Tips and Tools for Planning Your Course/Semester

What are your course goals?

What are your course objectives for student learning?

A course planning table may be your most critical teaching tool!

Your course calendar- keeps you and your students on track for success!

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Planning a course is a lot like planning a cross-country road trip.

First you need to determine your destination and then you must figure out what roads will take you there!
What are “Course Goals”?

The “Course Goal” points you toward your destination.

One all-encompassing course goal or several course goals are usually stated on the course syllabus and/or Syllabus of Record. Course goals are typically broad statements that give the course instructor general guidance regarding the course and its purpose. Course goals do not describe specific subject matter to teach and they do not tell how or when to teach certain material. Course goals provide a general description of the instructor’s intended focus for teaching the course.

Examples of course goals:

Some goals describe limited areas of course content:

1. “Students will become familiar with the professional language and terminology used in the field of paleontology.”
   Note- This goal suggests that you will teach your class the professional language and terminology commonly used in paleontology. It does not tell the teacher what terms to teach, how to teach them, when to teach them, or how to assess whether or not your students have learned them.

Some goals provide an overview of all areas to be addressed:

2. “Students in PED 306 will develop knowledge of instructional design, developmentally appropriate Physical Education content for elementary school, and classroom management skills, so they may successfully create and implement effective elementary Physical Education instruction.”
   Note- This all-encompassing course goal suggests the teacher will teach instructional design, appropriate content for teaching elementary school children, and classroom management skills. It does not tell the teacher what kinds of lessons the students must design, or which classroom management or instructional strategies students must learn, nor does it tell the teacher how to assess their student’s achievement.,
What are “Course Objectives for Student Learning” or “Student Learning Objectives”?

The “Student Learning Objectives” tell you which “roads to take” to get to that destination.

Your “Student learning objectives” (SLO’s) specifically describe what students must accomplish in order for the course goals to be achieved. Well written SLO’s become a useful planning tool, providing the instructor with a description of exactly what to teach, how the student will perform or demonstrate their learning, and a process for assessment of student learning.

• Since we are unable to observe “learning”, SLO’s describe student learning in terms of the student behaviors that may be observed by the teacher to provide evidence that “learning” has been accomplished. **The verb is the key to writing SLO’s that are observable!** (See Appendix A for examples)
  **Examples of observable behaviors:** students will demonstrate a skill, describe something, answer test questions, write a paper, perform, etc.

• SLO’s describe, define, and/or provide a context or condition in which the student will demonstrate their achievement.
  **Examples of contexts for demonstrating student achievement:** on a quiz, in a practice session, during a partner assessment, while presenting to the class.

• Student learning objectives provide a format for assessment of student achievement. The description in the SLO of what/how the student is to provide evidence of learning becomes the means for assessing what they have learned.
  **Examples of the SLO providing guidance for assessment:** “On a written quiz, the students will correctly define at least 80% of assigned key terms from the course text.” “In a partner practice and subsequent assessment activity, the student will demonstrate the 5 points of testing for concussion in an injured athlete.”

SLO’s describe specific content which, when achieved, lead to achieving the broader course goals.

SLO’s tell us what the student will learn, how it is to be demonstrated, and where/when/how it will be assessed.
How to write student learning objectives?

Three steps-

1. Starting with your course goal(s), pull items out of the goal(s) that you will teach your students. See examples below.
2. For each item in the course goal, write a separate SLO. Do not combine them.
3. Write your SLO to describe exactly what the student is to learn, how that knowledge will be demonstrated, how it will be assessed.

   Note-
   If you have been given SLO’s for your course on a Syllabus of Record; use this guide to amend them as needed for your syllabus so they are useful in teaching your course. Some “course objectives” on syllabi are too general to be useful for actual instructional planning unless you add in key detail.

Example of using course goal example #1 to develop student learning objectives:

• Course goal example #1 = provides a more focused direction
  “Students will become familiar with the unique professional language and terminology used in the field of Paleontology.”

• Student learning objective #1 = provides a specific target
  “On a written quiz, the students will correctly define at least 80% of assigned key terms from the course text.”

Example of using course goal example #2 to develop student learning objectives:

• Course goal example #2 = provides an “all-inclusive”, but general, direction
  “Students in PED 306 will develop knowledge of instructional design, developmentally appropriate Physical Education content for elementary school, and classroom management skills, so they may successfully create and implement effective elementary Physical Education instruction.”

