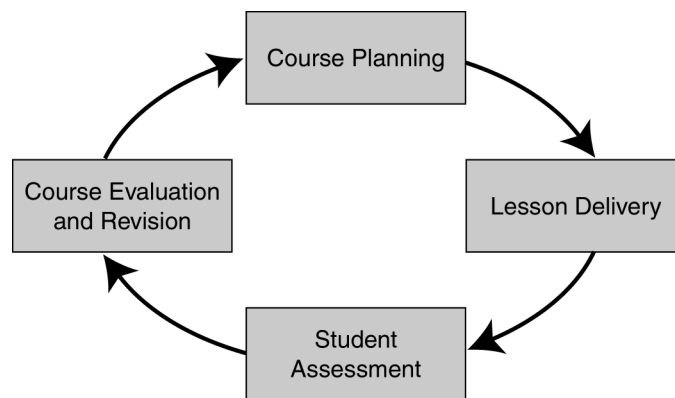


I. Course Planning -- Content

Chapter 1 — Designing an Effective Course

Instructional Design starts with course planning, continues with lesson design and delivery, moves through student assessment and grading to conclude with course evaluation and revision. The process is continuous and can start at any stage. In this chapter we introduce the tasks in designing effective courses; subsequent chapters discuss the various components in greater detail.

- **The First Steps toward Designing an Effective Course**



Instructional Systems Development Process

 Reference – **Center for Teaching and Learning**

The First Steps toward Designing an Effective Course

Tasks in Designing Effective Courses

1. Gather information on the university culture, faculty and course content expectations, and your students and their needs.
 2. Decide upon the goals for the course and specific learning objectives for students.
 3. Select content, learning activities, teaching methods, materials, and media that are appropriate and relevant to those goals and objectives.
 4. Develop student assessment methods that directly reflect the learning objective.
 5. Implement the course plan, creating a learning environment and a community of learners.
 6. Revise the plan after assessments and evaluations.
1. **Gather information on the university culture, faculty and course content expectations, and your students and their needs.**

University culture -- New faculty should quickly try to become part of the university culture. Become part of the social structure of the University by spending time on campus and learning about important resources available to you and your students. This handbook is one such resource.

Related Chapters

- **Chapter 4: Knowing Your Students** highlights the diversity among FSU students and how these differences might impact your teaching.
- **Chapter 5: Managing Students and the Classroom Climate** discusses some of the typical questions and concerns that should be addressed in the early days of your course design.
- **Chapter 6: Especially for TAs** offers useful advice to teaching assistants for managing the classroom environment and for maintaining a balance between teaching and their own studies.
- **Chapter 15: Support and Resources** lists faculty and student support resources.

Your students and their needs -- After accepting a new course assignment, instructors should acquire as much information as possible about the students they will be teaching. A student skills survey is helpful because it causes you to think

about what skills you expect a student to have when entering your course, and what they should be able to demonstrate when they leave. A student survey answers the question: What do the incoming students know about what it is you are going to be teaching?

As a course-planning tool, the survey should tell you what the students already know that you can build on. The single best predictor of what students will learn in your course is what they already know.

Course content expectations -- The needs and expectations of university students are as varied as the students themselves. Students' learning needs in the subject area should be identified. Much information can be gathered from the *General Bulletin*, your department's official course description, lists of prerequisites, previous syllabi, and the assigned textbook.

Faculty expectations -- Others who have taught the course and have had past experience with similar groups of students can give valuable help. The expected content of your course can be clarified by seeking out these sources.

2. Decide upon the goals for the course and specific learning objectives for students.

In an effectively designed course, all course components, defined as learning objectives, activities, and assessments, should be aligned. Learning objectives can be thought of as desired learning outcomes. Stay focused on the learners while asking yourself the following:

- What will your students be able to do after your course that they cannot do now?
- What activities can you facilitate for students to learn better?
- How will they show you that they know it?

As you read through this manual, you will see how objectives, activities, and assessments fit together to form an entire course.

Related Chapters

- **Chapter 2: Determining Learning Objectives** provides guidelines for writing goals and objectives that will aid you in course design and delivery.
- **Chapter 3: Creating a Syllabus** outlines the required components of a course syllabus at FSU and discusses how the syllabus communicates your course expectations to

students.

