

# Course Design Best Practices for Course Development

Office of Faculty Advancement and the Department of Instructional Technology and Design Services

## Defining Course Goals:

Course goals are the larger ideas and essential questions connected to your field or discipline; they are often abstract, and are not always easily assessed. They are what students should know, understand, believe, think, feel, or otherwise internally process as a result of course completion (Fink 2007; Wiggins & McTighe 2005; Linder 2017).

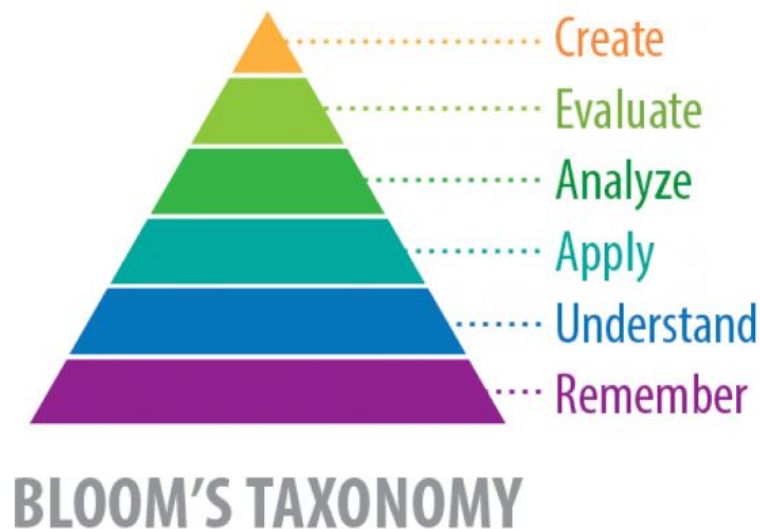
### Example Course Goals:

- Upon successful completion of this course, students will understand the scientific method.
- Upon successful completion of this course, students will be familiar with the components that comprise a successful marketing campaign.
- Students will be able to think like a geographer and understand major geographic concepts – physical geography, human geography, scale, demographic transition.
- Students will have increased awareness of non-Western cultures and traditions, and the ways in which they are similar and also different from Western cultures, values and traditions.

Write your course goals:

## Defining Student Learning Objectives (SLO):

Student learning objectives (also known as outcomes) are statements of exactly what a student should be able to do after completing a course. They should be student-centered, measurable and observable, and clearly stated so that students and instructors understand what is expected and will be measured; they may define the conditions under which performance or achievement of the objectives will be measured (Nilson 2010; Fink 2013; Wiggins & McTighe 2005; Linder 2017). Strong learning objectives use action words, and so Bloom's taxonomy for action verbs is useful to consult when writing student learning objectives and assessment measures.



### Example Student Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to discuss in writing and through oral presentation Freud's and Crick's theories of dreaming, ultimately designing an experiment to test dream theory.
- Students will prove a given proposition, and demonstrate through a short-answer comprehensive exam how theories of trigonometry applied to bridge construction.
- Students will draw on literary theory to analyze texts from the 19th century through exploratory writing and formal essays.
- Students will demonstrate their ability to take and defend a position on a debatable historical issue using rhetorical strategies, peer-reviewed research and scholarly evidence.

Write your learning objectives:

SLO 1:

SLO 2:

SLO 3:

(etc)

### Defining Student Learning Assessments:

Learning assessments align with SLOs and course goals. There should be a clear relationship between how instructors summatively assess and measure student learning and the the stated course goals and learning objectives. Assessments can be tasks, assignments (graded and ungraded, in class or out-of-class) or other processes that show both the student and the instructor how students are meeting the SLOs:

Wiggins & McTighe suggest these questions to aid instructors in designing assessments of student learning:

<b>Performance Tasks:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Through what authentic performance tasks will students demonstrate the desired understandings?</li><li>• By what criteria will performances of understanding be judged?</li></ul>	<b>Additional Evidence:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Through what other evidence (e.g., quizzes, tests, academic prompts, observations, homework, journals) will students demonstrate achievement of the desired results?</li><li>• How will students reflect upon and self-assess their learning?</li></ul>
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Source: *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Another method for coordinating goals, objectives, and assessments is to develop a table such as this one:

Course Alignment Table  
Stated Course Goals:

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Assessment Measure (means by which learning is measured)	SLO 1	SLO 2	SLO 3
(example) 1 formal analytical essay on the topic of technology and human development. 7-9 pages of formal prose with 2 drafts that receive formative feedback (graded complete or incomplete) and 1 final draft receiving summative grade.	Students will analyze and perform comparisons on topic-based issues to practice, refine, and master analytical writing strategies. Students will demonstrate through writing samples an ability to implement rhetorical strategies, awareness of audience, and use of scholarly sources.		
(example) Oral presentation that takes a position on a historically important issue (student choice). 3-5 minutes, 2 in-class practice sessions with peer and instructor feedback.		Rhetorical argument strategies (appeals, situation); Presents, anticipates, and articulates counter-perspectives; Speaks to audience and identifies genre.	

Write your learning assessments: