

COURSE DESIGN

DESIGNING AND ORGANIZING THE COURSE



WHAT IS IT?



A course plan provides a roadmap for the instructor of what students will learn in class and how class time will be used effectively to achieve learning. Traditionally, course planning starts with the content, which focuses attention and effort on what the instructor will teach and how they will teach it. In contrast, a more integrated design – a learner-centered approach to course planning – begins with an examination of situational factors and works “backwards” from traditional planning.

RESEARCH...



Research on teaching and learning demonstrates that clear course structure and teaching clarity increases student motivation, persistence, and improves performance and grades, with particular impact on first-generation and low-SES students (Blaich & Wise, 2014; Pascarella & Blaich, 2013; Wang et al., 2015). Clear and organized instruction impacts academic performance through three mechanisms: (1) student belief that faculty are interested in teaching and student development; (2) student academic engagement; and (3) student motivation (Roksa et al, 2017).

DATA ...



+ Clear and organized instruction is *positively associated* with student academic motivation, study time, and class participation (Roksa et al., 2017).

Students who reported higher levels of teaching clarity and organization were *more likely* to grow in critical thinking and interest in diversity (Blaich et al., 2016).

¹ List of all references in the complete JITT Guide.

TEACHING STRATEGIES...



- Consider the **situational factors** (context of the teaching and learning situation, characteristics of the learners, and factors about ourselves as instructors).
- Define **concrete and measurable learning outcomes** and prioritize which are most important. Describe what students will learn and be able to do by the end of a specific course.
- Decide the **assessments** you will use to check for understanding and achievement. How will students demonstrate understanding and accomplishment of the outcome?
- Determine the **activities** that you will use to help students acquire the skills and knowledge needed to successfully demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes.
- Check for **alignment and integration** by ensuring that assessments and activities will help students achieve the learning outcomes.

STUDENTS SAY...



“I appreciate classes where instructors are organized and prepared. Also, when they explain the purpose of assignments and activities, it helps me learn and earn higher grades.”

“My favorite instructors focus on learning. In their classes, I am able to practice the skills I need to have in order to do well on papers and exams.”

REFLECTION...



- How do you use information about students’ life situations, professional goals, prior knowledge and experiences, and expectations to design the course?
- How do your beliefs, values, and biases influence your teaching and student learning?



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