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# Situational Knowledge for Courses

In order to effectively support student learning, it is useful to be explicit about the skills and knowledge we expect our students to have when they enter our course.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What relevant skills and knowledge do students need to have in hand in order to succeed in your course?**  | **Predict how many students have mastered this.**  |
|   |   |

Consider these skills and knowledge along with your predictions about how many of your students are likely to have mastered those skills before the first day of class.  **Review each item with the following questions in mind:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Expectation** |  |
| **All/Most** | * How will you communicate this need/expectation on the first day of class and/or in the syllabus?
* What will you do to help students who need it to catch up and/or gain the background they need to succeed in your course?
* Are there areas where students may be “rusty” with these skills? What are some ways you can review material in order to activate/connect to your students’ prior knowledge?
 |
| **Some/****A Few** | * To what extent do you need to help your students learn this content during your course?
* What are some ways to help students gain these skills and knowledge – either during class or outside of class?
 |
| **None** | * You will need to teach these things in your course, to reasonably expect student success in your course.
 |
| **Don’t Know** | * What will you do to establish reasonable expectations for student prior knowledge?
 |

# Situational Factors Affecting Students During Pandemic

Consider the Remote Teaching environment as you answer these questions

*Modified from SITUATIONAL FACTORS TO CONSIDER from*[*Dee Fink A Self-Directed Guide for Significant Learning*](https://www.deefinkandassociates.com/GuidetoCourseDesignAug05.pdf)*.*

**Specific Context of the Teaching/Learning Situation**

How many students are in the class? Is the course lower division, upper division, or graduate level? How long and frequent are the class meetings? How will the remote learning environment will affect the class?

**General Context of the Learning Situation**

What learning expectations are placed on this course or curriculum by: the university, college and/or department? the profession? society? How are these affected by the remote learning environment?

**Characteristics of the Learners**

What is the life situation of the learners (e.g., working, family, professional goals)? What prior knowledge, experiences, and initial feelings do students usually have about this subject? What are their learning goals and expectations? How comfortable are they with the remote learning environment? What challenges might they face in accessing course materials remotely?

**Nature of the Subject**

Is this subject primarily theoretical, practical, or a combination? Is the subject primarily convergent or divergent? Are there important changes or controversies occurring within the field? What special challenges does remote teaching pose to addressing this subject?

**Characteristics of the Teacher**

What beliefs and values does the teacher have about teaching and learning? What is their attitude toward: the subject? students? What level of knowledge or familiarity do they have with this subject? What are his/her strengths in teaching? How comfortable are they with remote teaching?

# Mapping Course Objectives to Learning

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The Knowledge Dimension** | **The Cognitive Process Dimension (Bloom’s Taxonomy)** |
| **Remember**  | **Understand**  | **Apply**  | **Analyze**  | **Evaluate**  | **Create**  |
| Factual Knowledge |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Conceptual Knowledge |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Procedural Knowledge |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Meta-Cognitive Knowledge |   |   |   |   |   |       |

# Aligning Learning Activities and Active Learning with Course Objective-Driven Assessments

**Understanding Formative and Summative Assessments**

One of the best ways to help students learn is to provide a variety of activities and ways to approach the new material and skills they are learning before a high-stakes summative assessment like an exam. Formative assessments during a learning unit allow students to engage the material and receive feedback on their progress toward your learning objectives.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Types of Formative Assessments** | **Types of Summative Assessments** |
| * Online discussion posts
* Weekly quizzes
* 1-minute reflections
* Components of larger assignments
* Weekly reflection journals/blogs covering course concepts
* Homework exercises
* Socratic dialog
* Self-evaluation
 | * Exams
* Major report
* Research presentation
* Research poster
* Working prototype
* Completed project
 |

Once you have defined your learning objectives and major assessments using the backwards course design process, use the table below to consider what learning activities and formative assessments will help your students complete the assessment.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Major Assessments** | **Learning Objectives Addressed** | **Formative Learning Opportunities** |
| Assessment 1 |  |  |
| Assessment 2 |  |  |
| Assessment 3 |  |  |

# Learning Activity Map

Use this grid to map out learning activities and formative assessments you can use in your course to engage students with the material, their peers, and/or you as the instructor.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Week of** | **Week of** | **Week of** | **Week of** |
| **Content to Cover** |  |  |  |  |
| **Independent Practice** |  |  |  |  |
| **Collaborative Practice** |  |  |  |  |
| **Formative Assessment(s)** |  |  |  |  |

# Learning Activities and Active Learning Strategies

Including active learning strategies in your classes means that you intentionally and meaningfully ask the students to complete varied activities that help them to **engage, apply, and interact with what they are learning**. Active learning approaches are not an add-on to a lecture but an integrated part of the learning experience that is connected to the learning goals you have for your students and helps them to think critically and deeply about course material.

Using the Active Learning Strategies handout, identify strategies you might use to engage students in learning new information and practicing new skills. Then connect that activity to your learning objectives.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Before Lesson** | **During Lesson** | **After Lesson** |
| Ex. One-minute write | Students respond to an online discussion post |  |  |
| Ex. Think-pair-share |  | Students reflect on a question during the lesson, discuss with a partner, collaboratively share a response to the main prompt/problem. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

# Planning for Active Learning Activities

Planning for active learning is different than preparing for a lecture. However, it still requires careful advanced work to set up the right structure, identify and prepare supporting materials, and think through the procedures to make sure it is successful. The following questions should be helpful when putting together a lesson plan that engages students actively in learning asynchronously.

**Which active learning strategy from the list in the separate handout will help your students learn/practice the new information in this lesson?** How will it help students meet the learning goals for this lesson?

**What student preparation is necessary prior to the exercise?** What information do they need to be successful, and how will you deliver this information to them (for example, readings or a video lecture)? How will students be held accountable for reviewing this information (for example, taking a reading quiz or answering a discussion board prompt)?

**How will you introduce the activity to your students?** What instructions will you give your students? How much time will they have to complete the activity asynchronously?

**Will the students work individually? In groups? A combination?**What do you expect will be the benefits and disadvantages of this approach to student work?

**How will you check in with students while they were working?** Describe how you expect to interact with students during the check-in (such as responding to their discussion board posts or requesting a progress report).

**How will you learn about the results of the students’ work?** What mechanisms will you use to allow the students to report out? Will they share with you only or the entire class?

**How will you respond to the students’ work?** How will you ensure that students come away with the information and skills they need to be successful on the exam/project/course?