Beginning With the End in Mind: Writing Effective Learning Outcomes

The Center for Teaching Excellence

Course Design Series
Session I

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Situational Factors
(Fink, 2005)

1. **Course particulars and teaching context:**
   Questions to consider: Where does my course fall in the curriculum? How complex is the material? How many students might enroll? And, how often does the class meet?

2. **Institution:**
   Institutional considerations might include accreditation standards or expectations at our institution or in our department. If our institution or discipline has close ties with industry, we might need to consider industry needs and expectations in our course design.

3. **Environment:**
   Questions to consider: What kind of equipment does the lab have? What is the set-up of the classroom space? What kind of technology will I have access to? Are there co-curricular learning opportunities on campus or in the local community that I can include in my course?

4. **Students:**
   Questions to consider: What kind of experience or prior knowledge do most of the students taking this course have in this discipline? How will I find out? Are they typically non-majors with little experience or is it expected that they come to the class with prior knowledge and experience? Are there additional resources I need to consider providing to students who are less academically prepared for college-level work?

5. **Instructor:**
   Questions to consider: What resources do I have available? What is realistic considering my competing priorities? What teaching methods am I comfortable with? What are my beliefs about teaching and learning?

Source: Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Think, Pair, Share

What are some ways these situational factors will impact your course?

Writing Learning Outcomes

Think of a course you have taught or will teach.

Construct two or three learning outcomes for that class.

1.

2.

3.

At what level of Bloom's Taxonomy are your learning outcomes?

Additional Sample Learning Outcomes

- Discuss features and limitations of various sampling procedures and research methodologies (Statistics)
- Articulate and debunk common myths about Mexican immigration (History)
- Design an experimental study, carry out an appropriate statistical analysis of the data, and properly interpret and communicate the analyses (Ecology)
- Analyze simple circuits that include resistors and capacitors (Engineering)
- Execute different choreographic styles (Dance)
- Sketch and/or prototype scenarios of use to bring opportunity areas to life (Design)
- Analyze any vocal music score and prepare the same score individually for any audition, rehearsal, or performance (Musical Theater)

Source: Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., Norman, M.K. (2010). *How learning works: 7 research-based principles for smart teaching.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.