Beyond the Basics: Rethinking Brightspace Training at UCD

D2L Connection: Amsterdam | 30 October 2026

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University College Dublin
An Coláiste Ollscoile,
Baile Átha Cliath



Today’s Session

Rethinking Brightspace training at University College Dublin

1

Where we started

Our context, and why our training needed to change

2

How we reviewed it

Staff survey, stakeholder engagement and benchmarking

3

What we built

An asynchronous, self-paced programme with clear pathways

4

What we’re learning

What has worked, and what has been harder than expected

About UCD and Our Team

- Over 38,000 students and around 4,000 academic and professional staff
- Brightspace since 2019
- Educational Technology Services (ETS), in UCD IT Services, is responsible for training in Brightspace and its integrated tools
- Educational technologists sit in some schools, not all. We're an IT Services team, not a digital learning team.

Integrated tools we support

- YuJa video (moving to Panopto in 2027)
- Turnitin
- Ally
- FeedbackFruits
- Poll Everywhere
- Zoom

Where We Started

The same sessions, often the same people

- The same introductory sessions, repeated year on year
- Attendance plateauing and dropping, with many repeat attendees
- No progression route beyond the basics
- Limited professional development for our own team

What was needed

- A clear pathway to progress beyond the basics
- A way to track progress and recognise completion
- One place to find help and resources
- More connection to teaching practice

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Maturity Matrix - Higher Ed (TEMPLATE)

Key area / Maturity	Foundational		Advanced		Leading Edge	
Curriculum Development & Delivery · Develop and deliver a curriculum that aligns with educational standards and student needs. · Ensure that educational materials and platforms are accessible to all students, including those with disabilities, and promote inclusivity within the learning environment **Related Brightspace Tools:** Content, Video Note, Quizzes, Outcomes, Awards, Intelligent Agents, Release Conditions, Checklists, Surveys, Learning Repository, Source Courses, Bongo Freemium, Lumi Captions, Createspace **Partners & Add-ons:** Learning Services, Creator+, Accessibility Audit	Courses use basic content delivery methods, mainly text-based content or resource repository.	•	HTML templates, embedded media and integrations create a diverse and interactive experience with some alignment to learning outcomes. Alternate delivery formats such as audio and closed captioning are used to support accessibility.	•	Curriculum delivery is fully aligned with outcomes, featuring diverse, interactive, and personalised pathways. The use of tools within Brightspace is chosen purposefully and cohesively based on the university's wider learning strategy and pedagogical principles.	•

What the Review Found

2024/25 Training Review

“There is a genuine interest out there for leveraging the rubrics tool… it just doesn’t feature often enough in conversation.”

Survey respondent, 2024/25 Training Review

98.6%

use Brightspace for content, but only 11% use Intelligent Agents

34%

use rubrics, with no training on offer for them

60–70%

of queries to UCD’s Assessment Unit are Brightspace technical issues

No.1

barrier to taking part in training: time

What Staff Said

Comments from the staff survey, 2024/25 Training Review

“I’d love to learn lots of different things but honestly I’m teaching an overload so the basics I know will have to do.”

Survey respondent

“There is a complete disconnect with the pedagogy and the rationale for ‘why’.”

Survey respondent

“It’s not just the tools, but also learning effective ways to use the tools to engage students.”

Survey respondent

“The training is often very introductory by nature but they are never afraid to answer questions… That is very helpful.”

Survey respondent

What We Learned from Peers

Common patterns across the institutions we benchmarked

- Training hubs inside Brightspace, kept up to date
- Organised around what staff want to do, not by tool name
- Short self-paced modules with knowledge checks, built into induction
- Badges and certificates to encourage participation
- Self-paced training as the default, with support in context
- Less scheduled live training where attendance was low

> “Teaching staff are willing to engage with new technologies but they want the experience to be of practical value, relevant to their disciplines and focused.”
>
> **Jisc**

How We Got Here

A joint project between ETS and UCD Access & Lifelong Learning

Autumn 2024
Training Review
Staff survey and benchmarking with three Brightspace universities

Spring 2025
Consultation
Teaching & Learning, Assessment, and Access & Lifelong Learning

Summer 2025
New approach
SCALE framework and four pillars, agreed at university level

Autumn 2025
HEA PATH 4 funding
Senior Educational Technologist, linking ETS with Access & Lifelong Learning

Spring 2026
Design and development
Videos, case studies and modules, with Brightspace Interest Group feedback

Autumn 2026
Phased launch
Pillar 1 and Experiencing Brightspace as a Student

Key Design Decisions

What we chose to do differently

1. **Self-paced first, fewer live sessions.** Live time goes to what benefits from being in the room.
2. **Train in Brightspace, using Brightspace.** Staff learn the platform by being learners in it.
3. **A pathway with recognition.** Four pillars, badges and a certificate, instead of one-off sessions.
4. **Real UCD examples.** Case studies from colleagues, not invented scenarios.
5. **Built with partners.** Access & Lifelong Learning, Teaching & Learning, and the Assessment Unit.