• Student learning objectives #2-3-4-5 = provide 4 specific targets taken from the general course goal
  “Using the department lesson design format, students will complete 4 lesson design assignments with each lesson incorporating a different teaching style to be graded according to the department rubric for lesson plans.”
  “Students will demonstrate their knowledge of classroom management strategies while peer teaching 4 lessons which implement planned systematic classroom management strategies, written in detail in the lesson plan.”
  “On the Chapter 6 test, students will demonstrate their knowledge of classroom management theory by passing related questions with a score of 80% or better.”
  “While peer teaching, the student will demonstrate effective and efficient classroom management skills by keeping “transitions” and “response latency” during the lesson to less than 10% of the total allotted lesson time.”
Practice Writing Your Course Goal (determine your destination), And Use It To Create SLO’s (road map)

Use the course goal(s) you were provided, or, create your own goal(s) here for practice purposes in our mini-workshop.

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Refer to your course goal(s) above and try writing one or two very specific SLO(s) from your goal:

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# Use Your Student Learning Objectives to Plan Your Course

## Two Suggested Formats

**Format #1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Objectives and Number</th>
<th>Teaching and Learning Activities Related to this Objective</th>
<th>How will student achievement be assessed?</th>
<th>How much time is needed for these T/L/A activities (# minutes or hours)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample objective:</strong> 1. On a written quiz, the students will correctly define at least 80% of key terms from the course text.</td>
<td>1a. Students work independently to find and define key terms in text. Use the term correctly in their own written sentence. 1b. Student teams identify terms correctly in an in-class competition. 1c. Students take quiz over key terms. 1d. Post quiz review and clarification</td>
<td>1a. Homework, grade 1b. Practice, no grade 1c. Written quiz over key terms, grade 1d. NA</td>
<td>1a. Homework 1b.15 min 1c. 15 min. 1d. 10 min. Total time needed= 40 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Format #2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Objectives and Number</th>
<th>Teaching and Learning Activities Related to this Objective</th>
<th>How will student achievement be assessed?</th>
<th>How much time is needed for these T/L/A activities (minutes or hours)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample objective:</strong> 1. On a written quiz, the students will correctly define at least 80% of key terms from the course text. Total time needed= 40 minutes</td>
<td>1a. Students work independently to find and define key terms in text. Use the term correctly in their own written sentence. 1b. Student teams identify terms correctly in an in-class competition. 1c. Students take quiz over key terms. 1d. Post quiz review and clarification</td>
<td>1a. Homework grade 1b. Practice, not graded 1c. Written quiz over key terms 1d. NA</td>
<td>1a. Homework 1b. 15 minutes 1c. 15 minutes 1d. 10 min.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Sample objective:** 3. “While peer teaching, the student will demonstrate effective and efficient classroom management skills by keeping “transitions” and “response latency” during the lesson to less than 10% of the total allotted lesson time.” Total time needed= 130 minutes | 3a. Teacher demonstration and student practice in a variety of settings 3b. DVD on classroom management with short partner worksheet 3c. Student practice in small peer groups with various “cases” 3d. Team competition for efficiency 3e. Management planning on written lesson plan 3f. Management time score on rubric when peer teaching final lesson | 3a. NA 3b. Points for completing partner worksheet correctly 3c. NA 3d. NA 3e. 20 points possible on rubric 3f. 10 points possible on peer teaching rubric for final lesson. | 3a. 45 minutes with discussion 3b. 45 minutes + 5 discussion 3c. 20 minutes 3d. 20 minutes + 5 debriefing 3e. NA 3f. Included in per teaching time.
## SLO Worksheet

Select a Format and Try Planning Your Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Objectives and Number</th>
<th>Teaching and Learning Activities Related to this Objective</th>
<th>How will student achievement be assessed?</th>
<th>How much time is needed for these T/L/A activities? (minutes or hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample objective from your course:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Objectives and Number</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample objective from your course:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Course Calendar

Using your SLO worksheet and time estimates for guidance, insert teaching/learning/assessment activities into your course calendar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>IN-CLASS LEARNING ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS and CLASS PREPARATION.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>FH 11</td>
<td>Introduction and overview of PED 306</td>
<td>Read Ch. 1-2 in text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8-28</td>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus review and course expectations <em>(SLO #1-9)</em></td>
<td>Bring your text to our next class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NASPE Standards for Beginning Teachers <em>(SLO #3-4)</em></td>
<td>for graded activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Class introductions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8-30</td>
<td></td>
<td>Textbook scavenger hunt, get to know your text resources for future</td>
<td>Study Ch. 1-2 + review the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>application in class assignments! Names and class photos</td>
<td>Resource Book on Bb to look over</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the assignments and prep for</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>class in the computer lab. on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>HNY 116</td>
<td>Labor Day holiday- no class today</td>
<td>Bring 2 Unit Plan topics to next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>☺</td>
<td>class. Be aware- you will teach a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lesson from this unit for your final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>teaching presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet in computer lab</td>
<td>KNOW!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Review <em>Resources for Student Success</em> book on Bb</td>
<td>“National Standards for Physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Select Unit Plan topics <em>(SLO #5)</em></td>
<td>Education” <em>(SLO #1)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Set up: Unit Plan Cover, T/C, Unit Goal, Unit Rational</td>
<td>“Essential components of a quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>program” <em>(SLO #2)</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare for class discussion and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>quiz on both.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Verb is the Key to Writing Useful Objectives for Student Learning

