

Visioning Your Course: Questions to Ask as You Design Your Course

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Course quality depends upon the success of two activities: design and implementation. In *designing* a course, we articulate goals and plan activities to meet these goals. In *implementing* a course — the actual classroom teaching — we execute these plans, usually evaluating the success of the class as it unfolds. Needless to say, the more issues we raise and resolve in the design phase, the fewer problems we will experience in the implementation. The goal of this worksheet is to aid in the systematic design of the course so that you and your students will be free to focus on course content.

*What are
my course goals?
What do I want
my students to learn
primarily?*

1. What are my course goals? What do I want my students to learn primarily?
 - Content (facts, applications, theories, etc.)
 - Skills (writing skills, library skills, computer skills, research skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, etc.)
 - Attitudes (appreciation for field/subject, global perspective, tolerance, etc.)
 - Other, or some specified combination of the above
2. At what level(s) do I want my students to perform?
 - Knowledge (ability to recall facts)
 - Comprehension (ability to understand ideas and translate them into other formats)
 - Application (ability to use ideas in particular and concrete situations)
 - Analysis (ability to dissect ideas into constituent parts to make the organization clear)
 - Synthesis (ability to integrate parts into a unified whole)
 - Evaluation (ability to judge the value of an idea, procedure, etc., using appropriate criteria)

(Note: Each higher level assumes the mastery of lower levels of performance.)
3. What class activities will help my students meet these goals and levels?
 - Lecture
 - Demonstration
 - Debate
 - Case methods
 - Role-play
 - Games, simulations
 - Other, or some specified combination of the above
 - Large group discussion/problem-solving
 - Small group discussion/problem-solving
 - Laboratory exercise/experiments
 - Programmed learning
 - Library research
 - Field research
4. What support will I give to my students to enhance their success in meeting these goals and levels?
 - Administrative handouts (syllabus, course policies, etc.)
 - Content handouts (outlines of lectures, illustrative examples, tables, charts, etc.)
 - References, bibliographies
 - Models, demonstrations
 - Individual conferences
 - Other, or some specified combination of the above
 - Practice sessions
 - Review sessions
5. What assignments will I use to evaluate the success my students have had in meeting these goals and levels?
 - Exams, quizzes
 - Papers
 - Projects
 - Other, or some specified combination of the above
 - Oral presentations
 - Performance of skills
6. How much uniformity of assignments will best help my students meet these goals and levels?
 - Standardized (students have no choices)
 - Menu (students have choices from a fixed list)
 - Individualized (students have large range of choice)
 - Some combination of the above

7. What evaluation approach will best help my students to meet these goals and levels?
 - Summative, for grades and evaluation
 - Formative, for feedback
8. What evaluation unit for each assignment is consonant with these goals and levels?
 - Individual (each student works independently)
 - Small group (students work in pairs, triads, groups)
 - Some combination of the above
9. What type of class atmosphere will foster students' success in meeting these goals and levels?
 - Competitive
 - Cooperative
 - Some combination of the two (in what percentages and how combined?)
10. What kind of participation will foster students' success in meeting these goals and levels?
 - Teacher, 95%; students, 5% (lecture with an occasional student question)
 - Teacher, 75%; students, 25% (lecture with some group discussion)
 - Teacher, 50%; students, 50% (teacher-lead discussion, as in a seminar)
 - Teacher, 25%; students, 75% (hands-on problem-solving)
 - Teacher, 10%, students, 90% (student-designed and -directed projects)
 - Some combination of the above
11. What policy for class attendance will foster students' success in meeting these goals and levels?
 - Mandatory and graded
 - Expected
 - Mandatory, but not graded
 - Voluntary
12. What pace of the course will foster students' success in meeting these goals and levels?
 - Fixed (no deviations from syllabus)
 - Flexible (accommodate to skills students bring to the class)
 - Some combination of the two
13. What criteria will I use to determine the amount of success a student has achieved over the term?
 - Achievement of preset goals (comparison with standards)
 - Achievement of norm (comparison with others)
 - Progress made from the beginning of the term (comparison with self)
 - Some combination of the above (how calculated?)
14. How will I calculate final grades for my students?
 - Percentage of work satisfactorily completed
 - Contracts made with individual students
 - Competency-based evaluation
 - Some combination of the above (in what percentages?)
15. What qualities do I expect my students to possess as they enter my class?
E.g.: Prerequisite content, prerequisite skills, appreciation for discipline/field
16. What behaviors do I expect of my students while they are in class?
E.g.: Willingness to participate in class activities, prompt and consistent attendance, prompt and consistent completion of assignments, responsibility for the participation of others
17. What flexibility/contingencies have I planned in case my students don't meet these expectations?
E.g.: Reprimands (what kinds?), additional coursework, adjustment of syllabus
18. How will I convey all of the above information to my students?
 - Administrative handouts (syllabus, course policies, etc.)
 - Content handouts (outlines of lectures, illustrative examples, etc.)
 - Introductory session to course
 - Pretest
 - Verbal and nonverbal cues throughout term
 - Other, or some specified combination of the above

What qualities do I expect my students to possess as they enter my class?

What behaviors do I expect of my students while they are in class?

What flexibility/contingencies have I planned in case my students don't meet these expectations?