

Designing a Course A Step-by-Step Guide

Steps

1. Aims/ goals/ Learning outcomes¹

‘What are this course’s aims/ goals/ learning outcomes?’ That is, ‘what do you want your students to know or be able to do after completing this course – knowledge and skills (and attitudes)?’ They are sometimes referred to as exit outcomes. The outcomes must be appropriate to the students’ [level of learning](#) and or position of the course in the program. They usually are statements that refer to demonstration of performances/behaviours that reflect both knowledge and skills (and attitudes). They are student-focused and not teacher-focused. These outcomes tend to provide the [‘big picture’](#) – the road map for developing an effective and innovative course that helps your students to achieve these intended goals.

2. Write the learning objectives

‘What specifically are you going to teach in your course?’ After you have decided on the goals/ aims/ outcomes of this course, you next articulate them by [writing the learning objectives](#). The learning objectives support learning outcomes/ goals/ aims in that each is a small step in arriving at ‘what you want your students to know or be able to do’. Learning objectives are more specific, discrete units of knowledge and skills that will be taught to students (learning).

3. Consider the content to achieve the objectives

‘What content - topics/ modules/ units - could I use to achieve the learning objectives of my course?’ The articulated objectives and content form the ‘framework’ for designing the assessments and learning and teaching activities to enable students to achieve the intended goals/ aims/ of the course. At this stage, have you

¹ What are the differences between learning outcomes (big LO) and learning objectives (small Lo)? Learning Outcomes state what students should know, understand and can do or what they are expected to know, understand and can do as a result of their learning experience. They are broad statements and usually refer to demonstration of behaviours. Learning objectives are the specific units of knowledge and skills you have to teach. They state what the teachers must teach and what they have to plan to teach, not to assert the statement of the end product of the course.

Examples:

Learning Objectives	Learning Outcomes
Identify the four stages of a produce life cycle.	The student will be able to demonstrate the ability to formulate appropriate marketing strategies aligned to dynamic market conditions.
Define affirmative action. Describe three factors which promote affirmative action in the workplace.	The students will be able to demonstrate the ability to develop affirmative action programs in the workplace.

considered the order or sequence of topics that would allow students to build complexity of ideas and application over time, and or important concepts?

4. Consider the assessments

‘What assessment tasks can you use to assign grades and determine the extent to which students have met the learning objectives of your course?’ Use the learning objectives to determine your assessments. When designing your assessments, consider the student cohorts who are enrolled in the course e.g. [designing assessments for students with disabilities](#). After deciding on the assessment tasks, be sure to also develop the [marking rubric](#) and [assessment feedback](#). Be consistent: i.e. ensure that you have included the learning objectives to be assessed in the marking rubric. Usually they appear in the form of ‘criteria’. Also be sure to include the standards for each criterion when developing the marking rubric. For example, if one of your objectives states that students will *evaluate* XYZ by writing an essay or report, please ensure that one of the criteria for marking/grading the essay caters for ‘*evaluate*’ and has associated standard levels for HD, D, A, B, etc.

5. Consider the learning and teaching activities

‘What are the learning and teaching activities that you would (can) use to engage students in their learning and accomplish the learning objectives of your course?’ Keep in mind the context/ environment and constraints surrounding your course. Strive to design a student-centred course where active learning and engaging activities are present e.g. [designing for a multicultural classroom](#), [engaging with international students](#), [embedding indigenous perspectives](#), [developing students’ academic skills](#), [developing students’ referencing skills](#), developing student skills such as [Meet-UP](#). Ensure these activities are aligned and consistent to your learning objectives e.g. if one of your objectives states that students will discuss XYZ topic, please ensure that there is an activity e.g. a class discussion in the discussion board for students to discuss topic XYZ.

6. Consider the educational technologies

‘What are the educational technologies that would effectively enhance the learning and teaching activities so that students are engaged in their learning to facilitate achieving the objectives of your course?’ Check the [Technology-enhanced Learning and Teaching Guide](#).

7. Consider evaluating your course

‘What are the activities that you would use to evaluate your course?’ Strive to consider some [evaluation activities](#) to be used in the classroom/ course outside the administration of the formal university student evaluation. How can the course be improved for the next offering? Which areas need improvement? What are the strengths? How does [formative peer review of teaching](#) and or courses work? The key purpose is to bring our attention back to our students. Are we valuing the student voice by [closing the loop](#) on student feedback?

See p.3 for **Course Design template**.

Course Design Template

Aims/ Goals/ Learning Outcomes	Level of Learning	USQ Graduate Skills	Other: e.g. Professional Competencies E.g. Nursing – ANMC	Learning Objectives	Content/ Topic/ Modules/ Units	Assessment	Learning & Teaching Activities	Resources/ Materials	Technology
Evaluation strategies to improve the course									