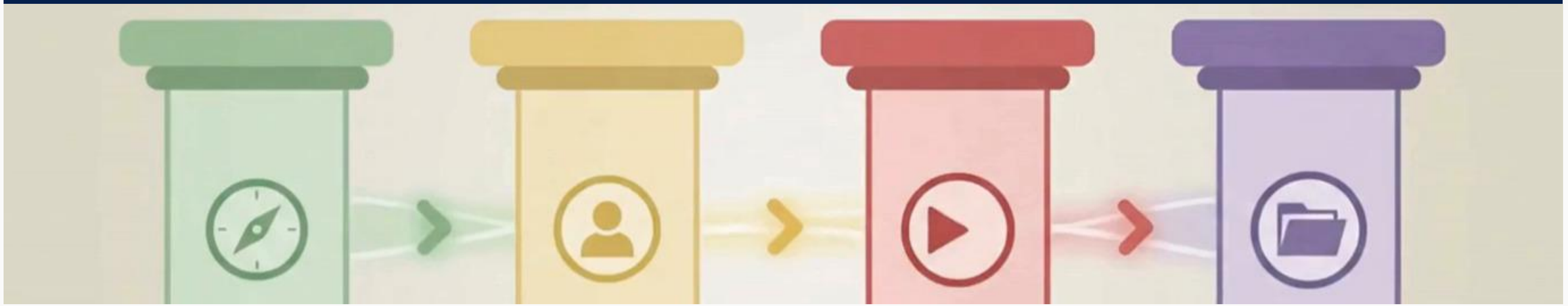
The SCALE Framework

From the review's recommendations to what we built

		What it means	What we did
S	**Self-service resources**	Help when staff need it	Pillars in Brightspace, short videos, Knowledge Base links, a glossary
C	**Collaborative engagement**	Working with partners across the university	Access & Lifelong Learning (PATH 4 role), the Assessment Unit, Teaching & Learning
A	**Authentic examples**	Going beyond what our team can show	Case studies from UCD colleagues in every pillar
L	**Learning pathways**	Progressing beyond the basics	Four pillars, badges and a programme certificate
E	**Evaluation and improvement**	Measuring more than attendance	Completion tracking, feedback in each pillar, a Brightspace Interest Group

Four Pillars

Accessibility and UDL run through every pillar, developed with UCD Access & Lifelong Learning