Selecting the correct verb is the key to writing objectives that describe student abilities in terms which provide observable evidence of student learning. Remember, the objective must describe what the student knows, is able to do, or how they behave as a result of instruction. You must be able to observe some kind of evidence to know students have “learned”.

Examples of "action words" or verbs, which are useful when writing objectives:

1. Accept - receive; tolerate; agree
2. Achieve - attain
3. Analyze - scrutinize; discuss
4. Appraise - evaluate; estimate
5. Appreciate - recognize; grasp; understand
6. Attain - achieve; reach
7. Avoid - shun; evade; void; annul; disqualify
8. Aware - inform
9. Build - construct; erect; establish; create
10. Categorize - classify
11. Change - alter; vary; substitute
12. Choose - select
13. Classify - arrange
14. Communicate - impart; disclose; reveal
15. Compare - to liken
16. Complete - accomplish; conclude
17. Compute - calculate; estimate
18. Construct - build; devise
19. Control - restrain; direct; rule
20. Critique - examine; discriminate
21. Define - prescribe; limit; explain; describe
22. Demonstrate - prove; point out; indicate; show
23. Describe - relate; explain; depict; outline
24. Design - outline; invent; devise; project; plan; intend
25. Designate - show; name; characterize
26. Detect - discover; perceive; apprehend
27. Develop - advance; expand; disclose
28. Discover - ascertain; solve; find; disclose within their group.
29. Discriminate - distinguish
30. Discuss - debate; argue; talk
31. Display - show; exhibit; view
32. Draw - deduce; derive; compose; draft; sketch; haul; pull
33. Employ - use; occupy
34. Enable - furnish
35. Establish - set; fix; found; institute; settle; prove; confirm
36. Evaluate - assess; appraise; estimate
37. Exhibit - show; view; display
38. Give - bestow; deliver; devote; present; offer; allot; assign
39. Grant - give; bestow; confer
40. Guide - advise; counsel; direct
41. Identify - associate
42. Illustrate - exemplify; interpret; represent
43. Implement - fulfill
44. Improve - better; correct
45. Incorporate - unite; join; associate
46. Indicate - show; signify
47. Justify - vindicate; prove
48. Label - affix
49. Limit - restrict
50. List - record; arrange
51. Maintain - hold; sustain; support
52. Make - produce; create; compel
53. Match - complement; combine
54. Measure - compute; reckon; ascertain; estimate; judge
55. Meet - fulfill; encounter; assemble; satisfy
56. Modify - alter; vary; change; reduce; limit
57. Motivate - prompt; incite
58. Name - choose; nominate; identify
59. Operate - act; function
60. Outline - plan; sketch; describe
61. Perform - do; fulfill
62. Plan - scheme
63. Practice - drill; accomplish
64. Produce - make; cause; create
65. Provide - furnish; supply; prepare
66. Rank - arrange
67. Realize - understand; group; comprehend
68. Recognize - identify; remember; approve; authorize
69. Refine - educate
70. Reinforce - strengthen; fortify
71. Relate - associate; connect; pertain
72. Represent - imitate; exhibit; denote
73. Respect - concern
74. Revise - amend; alter; correct
75. Rewrite - edit
76. Select - choose
77. Show - display; exhibit; present; demonstrate
78. Solve - clear up; unravel
79. Specify - mention; name; designate
80. State - declare; inform
81. Stimulate - stir; excite; arouse
82. Suggest - propose
83. Synthesize - combine
84. Translate - interpret; transfer; remove
85. Understand - comprehend; appreciate; learn; interpret
86. Utilize - use; employ
87. Write - communicate; disclose; compose

The list of “action words” in this document is not my original work. It was adapted from a source of unknown origin found in old files of a former GVSU professor in 1984 - some materials do retain their usefulness! (PIR, August 2013)