



Course Design: Course Map and Goals

What It Is

Course mapping, or planning, outlines how course goals translate into the classroom. A course map aligns instructional goals with specific learning objectives, learning experiences, assessments, and instructional materials. It also includes a plan for instructor presence. Course maps are guided by one main question: What should learners know or be able to do at the end of a course?

Why It Matters

Course mapping saves time and improves learning outcomes. Mapping a course provides a clear plan, ensuring instructors only create materials and activities that support learning goals (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). It also helps instructors plan assessments of learning that align with their instructional goals for the course. Finally, course mapping encourages instructors to make an intentional plan for [instructor presence](#).

Apply it

1. **Divide your course into modules**, or chunks, based on learning objectives at the course and module level.
 - **Create course-level learning objectives.** These are the big ideas that a course is all about. What will learners know or be able to do when they finish a course? [Check the verbs](#) in the learning objectives to match what learners will do in class.
 - **Identify course modules.** Modules are chunks of content, organized around a central concept. The idea is to divide a course into manageable pieces that are easier for instructors to plan and for learners to understand. Create modules based on what makes sense: chronologically, thematically, etc.
 - **Plan module-level learning objectives.** For each module, [write specific and measurable learning objectives](#). For each theme,





topic, or week of instruction, what will learners know or be able to do at the end of the module? Consider how each module-level objective aligns with, or supports, course-level objectives.

2. Choose learning experiences to support each learning objective.

Course readings, discussions, projects, and presentations should clearly align with module and course-level objectives. What kinds of experiences will allow learners to develop the knowledge and skills they need to learn? When aligned, **learning activities** also prepare learners for the types of assessments they'll be expected to complete.

3. Develop assessments aligned with those experiences and objectives. Assessments provide feedback and data on knowledge and skill development. Remember to align assessments with learning experiences—if learning activities ask learners to “recall” and “memorize,” but the midterm asks them to “evaluate” and “analyze,” results might reflect that mismatch.

Resources

- Watch: [Start Here in Teaching Your Courses](#)
- Watch: [STLi Quickbite-Course Mapping](#)
- Read: [Building Your Course Around Design Principles](#)
- Read: [Course Mapping](#)
- Listen: [Mid Week Motivation - The Power of Modules](#)
- Engage: [Course Map Template forced copy](#)
- Engage: [SMART Objective Development Checklist](#)
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References

Manis, A., McKenna, L., & Sculthorp, S. (2022). Systematic Assessment of Learning in Higher Education: A Comprehensive Approach Within Curriculum Design. *Education Research Quarterly*, 46(1), 33–45.

Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.





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