**Building the Units in a Course**

When you put together a course, hybrid or totally online, here are some ideas and forms that can help in the process of building the individual units in the course.

1. **Initial Steps**

As described in the basic procedures for Integrated Course Design, you begin by identifying your Big Dream and a Culminating Project for the course as a whole. The Culminating Project should be an activity that enables students to demonstrate how well they have achieved the learning described in your Big Dream for the course.

1. **Create the Set of Units for the Course**

Using Form “A” (below), identify the major units or segments of your course. Most courses will have 4 to 7 units. If you have more than this, you may want to consider creating clusters around some larger themes that include sub-units within them.

**Form “A”**

**Identifying the Units or Segments of Your Course**

Segments/Units/Modules:

|  |
| --- |
| **Getting Started:** |
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|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
| **Culminating Project:** |

In general, it is desirable to have an introductory unit at the beginning of the course; this has already been placed into Form A as “Getting Started”. Time has also been put into a final unit where students do the Culminating Project.

Then, using the principle of Backward Design where you “start with the end in mind”, you ask yourself the following questions:

* If I want students to be ready to do a good job in the Culminating Project in the final unit, what will they need to be doing in the unit just before the Project?
* And, if they want to do a good job in that unit, what do they need to be doing in the unit before that?
* Continue this process until you reach the beginning of the course.

**Creating Units that Build on Each Other**

The course will be much more dynamic and engaging if the units build on each other, rather than simply dealing with separate, independent topics. Basically, this means students should be able to see that each unit prepares them for working in the next unit, which prepares them for the following unit, and so on – as illustrated in the following diagram:

**Culminating Project**

**3rd Set of Learning Activities**

**2nd Set of Learning Activities**

**1st Set of Learning Activities**

**S E M E S T E R**

**An Idea to Consider: Shifting from Topics to Questions.** When you label the units, consider using questions (based on well-chosen verbs) rather than phrases (based on nouns). This has the effect of drawing students into the course more effectively. Students will want to know the answers to those questions.

To illustrate what this might look like, here is a list of questions for the four major units in a course on “*Youth and Social Innovation*”:

1. How Do Developmental and Socio-Cultural Factors Influence Youth Outcomes?
2. How Do Theories of Change Inform Social Innovations?
3. How do Social Innovations Address Youth Challenges?
4. How can Social Innovations for Youth Be Enhanced?
5. **Identify Appropriate ACTIVITIES for Each Unit**

Now, using Form “B” (below, on the next two pages), work on this task:

* Fill in the 3 cells at the top of the column, about (a) the Topic, Focus or central Question for the unit, (b) the Primary Learning Outcome, and (c) an idea you have for a culminating project or activity for the unit.
  + These will provide the focus for your selection of learning and assessment activities.
* Then fill in each cell, going down the column.
  + Identify the Learning Activities that students will need, to achieve the learning outcome and prepare for the culminating project or activity.
  + Identify the Feedback and Assessment Activities that students will need, as they work to develop the knowledge, skills, and capabilities that constitute the primary purpose of this unit.

Continue building these columns in Form B for each of the units that you identified in Form A.

**Form “B”**

**Identifying Appropriate Activities for Each Segment of a Course**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Unit/Module 1** | **Unit/Module 2** | **Unit/Module 3** |
| **TOPIC, FOCUS or QUESTION for This Unit/Module:** |  |  |  |
| **Primary LEARNING OUTCOME for this Unit/Module:** |  |  |  |
| **CULMINATING ACTIVITY for this Unit/Module?** |  |  |  |

1. **Learning Activities:**

What will students need to do with each of the following kinds of learning activities, to achieve the desired Learning Outcome and/or prepare for the Culminating Project/Activity?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **Acquire new information, perspective, ideas**  * Readings (print, online) * Video, audio presentations |  |  |  |
| 1. **Do, create something**  * Answer thought-questions, solve problems, analyze, compare, evaluate, etc. * Individually, or in groups? |  |  |  |
| 1. **Dialogue with others**  * With other learners, other experts, the teacher(s) |  |  |  |
| 1. **Reflect**  * On the subject of the course * On their own learning |  |  |  |

1. **Feedback/Assessment Activities:**

What feedback will learners need from each of the following sources, to achieve the desired Learning Outcome and/or prepare for the Culminating Project/Activity?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. When will students generate their own feedback on their work, i.e., **SELF-Assess** their own work?  * Where will they get a rubric to do this assessment? Will it be generated by the class, given by the teacher, or something else? |  |  |  |
| 1. What **feedback** will students receive from the **TEACHER** on the 4 kinds of Learning Activities listed in Section I above:    * Periodic tests (on A, above)    * Comments on their work (B)    * Comments on their thoughts & interactions (C, D)? |  |  |  |
| 1. When will students receive **comments** and **feedback** from **OTHER LEARNERS,** on A, B, C, or D? |  |  |  |

[Continue for as many Units or Modules as needed.]