Pillar 1: Brightspace Foundations

Live since September 2026

Pillar 2: Assessment & Feedback

Launching 2 November 2026

Pillar 3: Engagement & Interaction

Planned: January 2027

Pillar 4: Content Management & Learning Analytics

Planned: January 2027

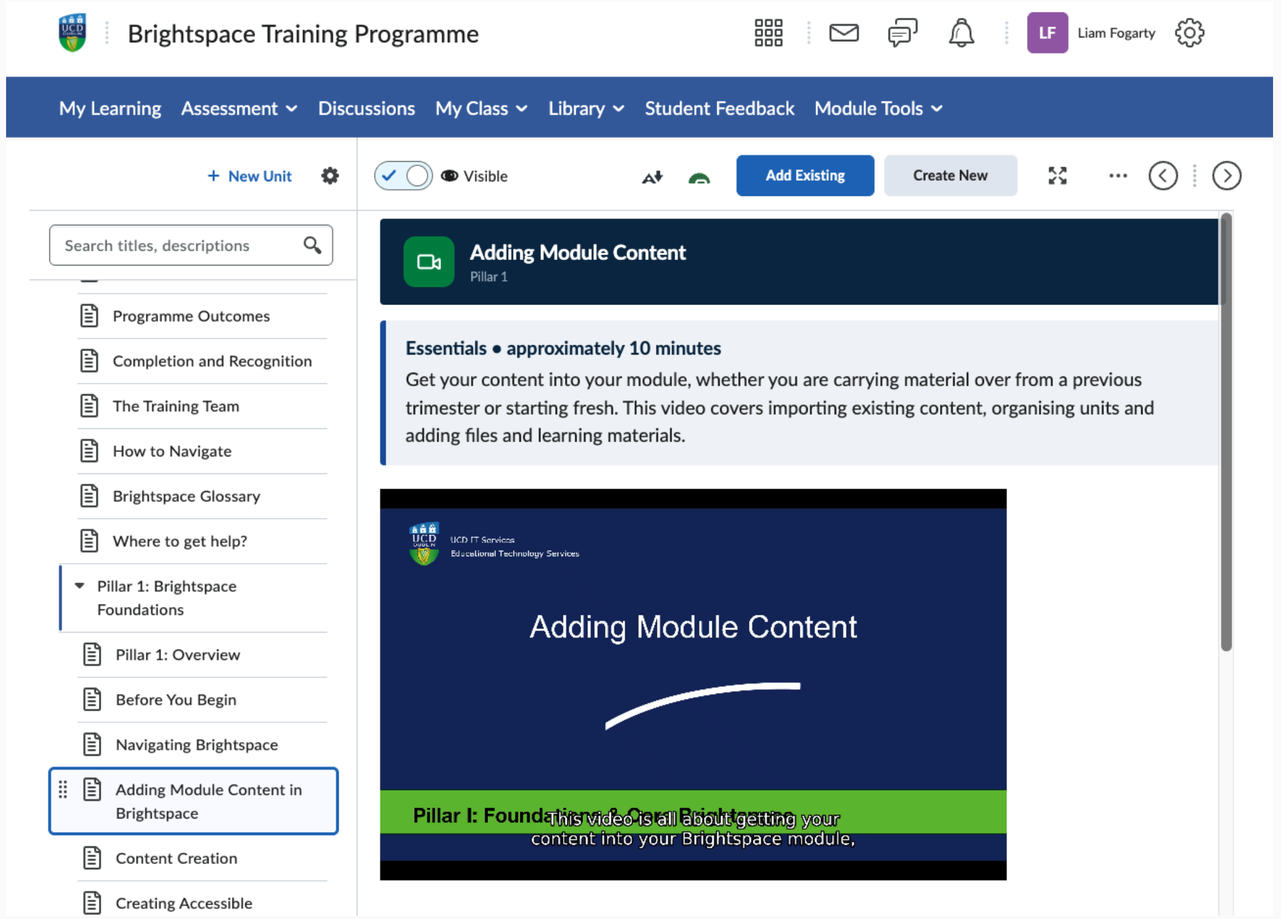
Now Live: Pillar 1

Brightspace Foundations

Launched 14 September 2026. About an hour, in three steps:

- Build, organise, communicate and manage (about 30 min)
- Brightspace in practice at UCD: four case studies (about 20 min)
- Apply and complete: checklist, quiz and a personal action plan (about 15 min)

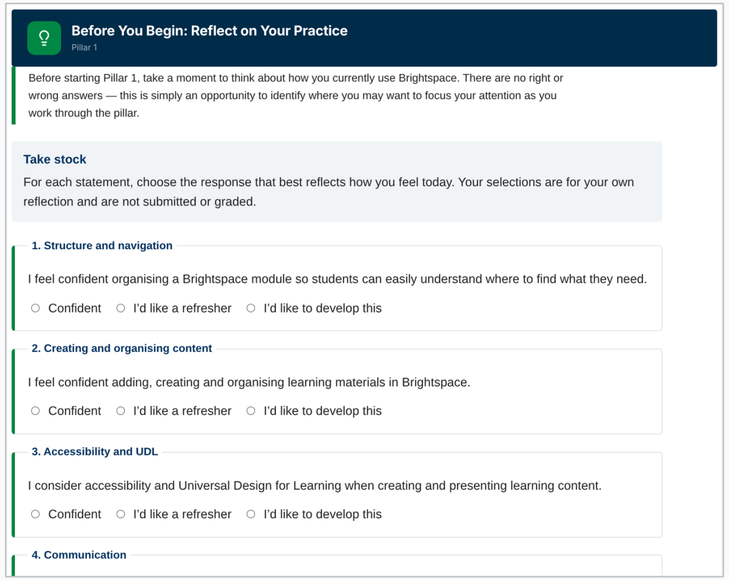
Staff finish by choosing one thing to change in their own module.

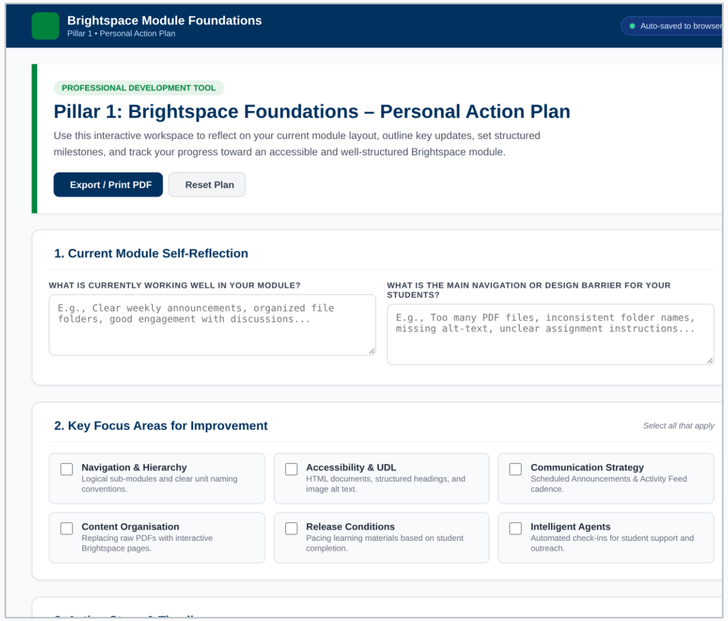


Inside a Pillar

Reflect, learn, then apply it to your own module

- **Before you begin:** staff rate their confidence, so they can focus where it helps
- **Each topic:** a short captioned video, a one-minute “try it in your module” task, and Knowledge Base links
- **Apply and complete:** a checklist, a personal action plan and a short quiz that earns the badge

