

# Configure your Canvas Course Site

Frequently Asked Questions: [Configure Canvas Site \(FAQ\)](#)

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Canvas course sites at JCPH are provided with a default template well suited to a variety of purposes, from delivering a fully online course to providing an online companion site for a classroom-based course. This configuration guide walks through the essential steps for configuring the course template to meet the needs of your course.

For a good introduction to the mechanics of working with the Canvas course management system, see 'Growing with Canvas' available from your Canvas homepage.

Configuring your Canvas course site for the start of the term involves these essential steps:

1. **Personalization:** Add personal/course information, media, and notification preferences.
2. **Configuration:** Set the grading point values and options for the course areas/features that you will be using. Build assessments, if applicable.
3. **Publication (course modules):** Reveal ('publish') or hide ('unpublish') the components of the course template you will be using.
4. **Quality Assurance:** Double-checking your work.
5. **Publication (entire course):** Open the course site so that it is available to students.

## 1. Adding personal/course information, media, and notification preferences.

1. Edit your course site's homepage to display the contact information students will see there. The template carries placeholders for your e-mail address, phone number, and office hours/policies. Edit the headings provided as needed to support any additional/other information to be displayed.
  - Note that the instructor contact information displayed on the course homepage in Canvas is **not** generated from the GRAVITAS system. The contact information is always updated directly on the Canvas homepage by the course instructor at start of term.
2. Edit the placeholder graphic on the homepage's main table to substitute a photo of yourself (the instructor) or a suitable graphic/image.
3. The Course Description: If your course is in GRAVITAS and has a description, that language should be displayed automatically on the course homepage. ([Canvas-homepage-main-display-default.PNG](#))
4. Update your Profile and set your notification preferences from the Canvas 'Profile' page. ([Canvas-Profile-Notifications.PNG](#))
  - a. Edit the Profile to add an instructor photo that will appear throughout the course.
  - b. Edit Notifications to set email and push notification preferences, including options for frequency of communication.
5. Settings: The settings sub-page should already hold your primary Jefferson e-mail address. You may find it helpful to add a secondary e-mail address of your choice so that course-related notifications will also be directed there.

## 2a. Configuring the course areas/features that you will be using - *components with links in the course's left navigation menu.*

1. **Home:** Configuration of the course homepage is addressed in 'Adding personal/course information'. Along with course and contact information, the homepage will also display recent course announcements.
  - Once a course is Published its homepage is always visible (it cannot be hidden in the course navigation).
2. **Announcements:** Create announcements for start of term.
  - Announcements can be set so that their posting is delayed until a specified date/time.
  - Announcements can include video and other media created through controls available in the announcement editor.
    - Once a course is Published announcements are always visible. They cannot be hidden in the course navigation.
3. **Syllabus:** If your course is in GRAVITAS its syllabus will appear in the course site's 'Syllabus' area. To use your own copy/version of the course syllabus, edit the syllabus page to remove the content imported from GRAVITAS and attach your own file.
  - a. If your syllabus does not include dates for course events for the term, provide a course schedule as an attachment on the Syllabus page.
    - Once a course is Published its syllabus is always visible. It cannot be hidden in the course navigation.
4. **Modules:** Modules typically hold course content arranged by weeks and/or content type. Modules are the primary containers for course content in Canvas. Determine the number of modules that will be used during the term, and use the 'more' icon for each one of those modules to:
  - a. Give each module a meaningful name.
  - b. Rearrange the sequence of items within a module, if desired. ([Canvas-Module- Edit-Menu.PNG](#))
  - c. Click the 'Edit' command in the more icon's list to set the modules 'locked' state, prerequisites, and requirements, as needed. ([Canvas Module Settings.PNG](#))
  - d. Click the 'more' icon displayed to the far right of a module item's link/name in a module to give that item a meaningful name, if desired. ([Canvas-Module-Item-Edit-Menu.PNG](#))
    - *Although students cannot see unpublished items in a module, you may find it easier to manage a module's contents if you move hidden items to the last/bottom positions in the module and out of your way.*
    - The 'Module' link is always visible in the course navigation once a course has been Published.

