this idea. Contact your IML Faculty Learning Technologist if you need assistance.
Expectations survey/poll	<p>Poll students and share insights with them in the first class. This provides you with early insights on the student cohort and an early opportunity to adjust accordingly.</p> <p>Some suggested questions you could ask: What would students like to gain from studying in the subject? What they are looking forward to? Anything they are concerned about?</p> <p>Keeping it private allows students to express fears, concerns, strengths and weaknesses which can give you valuable insights.</p> <p>Tools you could use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UTSONline survey tool• SPARKplus in survey mode	Instructions on how to create a survey Instruction on how to deploy a survey Alternatively feel free to contact your Faculty learning technologists for assistance.

Introduce the students to some of the writing tools used for avoiding plagiarism

Submit two exemplars of writing through Turnitin inside UTSONline. One is 'good' academic writing the other 'bad'. Make the Turnitin reports available to students.

Some benefits are that students are introduced to Turnitin (use and benefits) and experience the process of submitting written assignments in UTSONline. This may help to set the context as "good academic practice" right at the start.

Additionally link to the UTS avoiding plagiarism module: <https://avoidingplagiarism.uts.edu.au>

[UTSONline Turnitin tool](#)

Your [Faculty Learning Technologists](#) can provide support if needed.

Use Lynda.com to help students to develop skills that they'll need for the subject

Students can get a head start on some essential skills that they'll need, or check or extend their skills.

Lynda.com is available through the library and has a wide range of modules that might be relevant to students, for example Excel skills, English grammar, specialist software tools.

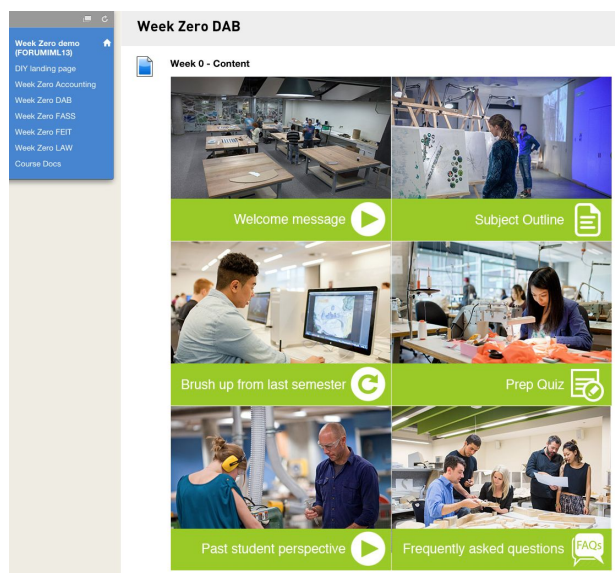
[Lynda.com](#) is available through the library.

Links to modules can be embedded in UTSONline, so that students can gain access without logging in again. [Instructions on how to do this.](#)

Creating a customised DIY UTSONline landing page

If you have some great preparation activities, you might like to improve how your students see them! Below is a screenshot of a visually appealing navigation system specifically aimed at improving

student access to preparation activities. Each tile is an image which has been turned into a link to some content for the students to engage with. This content can be anything you have prepared already. While there are up to six tiles, you can make the activities short so students are prepared, but not overloaded (and you do not need all 6, of course).



How to link content to graphic tiles:

[Video 1](#) - setting up the tiles on a page

[Video 2](#) - creating clickable tiles

[Video 3](#) - making this the default landing page in UTSONline

We are here to help! Contact your IML [Faculty Learning Technologist](#).