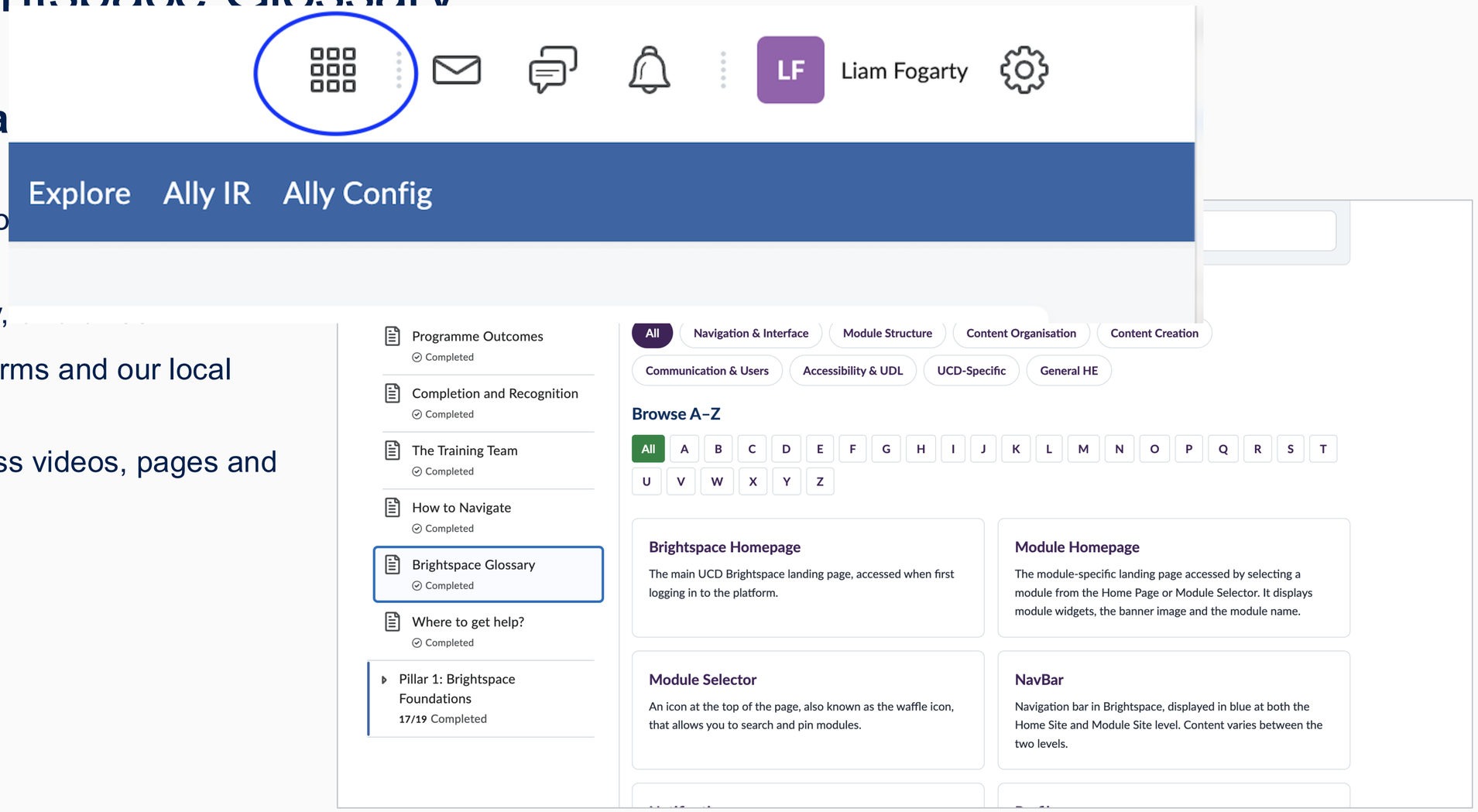




A Shared Brightspace Glossary

One of the most va

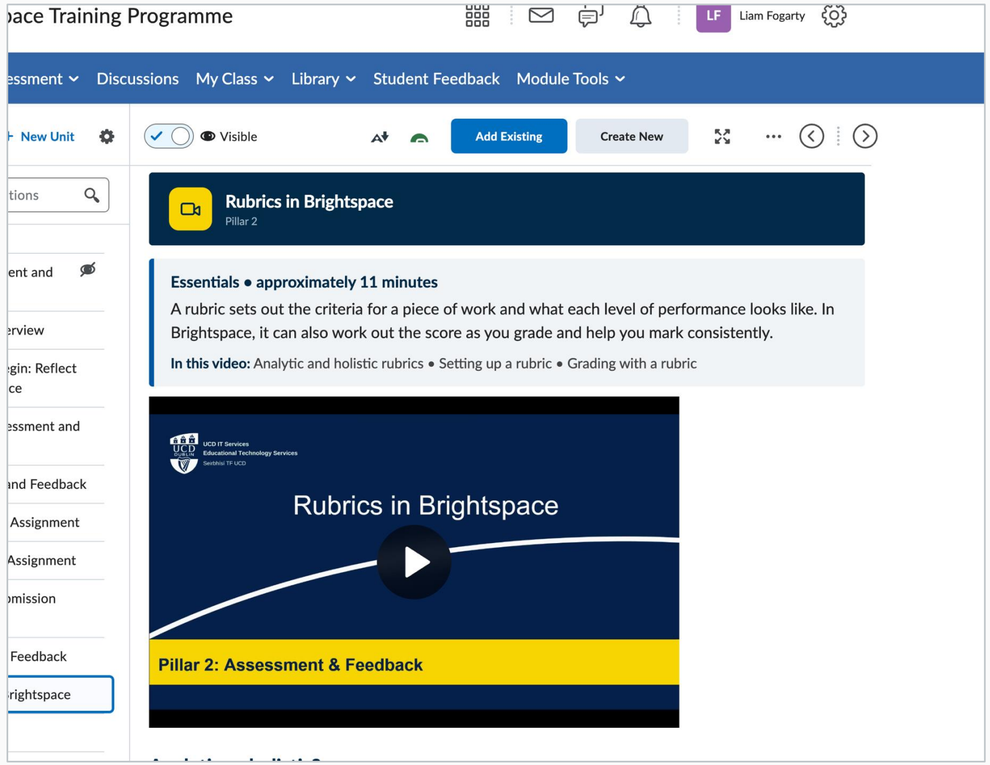
- Brightspace and educatio
  language
- Search, filter by category,
- Includes UCD-specific terms and our local names for tools
- Consistent wording across videos, pages and support guides