5. **Discussions:** A course module holds up to three discussion forums by default. For each module in your course, determine how many forums (if any) it will provide to students.
  - a. Click on a Discussion forum's link inside a module to access that discussion forum's Edit controls. ([Canvas-Forum-Open.PNG](#))
  - b. If you are managing your course content through GRAVITAS, confirm that the content of the discussion forum is displaying as expected in the forum. If not managing the content through GRAVITAS, edit the forum directly to provide your discussion prompt(s).
  - c. Update the default options such as Graded/Ungraded and 'Points Possible' in each discussion forum that you will be using.
    - The 'Discussions' link is always visible in the course navigation once a course has been Published.
    - Tip: 'Subscribe' to any forum you want to be sure to receive notifications from. A 'General Q&A' type forum can be especially useful to subscribe to. ([Canvas-Forum-Edit-SUBSCRIBE.PNG](#))
6. **Assignments:** A course module holds up to two assignment items (items through which students submit work for grading).
  - a. Click on an assignment link inside a module to display the assignment.
  - b. If you are managing your course content through GRAVITAS, confirm that the content of the assignment is displaying as expected in the Canvas page. If not managing the content through GRAVITAS, edit the assignment item directly.
  - c. Click the 'Edit' command button to access the assignment's Edit controls. ([assignment-edit-control.PNG](#))
    - i. Update the default options for the assignment such as point value, submission type, group association (if any), and due date/availability (if any).
7. **Studio:** The Studio tool allows instructors and students to create video for embedding into course content, communications, and assignments.
  - Once a course is Published the 'Studio' tool link is always available in the course site's left navigation.
  - Tip: Video can be created in the moment with Studio and a webcam, or video can be created offline and the video file subsequently imported into Studio.
8. **People:** Visit the 'People' page to confirm the course roster and manage student work Groups (if required). ([People-page.PNG](#))
  - Once a course is Published the 'People' link is always available in the course site's left navigation.
9. **Blackboard Collaborate:** 'Collaborate' is the web conferencing tool built in to your Canvas course site. It is ready to use as-is. Training and support for Collaborate (and Zoom) are available from the Academic Commons TJU: [Academic Commons Homepage](#).
  - Once a course is published, the 'Blackboard Collaborate' is always available in the left navigation.
10. **Grades:** The Gradebook is built automatically by Canvas as gradable assignments/activities are configured in the course.
11. View the Gradebook to confirm that gradable items are reflected as expected, and that course points tally to the correct course total.
  - Note controls allowing for various views of the data, including grouping grades by module or by status. ([gradebook-views.PNG](#))
  - Note controls for setting gradebook policies, including those for posting grades and for late work. ([gradebook-policies.PNG](#))
12. Manually adding grading columns to your Canvas Gradebook: Columns in the gradebook are only created by adding an assignment in Canvas. If you need to create a column in the gradebook for manual grading (e.g., in-class presentations, participation points, etc.), you can do so by creating a No Submission or On Paper assignment.
  - Tip: Create feedback loops: Students can reply to your feedback within their graded responses.
  - Tip: Provide a variety of feedback: Instructors can provide written as well as audio/video feedback.
  - Tip: Student assignment submissions downloaded as a batch of files (.zip file) can be reuploaded into the Gradebook as a batch (.zip file).
1. **Course Evaluations:** The Course Evaluations link provides students and instructors with direct access to SmartEvals, our course evaluation system. The link requires no configuration.
  - The 'Course Evaluations' link is always visible in the course navigation once a course has been Published.

