

10 | Lesson Planning

Importance of Planning

When you take time to plan your classes, you and your students will see improvements in teaching and learning experiences. Listed below are the benefits of taking the time to plan:

- examine how your class fits within the whole course
- design learning experiences that will address key topics and content
- be on the look-out for current stories, videos, or special events related to your topic
- give students the knowledge and skills to be successful in completing assignments
- be organized and know what is coming next in your class
- provide varied and interesting learning opportunities for your students
- accommodate special needs students by considering their requests/needs
- integrate technology effectively and prepare a back-up plan too
- present a cohesive class that flows from one topic to another
- think through possible problems or challenges and be prepared for them
- pre-create questions and anticipate answers for effective discussions
- include time for student questions and feedback

Planning is a vital component to being an effective instructor. When you plan more, you will see an improvement in the flow and delivery of your content. It is important that you take time to lay out a plan for your classes to ensure success for both you and your students.

Four Key Questions

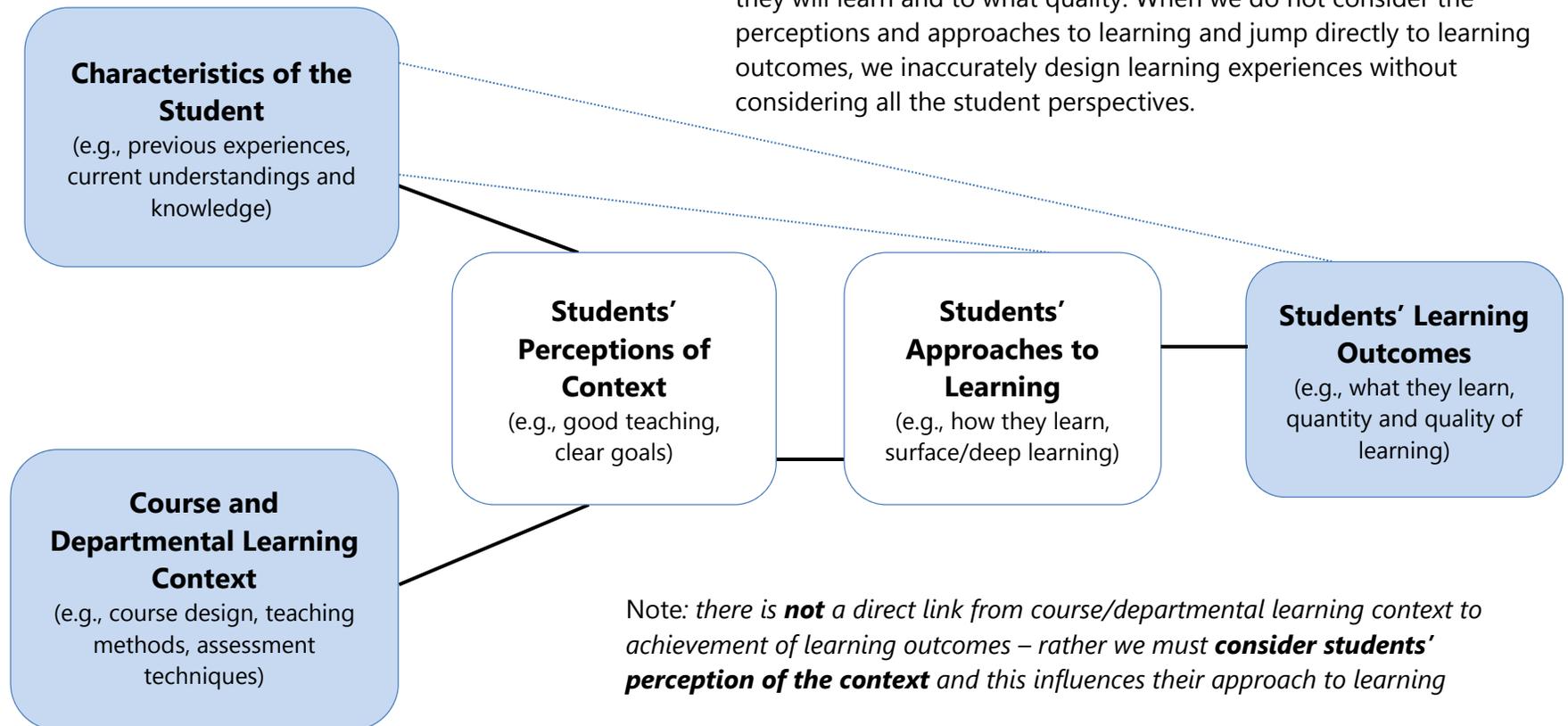
Before planning can begin, consider the four questions listed in the box. The answers to these questions will help you begin your class planning process.

1. **What shall I teach?**
2. **How shall I teach?**
3. **How can I organize it?**
4. **How can I assess it?**