Pillar 2: Assessment and Feedback

Launching Monday, 2 November

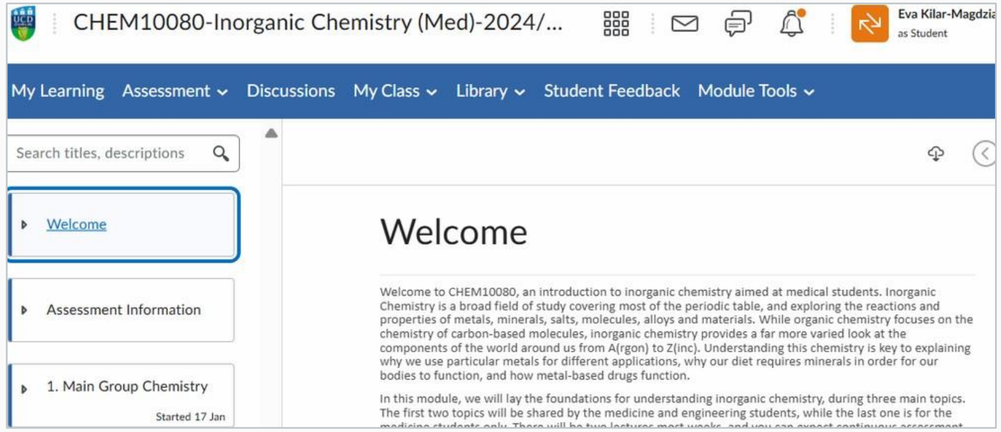
- Assignments, quizzes, rubrics, grades and feedback
- Every tool topic opens with what it is and why you'd use it
- Rubrics: a gap the review found, now covered
- We teach the tool and link to UCD Teaching & Learning's guide on designing rubrics



Case Studies

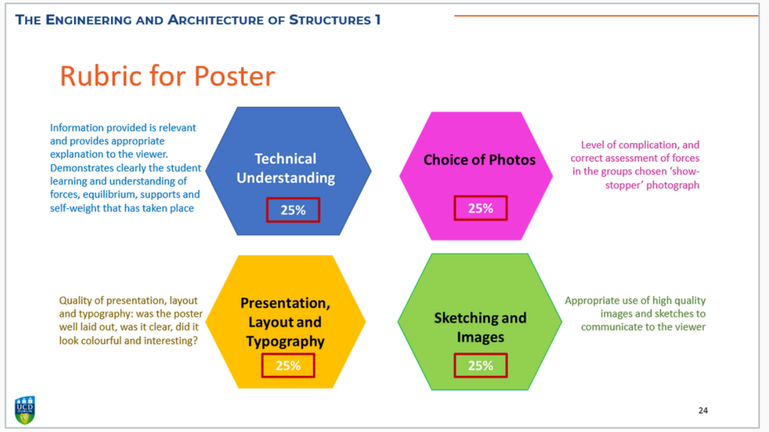
Real practice from UCD colleagues, built into every pillar

Dr Joseph Byrne, Chemistry | Pillar 1



“Don’t try to make a module ‘perfect’ in one go: it is overwhelming and setting yourself up to fall short!”

Dr Jennifer Keenahan, Civil Engineering | Pillar 2



“Using rubrics in this way helped take the mystery out of assessment.”

