

QMplus Guidelines and Strategy

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Guidelines for undergraduate module sites

Background

All our undergraduate modules now have a site in QMplus that is the official repository for teaching materials and for formal module documentation such as syllabus and learning outcomes. (However, the latter are also maintained in another central QMplus site. My long-term plan is to remove the duplication of information sources and cross-link from the central site, but my short-term plan is to aim for consistency.) Postgraduate modules that have an undergraduate counterpart are (or should be) enrolment-mapped to the undergraduate site and so are implicitly included in this proposal, but postgraduate-only modules are not.

Summary

The QMplus sites covered by this document are (or should be) all based on our template [DMT202 SMS Module Template Science & Engineering - SMS](#). There are two flavours of content in our module sites: formal content, a skeleton for which is provided by the template, and academic content, which is provided by the module organiser. The formal content should be filled in either when the module site is set up (before the module organiser gets access) or automatically when the site goes live. In order to maintain some degree of consistency throughout the School, module organisers should not delete or hide any of the formal content. But they should edit it if necessary to correct any errors.

Formal content

Module organisers are asked not to delete or hide the MENU, MODULE INFO, QUICK LINKS or READING blocks because if students don't want to see them they can collapse or dock¹ them. (This applies to other such blocks, and docking the SETTINGS block may be particularly helpful.) Module organisers are asked not to delete or hide the Teaching & Assessment Overview menu or its components because students can also collapse this menu. If, for example, a module has no past exam papers because it is a project module then it is best if the Past Exam Papers content is edited to reflect this. Every main module page should begin with the module description (or optionally module news) and an appropriate image. Module organisers are welcome to replace the image by a more appropriate one (which should ideally be 200px × 200px). Timetable information should be provided via the automatic links to MyTimetable, but can be supplemented if necessary. Office hours should be provided via a hyperlink to the module organiser's "people" page on the School web site so that office hours only need to be updated in one place.

Module organisers are encouraged to use QMplus fora, posts to which are emailed to all enrolled users and also archived in bulletin-board format. The module announcements forum should be used for all module announcements. The student forum allows students to discuss the module among

¹ Docking is not currently possible since the July 2014 QMplus upgrade, but this should be fixed soon.

themselves and/or with the module organiser, but users can unsubscribe from this forum. Module organisers should consider enabling anonymous posting to the student forum (via the Settings menu for the forum), which seems to encourage usage without leading to much abuse.

Academic content

Most academic content should be placed in appropriately named topics or weeks. (Putting a lot of content in “topic 0” above the main topics is discouraged.) When adding content, please ensure that you delete any template instructions, which are normally set in red text. Module sites can be organised either by topic or by week, but one of the standard QMUL formats should be used. The number of topics (weeks) can be changed to anything in the range 0–52 and something in the range 5–15 is probably sensible in most cases. Empty topics should be avoided. (Topics can be removed by moving them below any required topics and then reducing the number of displayed topics using the “Edit settings” dialogue.)

Using appropriate resource types can make a QMplus site far easier to use. Whilst PDF files are probably best for mathematical content, QMplus labels, pages or books may be more appropriate for other content since they fit more naturally into QMplus. There are several display options for files, and for content that can be displayed in a web browser, in particular PDF files, the default of “force download” is almost certainly a bad choice. It makes reading the content cumbersome at best and impossible on some mobile devices. Currently, I recommend the “open” display option. Note that display is an option in the collapsible appearance setting section.

It is in principle possible to use almost any HTML mark-up, CSS styling and JavaScript code within QMplus and module organisers are free to do so, but should aim to retain the overall “look and feel” of QMplus.

General QMplus strategy

- Improve acceptance and consistency of use by module organisers
- Move all general information primarily intended for current students into QMplus, including past exam papers for the last two year (as per current S&E Faculty policy)
- Move our intranet into QMplus