3. Select content, learning activities, teaching methods, materials, and media that are appropriate and relevant to those goals and objectives.

Texts are one of the major resources used in a course. Using a text wisely can help a student prepare for class and can be a valuable resource for practice. A good text is invaluable because:

- It is well organized.
- Generally, it is nearly complete.
- It can be read at the student's convenience.

Selecting learning activities for your students is another major consideration when planning a course. Learning, by nature, is an active process; students learn better when they are involved with their learning; and people learn in different ways.

- Design learning activities with your desired learning outcomes in mind.
- Allow students to see the relevance and importance of the course material.
- Give students the chance to use, demonstrate, or question the content.
- Choose activities that match the desired performance, e.g., if the desired outcome is problem solving, you might use case studies or role-playing.
- Help students understand what your expectations are and give them feedback.

There are learning activities that are appropriate for almost all class sizes, which can be accomplished with minimum disruption to the class, that require little or no change in facilities, and, most importantly, that will get your students actively participating in their learning process. Most active learning activities such as class discussions, collaborative exercises, short writing assignments, and interactive presentations can be used in most classes.

For web-supported classes, threaded discussions are very effective. Also, groups can be set up through the website, which will allow students to work together electronically to produce a project, product, or presentation.

 **Related Chapters**

- For a list of more active learning techniques and details on how they can be used in your classroom, see **Chapter 8 -- Using Active Learning in the Classroom**.
- For information on instructional media, see **Chapter 9 – Instructional Media: Chalkboards to Video** and **Chapter 10 – Using Course Websites as Instructional Tools**.
- For information on teaching methods, see **Chapter 7 – Lecturing Effectively** and **Chapter 11 – Teaching Contexts**.

4. **Develop student assessment methods that directly reflect the learning objective.**

If the purpose of instruction is helping students to acquire the learning outcomes, the purpose of assessment is to determine if the student was successful. The best time to write assessment tools is right after you have written your learning outcomes statement. With this timing, it is likely there will be a high degree of congruence between what was intended and what is measured. The goal should always be to measure student achievement as accurately and fairly as possible. One way to do this is to align the assessment with the learning outcome as closely as possible.

Pencil and paper tests using limited-choice (multiple choice/true-false) and/or open-ended questions (essay, short answer) are common methods of student assessment. In addition to the learning outcomes, other considerations to make when constructing a test include class size, time available for test preparation, administration, grading, and type of feedback you want to provide.

Authentic assessments such as research papers, portfolios, projects, performances, and peer evaluations offer ways to measure student performance in a real-life context. In developing authentic assessments, it is important to note that students may not have the research and information literacy skills to use and evaluate information in your discipline. Class time may be needed to teach these skills, as well as how to avoid plagiarism mistakes.



Related Chapters

- **Chapter 12: Testing and Assessment Issues** discusses the types of assessments that are generally used in university settings.
- **Chapter 13: Grading** Provides tips on fairly grading assessments and discusses issues such as plagiarism that should be addressed in course planning.

5. Implement the course plan, creating a learning environment and a community of learners.


After planning the course, it's time to meet the class and teach, but before you do so, consider the following. First, the purpose of the course and class is that the students learn something. Second, your role as an instructor is to help them learn it. What is the best way for you to help students learn what you want them to by the end of the course?

A framework for lesson delivery that is successful consists of six parts:

- Gain the students' attention and establish expectations.
- Review relevant, previously learned material.
- Present the new information by linking it to previous learning.
- Provide learning guidance or elaboration.
- Provide time for practice and feedback.
- Provide for spaced practice to enhance retention.

6. Revise the plan after assessments and evaluations.

Course evaluation, instructor evaluation, and revisions to the course should be seen as part of the larger picture of Instructional Design. It is rare that a course or instruction cannot use some improvement. Course revisions involve the collection and interpretation of data for the purpose of improving instruction.

 **Related Chapter -- Chapter 14: Improving Your Teaching with Feedback** offers several methods you can use to obtain information on improving your courses and teaching methods.

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