Also in Pillar 1: Dr Áine Byrne (a Welcome Widget), Dr Claire McGuinness (the module as a connected hub), Dr Daniel Esmonde Deasy (module banner and organisation)

Experiencing Brightspace as a Student

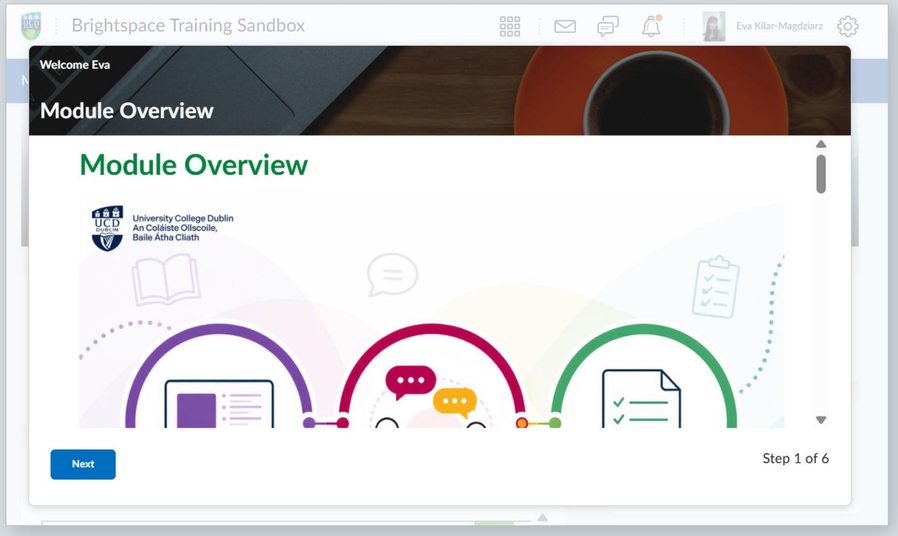
Now live, alongside Pillar 1

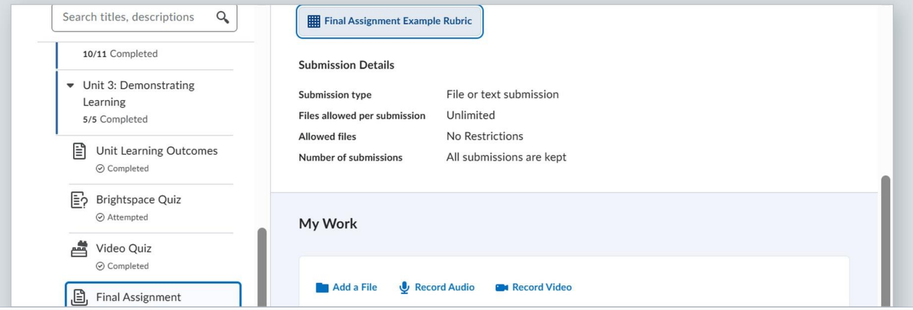
A short module, about 45 minutes, that is demonstrative rather than instructive:

- Discovering content: pages, video, audio and alternative formats
- Participating in learning: polls, discussions, groups and peer feedback
- Demonstrating learning: quizzes, an assignment with a rubric, and feedback

Release conditions, Awards and integrated tools all working as students see them, with “Build Your Module” showing how each unit was made.

Inspired by Leiden University, whose approach we saw at D2L Connection Amsterdam in 2024.





Badges and Certificates

Recognising progress through the programme

- **Pillar badges:** a digital badge for each of the four pillars, awarded on completing its Check Your Learning quiz
- **Programme certificate:** the Brightspace Training Programme Certificate of Completion, for earning all four badges
- **Experiencing Brightspace as a Student:** a Certificate of Completion, awarded automatically when the final assignment is submitted