## 2b. Configuring the course areas/features that you will be using - *customizations to make if/as needed.*

1. **The 'Getting Started' Module (Optional):** The Canvas course template carries a 'Getting Started' module by default. The module carries four important items by default. Each one can be displayed or hidden independently--though all of them will be useful in almost any course site.
  - a. **Course Overview:** This page can display a general introduction to your course. It is an especially good place to include an explanation of how you plan to use the Canvas course site during term.
    - i. If you are managing your course content through GRAVITAS, confirm that the 'Course Introduction' page is displaying as expected in Canvas. If not managing the content through GRAVITAS, edit the page directly.
  - b. **Course Resources:** This page serves as a 'catch-all' location for course files that are not provided in other course modules.
    - i. If you are managing your course content through GRAVITAS, confirm that the 'Course Resources' page is displaying as expected on the Canvas page. If not managing the content through GRAVITAS, edit the forum directly to add your own content.
  - c. **'General Q&A' [Discussion Forum]:** Help provide a single location for course-related questions, answers, and issues that are relevant to the entire class.
    - i. The Canvas template provides default language for this forum's prompt. Review the form's content, and edit the forum directly to add/edit your own prompt(s) if desired.
  - d. **'Personal Introductions' [Discussion Forum]:** Help build a learning community by providing students a place to get to know each other if they will have few or no opportunities to do so in person.
    - i. If you are managing your course content through GRAVITAS, confirm that the 'Personal Introductions' forum is displaying as expected on the Canvas page. If not managing the content through GRAVITAS, edit the forum directly to add your prompt(s).
2. **Introduction Page (Optional):** Each course module carries an 'Introduction' page. If you are managing your course content through GRAVITAS, confirm that the content of each module's 'Introduction' page is displaying as expected on the Canvas page. If not managing the content through GRAVITAS, edit the 'Introduction' page directly.
3. **Readings Page (Optional):** Each course module carries a 'Readings' page. If you are managing your course content through GRAVITAS, confirm that the content of the module's readings is displaying as expected on the Canvas page. If not managing the content through GRAVITAS, edit the Readings page directly to add your Readings listing.
4. **Lectures and Presentations (Optional):** Each course module carries a 'Lectures and Presentations' page. If you are managing your course content through GRAVITAS, confirm that the content of the lecture/presentation links is displaying as expected on the Canvas page. If not managing the content through GRAVITAS, edit the Lectures and Presentations page directly to add your links.

5. **Assessments and Evaluations (Optional):** Each course module carries '5-min. feedback' survey links. Hide them if you do not intend to use them. Build any additional quizzes, tests, or surveys using the Canvas tools provided. Then, use a corresponding module's 'Add Item' control to add links to the assessments or surveys for your students. ([module-add-item.PNG](#))

### 3. Revealing ('publishing') or hiding ('unpublishing') the components of the course template.

6. Your Canvas course site comes with a number of modules (and items within those modules) that are to be displayed ('published') or hidden ('unpublished') if and as needed. Go through your course and publish the modules and module items you will be using during the term. ([Pub-NoPub-Flags.PNG](#))
  - **Caution:** Publishing a module automatically publishes all the items housed in that module, so be sure to review the publication status of a module's items after publishing the module. You may need to unpublish items that you intend to remain hidden.

### 4. Double-checking your work.

1. Student View activates a fictitious 'Test Student'. ([Button-Stu-View.PNG](#))
2. Click through your course in Student View to confirm how the learning environment appears and functions from the student perspective. (A 'Test Student' is automatically enrolled in your gradebook.)
  - a. Submit work as Test Student to verify Canvas functionality.
    - Reset 'Test Student' when you need to clear out data and start over.

### 5. Publishing the course site so that it is available to students.

1. To publish your course, click the 'Publish' button located on the right-hand sidebar of your course homepage. ([Publish-Crs-Status.PNG](#))
  - Reminder: Be sure that you have also published the modules, assignments, pages, and other instructional materials you intend to make available to your students.
    - Reminder: Publishing a module automatically publishes all the items housed in that module, so be sure to review the publication status of a module's items after publishing the module. You may need to unpublish items that you intend to remain hidden.

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