Nottingham Trent University

Using news items in NOW

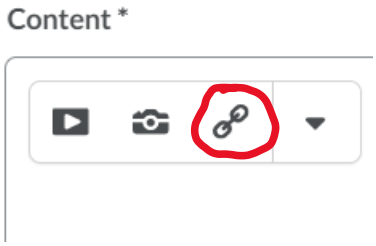
Clear and consistent communication with students is important to keep them engaged. Using News items on NOW is a great, easy way to do this.

How to add a news item

Go to your module's learning room and select **Edit room** > **News** > **New item.**

Enter a **headline** for your item (e.g. Welcome to week 1) and then in the **Content** box, enter the information you would like to share.

You may want to include **links** to important places, such as a particular Dropbox folder where an assignment should be saved. To do this, click the **link** icon and choose from the list of file locations.



Select **Publish**. If you have scheduled an item to be released at a later date, selecting Publish means it will be released on that date, not immediately.

How frequently to post news items

We recommend an **introductory post** (to be released on or before the module start date, including how to work through the module and key dates) and then a post at the **start and end of each week** to touch base and summarise what's being covered.

Suggested template for your first news item

Welcome to [Module name, Module code].

The module starts on [Start date]. We will be working to British Summertime (BST) so please be aware of this when making a note of deadlines. [If applicable:] Most of the module will take place on NOW, but some discussions will also take place in Microsoft Teams. You have been added to the [Module Teams name] team but please make sure you can access Teams before the module starts.

Key dates: [insert dates] Any Teams meetings will be recorded and placed on NOW.

If you have any questions, please email [add email].

[Add any further important information]

Tips for communicating with students

- **Make sure your contact details and availability are clear from the outset**: Schedule your first News item a week or so before the module begins and ensure you include your contact information and any preferences (e.g. 'My online office hours are usually Monday and Wednesday, 2pm-4pm. Email me to set up a meeting.').
- **Make a plan**: make a note in your diary/calendar of any key touchpoints. For example, if you have a discussion forum being released on a Monday, you may want to remind yourself to check it and respond to students on Tuesday and Wednesday.
- **Schedule News items in advance**: schedule News items for the duration of the module before it even begins. Follow the steps above and create News items for the start and end of each week. These could include key concepts for the week, pre-sessional questions and helpful readings/resources.
- **Get involved in any asynchronous discussions**: if you set up a discussion activity in NOW or a Teams channel, make sure you check these regularly and interact with students. If few students are engaging with the activity, you could post extra prompts to get them talking and provide encouraging feedback to those that are engaging.
- **Utilise Microsoft Bookings and Teams**: set up Microsoft Bookings to share your online office hours and arrange meetings through Teams.
- **Show your personality**: don't be afraid to show your personality in your News items and other announcements. This kind of personal touch helps keep students engaged and motivated. You could share a short anecdote from your week or even a photo of your working environment or hobby.