CQSD
CENTRE FOR | QUALITY SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

University of Reading

FOCUS ON: TEACHING AND LEARNING

CREATING ENGAGING ONLINE READING LISTS

WHY SHOULD I USE AN ONLINE READING LIST?

Your online reading list is a key pedagogical tool which can be used as a framework for your module, to develop your students' understanding of a topic, and as a basis for activities in class and via Blackboard. When well-designed, an online reading list can contribute to students' attainment of module and programme learning outcomes (Croft, 2018).

Use the Library's online Reading Lists system to create and share an accessible and inclusive list of hyperlinked resources. Your list displays live Library availability of print items, and stable links to subscription material such as journal articles, film and TV. You can add resources throughout the year and share via your Blackboard module to provide easy access for your students.

The Library uses your online reading list to identify and purchase sufficient print and online resources – and your Academic Liaison Librarian is available to help with any online reading list queries. Your list can include items in stock through the Library's print and online collections, freely-available material, and resources you would like to request for the Library's collections. You can update it throughout the year, and all changes are passed onto the Library team and reflected in Blackboard.

> "[my online reading list] allowed me to spend more time finding other resources and doing wider reading […]. It also gave me more time to spend actually writing which resulted in high quality, better researched and more stimulating work."
> – Student feedback, 2017

WHAT DOES A GOOD READING LIST LOOK LIKE?

A good reading list helps students to navigate the module and explore the content. It directs students to relevant materials – whether these are weekly essential readings, key texts, or specialist databases to explore – and provides context for their inclusion and relevance to the module.

BEST PRACTICE	HOW DOES THIS HELP?
Group resources using sections	Structure helps students to navigate the list by breaking down the reading into manageable sections, which addresses concerns about the length of lists and where to start (Marks, 2020). Consider following the structure of your Blackboard course and organise by week, theme, or topic.
Highlight key resources using importance labels	If you set weekly readings, using importance labels allows students to easily identify what they need to read, and plan their self-scheduled study accordingly. The Library also uses this information to ensure that the right level of access is provided to recommended materials.
Annotate your list to provide additional information and context	Annotations can be used to explain how and why an item was added to the list. By demonstrating your selection process to your students, you can support them in confidently evaluating material for their own research (Marks, 2020). You could also suggest some questions for students to consider while reading, or instructions for using the linked database or journal article.

What kinds of resources can I link to?

- Print books
- E-books
- Journal articles
- News articles
- Specialist databases
- DVDs, and online film and television programmes e.g. Box of Broadcasts (BoB)
- Links to online archive material

Module convenors are responsible for creating and maintaining online reading lists for modules*

* Please note that the online Reading Lists system (Talis) should only be used for modules delivered within the UK (i.e. at Whiteknights or London Road). It is not licensed for use at our international partnership institutions/campuses. If you require duplicate reading lists for modules taught at our international partnership institutions, please contact your Academic Liaison Librarian for further advice.

BEST PRACTICE	HOW DOES THIS HELP?
Review your list regularly	Keep your list up to date by adding <u>new</u> and relevant material and <u>deleting</u> old or irrelevant links throughout the year. An outdated list can reduce engagement as students learn that the list cannot be relied upon for contemporary readings.
Include a range of diverse opinions and materials	Consider adding more diverse readings from a <u>range of authors and viewpoints</u>, different types of material e.g. books, film, podcasts, journal articles, blogs. Your inclusion of a range of materials not only supports inclusive learning and access but can introduce students to a wider range of scholarly material than they may have experienced in their previous studies.
Introduce your students to your online reading list at the start of the module	Students may find reading lists confusing and so your introduction and contextualisation of the list supports their understanding of the list and the resources you have included (Croft, 2018). Introduce your reading list to your students and give them information on how you have organised it. How are they expected to use it, and when? We have included some more information on ideas to engage your students below.

HOW CAN STUDENTS DEVELOP THEIR RESEARCH SKILLS WHEN THEY HAVE AN ONLINE READING LIST?

You may be concerned that students will not develop information literacy or research skills if the list provides everything they need.

When building your list consider the skills that students are expected to practice and develop over the course of their programme and adapt your lists to scaffold development. Think about students' transitions and how much support is needed to make the leap from one level to another. Your reading list can help your students to develop critical reading and appraisal skills as well as subject knowledge (Savage et al., 2016).

For example, you may include more textbooks and reference materials such as encyclopaedia entries for Part 1 students to ensure that they have access to key ideas and definitions in your discipline.

As students move through the programme, you can encourage them to develop their research and information literacy skills by linking to journals or specialist databases in addition to individual articles and chapters. Including a search prompt in your annotations can provide some direction for moving beyond the list into more independent research.
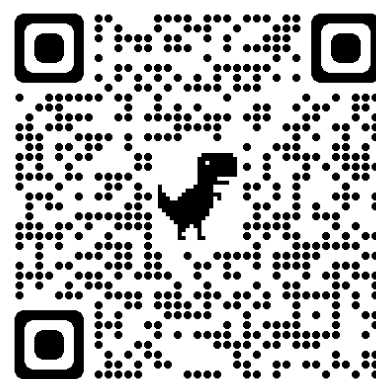
> "The scaffold[ing] facilitate[s] a student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information. The activities provided in scaffolding instruction are just beyond the level of what the learner can do alone […] so that the learner can accomplish (with assistance) the tasks that he or she could otherwise not complete"
> (Van Der Stuyf, 2002, p.2)

Look at the Library's example reading list to see some examples of scaffolded links.

HOW CAN I SUPPORT STUDENTS TO DEVELOP THEIR ACADEMIC READING SKILLS?

We know that students can struggle with managing their academic reading and have created some guidance to help. You might want to consider embedding these resources in your Blackboard module alongside your reading list, alongside a short session on active reading tips.

- Targeted reading, and use of evidence

- Academic reading, and making notes

The Library has also created guidance for students to help them to manage and plan their reading using the Talis online reading list.

Do contact studyadvice@reading.ac.uk for suggestions on how you can develop your students' skills in this area.

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO USE THE ONLINE READING LIST?

To promote learning and engagement, the reading list can be used as an activity as well as a reference resource (Croft, 2018).

Suggestions for in-person /scheduled reading list activities:

- Use the list in class to find relevant sources through citation searching, or using the Library's searches to locate supporting material. For support in developing and delivering information literacy skills development, contact your Academic Liaison Librarian.
- Navigate to the list in class to access the weekly reading, as part of an in-class discussion.
- Review the results of an online quiz or discussion based around the weekly reading in class (You could add a link to any online elements to your reading list for easy access in class!).

Suggestions for self-scheduled reading list activities

- Use the discussion board or conversation feature in Blackboard Ultra to encourage students to share their thoughts or questions on the reading list or the weekly reading.
- Ask students to suggest readings which have informed their understanding of the module and add these to the list.
- Direct students to relevant sections of their list e.g. create an 'assessment help' section in your list including resources to support the creation of an annotated bibliography and some relevant examples in the literature, and embed this in the Assessment section on Blackboard.

HOW DO I START CREATING MY ONLINE READING LIST?

Visit the Library's Online Reading Lists guide to find out how to:

- set up your account.
- add resources and sections to your list.
- share your list on Blackboard.

Contact your Academic Liaison Librarian for 1-1 training and support with online reading lists or discuss ways we can help your students to develop their information literacy skills.

References and further reading

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