



Planning Your Online Course

In the Plan module, you explored online learner characteristics, planned and aligned your course outcomes, assessments, and structure, and checked your tech skills and equipment. This document contains some key takeaways.

Consider Your Online Learners and the Online Learning Environment

While the student demographics of online learners continually shift, observing these trends may help you to consider your students as you plan your course. Consider a student introductions discussion board or survey to learn more about each class. Your students may be currently employed, parenting, new to learning online, or facing barriers to completing education such as managing tuition and life events.

Why a Well-Designed Learning Environment Matters

- Increased student motivation
- Increased student engagement and interaction
- Improved role for instructor
- Fewer opportunities for academic dishonesty

Planning Your Course: Start at the End with Backward Design

Focus the course on what is most important and avoid content overload by starting with the end in mind: the outcomes. The measurability of outcomes and their alignment with assessments and content are essential factors in meeting Quality Matters standards.

1. First develop cognitive, affective, and/or behavioral learning outcomes using measurable verbs that follow the structure of an objective: audience, behavior, condition, and degree.
2. Design assessment opportunities that **align** with student outcomes. Consider multiple means of engagement, representation, action and expression in the Universal Design for Learning Framework to support all learners.
3. Determine the content and technology that will help the students complete assessments and achieve learning outcomes successfully. Create and gather content last!

Outline Your Course's Structure and Prepare Your Technology

Organize your course into a logical flow. To use your time efficiently, outline the learning outcomes, plan course structure, design assessments, and identify readings before writing your materials and planning lectures. Give yourself due dates and find individuals who can help you test parts of the course in advance. Make it your goal to complete the course a few weeks before the semester begins. You will need to ensure you have sufficient technical skills and equipment such as stable Internet, familiarity with your LMS, email, and creating, editing, saving, and sharing files. To prepare yourself, reach out to your school's Instructional Technology Consultant or technical support to practice key skills.