Accessibility and UDL

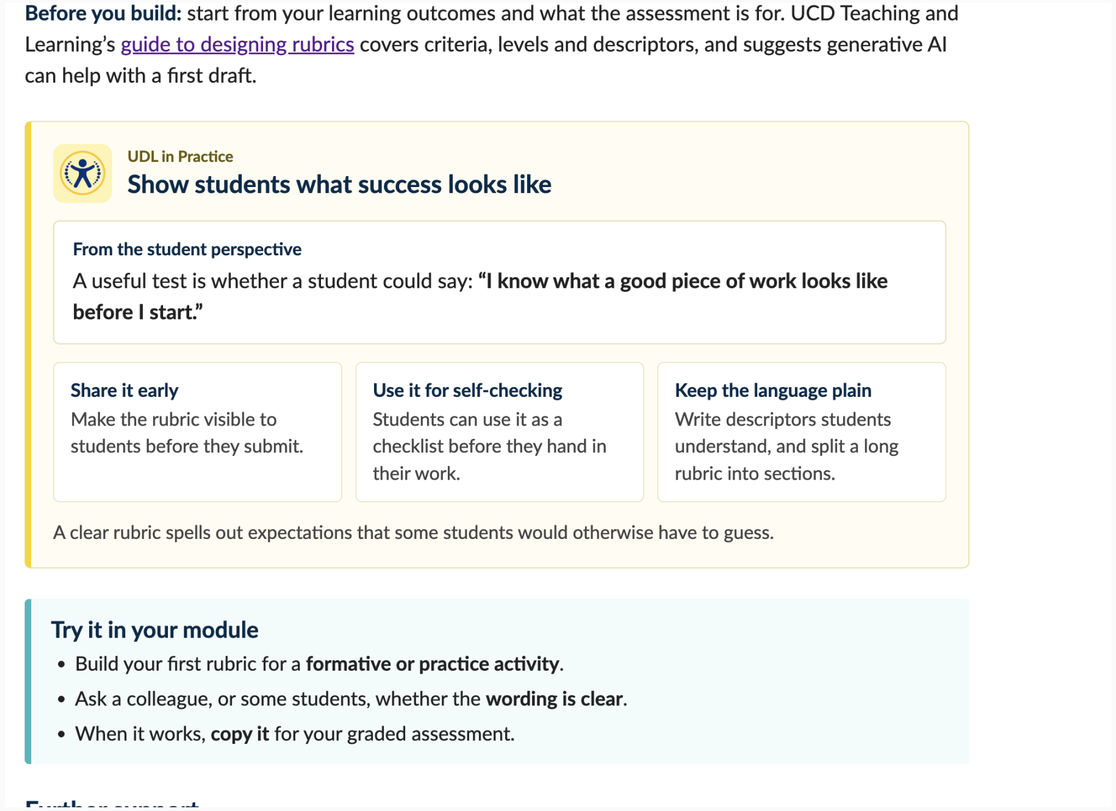
Built into every pillar

In our content

- “UDL in Practice” callouts on topic pages
- YuJa captions and audio descriptions on all training videos
- Dedicated content, e.g. Creating Accessible Learning Content

In partnership

- Developed with UCD Access & Lifelong Learning
- HEA PATH 4 funding secured a Senior Educational Technologist, linking ETS with Access & Lifelong Learning
- Experiencing Brightspace as a Student models accessible design



Before you build: start from your learning outcomes and what the assessment is for. UCD Teaching and Learning’s guide to designing rubrics covers criteria, levels and descriptors, and suggests generative AI can help with a first draft.

UDL in Practice

Show students what success looks like

From the student perspective

A useful test is whether a student could say: **“I know what a good piece of work looks like before I start.”**

Share it early
Make the rubric visible to students before they submit.

Use it for self-checking
Students can use it as a checklist before they hand in their work.

Keep the language plain
Write descriptors students understand, and split a long rubric into sections.

A clear rubric spells out expectations that some students would otherwise have to guess.

Try it in your module

- Build your first rubric for a **formative or practice activity**.
- Ask a colleague, or some students, whether the **wording is clear**.
- When it works, **copy it** for your graded assessment.

What We’re Learning

Some of this we only found out by building it

Building self-paced resources shows you what you don’t know. A resource staff can return to has to be right.

Video production takes more skill, consistency and direction than we expected. We’re now bringing in a video producer.

Videos don’t need to carry everything. Supporting text and links can sit on the page.

We teach the tools. Teaching practice comes from partners and case studies.

There’s a lot of change fatigue. Staff overwhelmed with System change

What We're Learning

Some of this we only found out

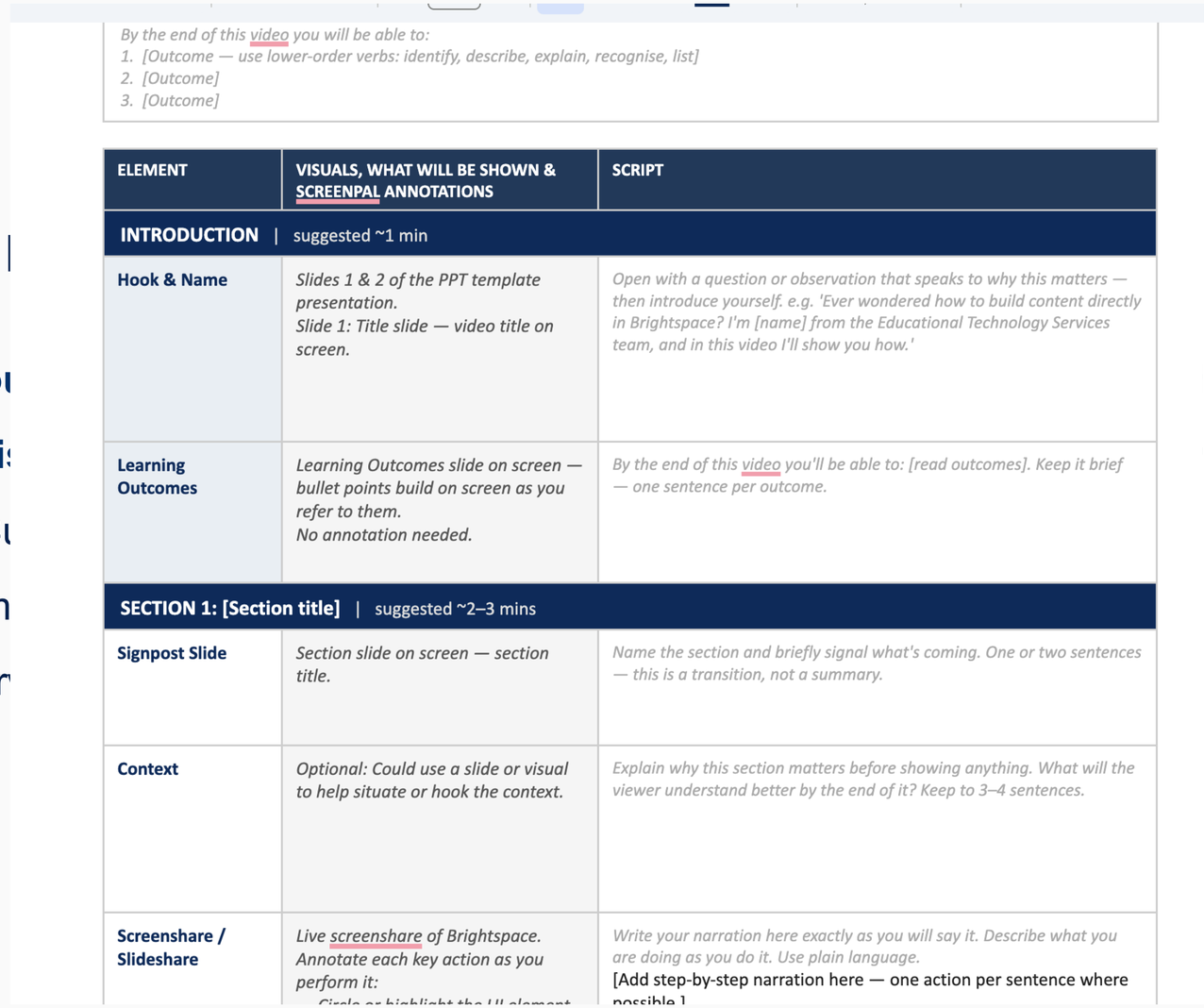
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By the end of this video you will be able to:
1. *[Outcome — use lower-order verbs: identify, describe, explain, recognise, list]*
2. *[Outcome]*
3. *[Outcome]*

