How to publish everything in Canvas

It can be confusing sometimes to determine if the content you've uploaded or edited within Canvas is published and available for your students. This guide will cover how to publish each of the content items provided by Canvas and alert you to some of the common pitfalls people face when attempting to add material to their Canvas site.

For the purpose of this article I'm going to assume you already know how to access Canvas and know how to navigate to your course site for the current semester. If you don't know how to do this I suggest checking out the [Center for Teaching Excellence resource on accessing Canvas.](#)

The table below breaks down the different content items that can be published in Canvas and whether or not they are published by default when they are first created or uploaded to Canvas.

Publishable Content

*Please note that if your Canvas site is **NOT** published, students **WILL NOT** be able to access anything in your site regardless of whether or not the individual items are published! After publishing your Canvas site students are enrolled within 24 hours.

Content Type	Published on Creation
Canvas Site*	No
Syllabus Page	Yes
Announcements	Yes
Assignments	No
Modules	No
Items Added to Modules	Depends
Pages	No
Discussions	No

Quizzes	No
Files	Yes

Let's start at the top of the table and work our way down to figure out how to publish the various content items and some of the things you should consider when doing so.

Publishing your Canvas site

Publishing your Canvas site is how your students gain access to it in their Canvas Dashboard. If you don't publish your site your students will never have access to any of the material you post there. In order to publish your site follow these instructions:

1. Click "Home" in your course navigation menu.

   (Note: In the example photo the homepage is set to the Syllabus page. That's why after clicking the "Home" link the "Syllabus" page is highlighted as the active page.)

2. In the "Course Status" section click the "Publish" button. This will make your course active and available to all enrolled students.

   (Note: When in an unpublished state, your course status will show a red unpublished icon with a grey publish button. After it's published the publish button will change green indicating that your course is in fact published.)

(Course in an unpublished state)
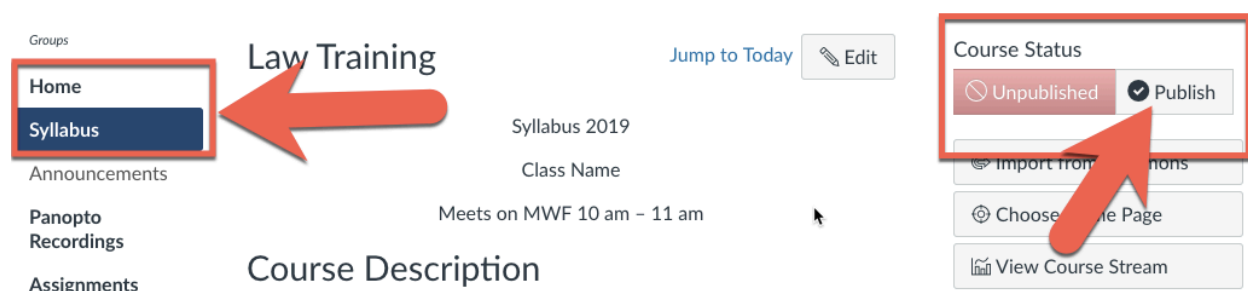
(Course in a published state)

Publishing your syllabus page

To update your syllabus page simply save the changes you make after editing. The syllabus page always remains published so there isn't anything further you have to do.

Publishing your announcements

To publish your announcements simply save the changes you make after editing. Announcements are published instantly so there isn't anything further you have to do.

Publishing your assignments, pages, quizzes and discussions

These three content items all have the same behavior. All three have very similar edit pages and when you're done editing them you have the option to either "Save & Publish" or "Save".

Clicking "Save & Publish"

Clicking "Save & Publish" will automatically publish the content for you. There is nothing further you have to do.

Clicking "Save"

If you choose to click "save" after editing the content for any of these items it will be saved in a "draft" state. What this means is that you can see it and continue to make edits to it, but your students will not be able to access the content until you click publish. There are a few different ways to publish an item in its draft state.

I'll start with the easiest way to publish your content. Click the link in the course navigation for the particular content item you wish to publish (Pages, Assignments, or Announcements). Then click the "publish/unpublish" icon. You'll see the icon change to a green circle with a white check indicating that it's published. The video below shows an example of publishing a "Page" this way.

The second way is to access the item you wish to publish by clicking its title. Then clicking the "Publish" button that appears on the following screen.

The third and final way to publish is to enter the items edit page again. Then scroll down to the bottom of the page and click the "Publish" button.

Publishing your modules

Modules are a special case in Canvas. If you aren't familiar with modules I suggest reading the Canvas guide to modules. There are a lot of ways to think your content is published when in fact it really isn't. The basic way to think about how to use them is as follows.

Modules control the entire flow of your course and its content. When you add items to a Module, please be aware that the status of the Module overrides the state of the individual module items. Unpublished modules are invisible to students. This is true even if there are published items in an unpublished module. (From the Canvas Docs)

Take a look at the image below:

1. The "Class 1" module is published. All items that are published within it are accessible to students.
2. The Quiz in the "Class 1" module is currently unpublished. Until it is published, students won't see this module item at all.
3. The "Class 2" module is unpublished. Students won't see this module at all or anything inside of it even if the module's items are published. If they click on the "Week 2 Reflection" assignment from another area in your course they'll receive a message stating that it's part of an unpublished module and is not available yet.
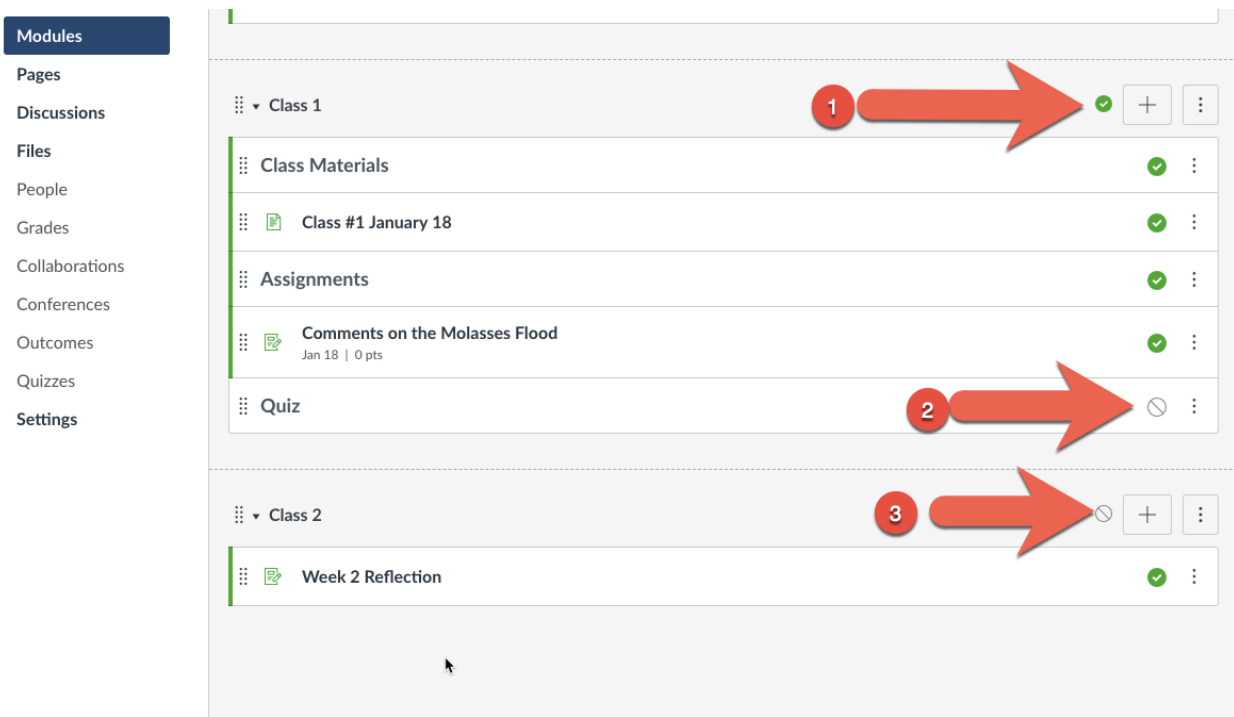
If you use modules I suggest taking some time to play around with this behavior. Using student view is a great way to test this out and make sure your Canvas material is published and available the way you think it is.

Thanks for reading this guide on publishing content in Canvas. Please feel free to reach out with any questions regarding how to make your content available to students. lawedtec@bc.edu