ELEMENT	VISUALS, WHAT WILL BE SHOWN & SCREENPAL ANNOTATIONS	SCRIPT
INTRODUCTION | suggested ~1 min		
Hook & Name	*Slides 1 & 2 of the PPT template presentation.* *Slide 1: Title slide — video title on screen.*	*Open with a question or observation that speaks to why this matters — then introduce yourself. e.g. 'Ever wondered how to build content directly in Brightspace? I'm [name] from the Educational Technology Services team, and in this video I'll show you how.'*
Learning Outcomes	*Learning Outcomes slide on screen — bullet points build on screen as you refer to them.* *No annotation needed.*	*By the end of this video you'll be able to: [read outcomes]. Keep it brief — one sentence per outcome.*
SECTION 1: [Section title] | suggested ~2–3 mins		
Signpost Slide	*Section slide on screen — section title.*	*Name the section and briefly signal what's coming. One or two sentences — this is a transition, not a summary.*
Context	*Optional: Could use a slide or visual to help situate or hook the context.*	*Explain why this section matters before showing anything. What will the viewer understand better by the end of it? Keep to 3–4 sentences.*
Screenshare / Slideshare	*Live screenshare of Brightspace. Annotate each key action as you perform it:* *Circle or highlight the UI element*	*Write your narration here exactly as you will say it. Describe what you are doing as you do it. Use plain language.* [Add step-by-step narration here — one action per sentence where possible.]

Reaching More Staff

Getting the programme to the people who need it most

- Going out to schools and colleges to meet staff and promote the programme
- A bigger launch, with incentives, alongside Pillar 2
- Champions over time: staff who complete becoming local points of contact

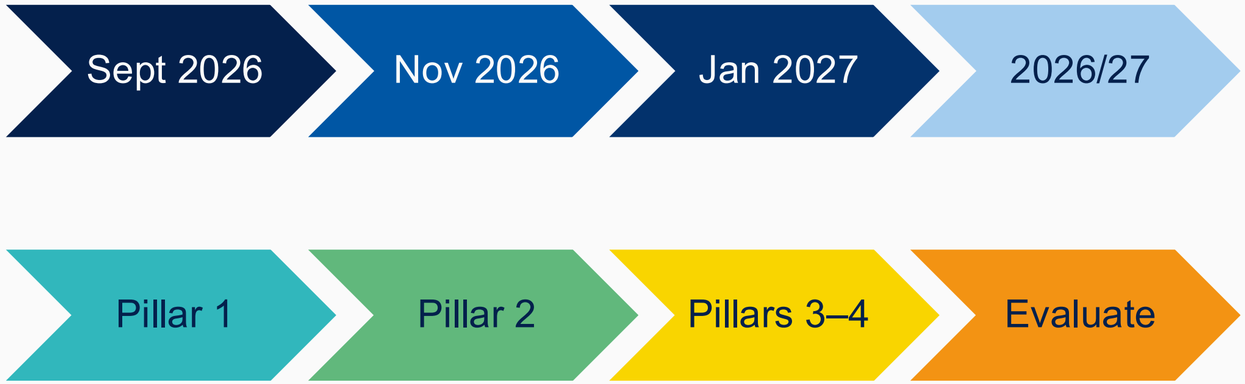
1 in 7

survey respondents didn’t know about any of our training

What’s Next

A phased launch

- Pillar 2: Assessment & Feedback launches on Monday, 2 November
- Pillars 3 and 4 in January 2027
- Face-to-face workshops for each pillar
- Evaluation beyond enrolments: completions, feedback, and what staff change in their modules



Thank You

Questions and discussion

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University College Dublin
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Baile Átha Cliath