Overview of the Student Learning Perspective

Model of Student Learning

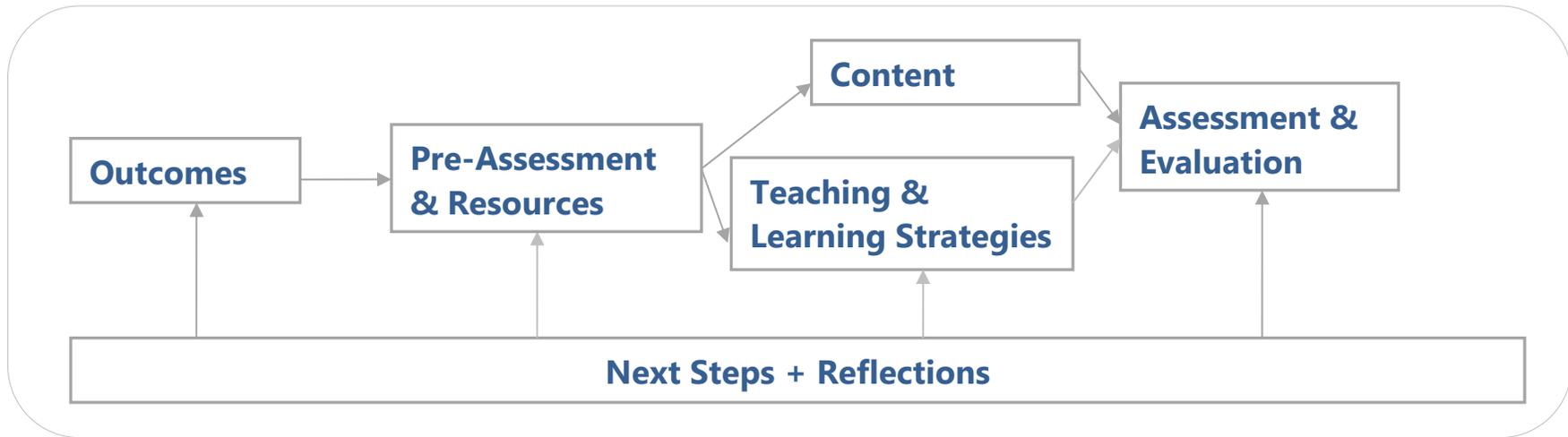
This diagram depicts the model of how a student learns. A student arrives in to a learning experience with previous experiences and knowledge. They also have a perception of the learning and various approaches to how they'll learn that significantly affects how much they will learn and to what quality. When we do not consider the perceptions and approaches to learning and jump directly to learning outcomes, we inaccurately design learning experiences without considering all the student perspectives.



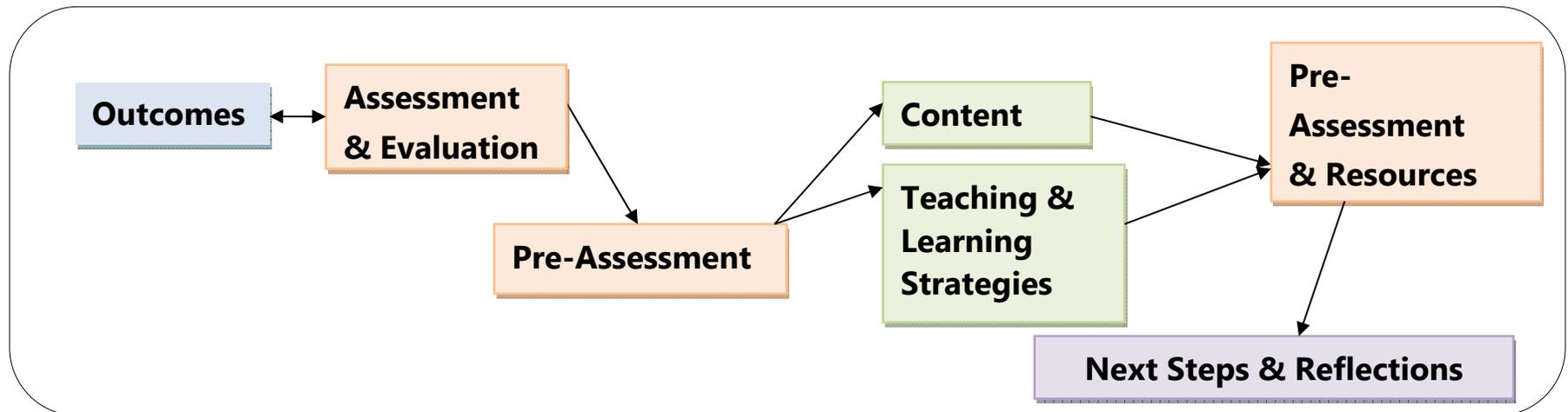
Prosser, M. and Trigwell, K. (2001). *Understanding learning and teaching: The Experience in Higher Education*. Philadelphia, USA. The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

Look at the two flowcharts below. Consider the differences between how instructors teach versus how instructors plan.

HOW INSTRUCTORS TEACH



HOW INSTRUCTORS SHOULD PLAN



How to Plan

Learning Outcomes

Always begin by considering what learning outcomes you wish to cover in your class. These will come from your course syllabus. There should be 1 or 2 outcomes that could be reasonably covered within your class time (e.g., 50 minutes or 3 hours)

Assessment & Evaluation

Next consider how the learning outcomes will be met. This is called backwards planning or planning with the end in mind, which basically means you figure out how you will be assessing and evaluating student work in relation to the outcomes. It is like thinking about the 'end' first and working backwards to figure out how you will get your students there (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). Consider how your students will demonstrate the learning outcomes.

Relationship between Learning Outcomes and Assessment + Evaluation: These first two steps in planning are linked together. You may go back and forth considering the outcomes and deciding on different assessments or evaluations. This step may also take a bit longer.

Pre-Assessment

At this step, think carefully about your class (number of students, students with disabilities, age of students, previous knowledge about the topic, social and behavioral characteristics, etc.) and how this will impact your class. It is a step that involves pre-assessing what you know already about your students and taking that into account when you plan the rest of the class.

Content/ Teaching & Learning Strategies

This step involves brainstorming all the content required for your class and narrowing it down to key concepts. Once you have those key concepts, chunk them into 10-15 minute chunks. How you will deliver the content revolves around the teaching and learning strategies you choose (lecture, small group activity, video, discussion, etc.)

Pre-Assessment & Resources

After the class has been developed, it is important for you to go back and ensure that all your students are being considered through the teaching and learning strategies chosen. Are student needs being met? At this point, it is also time to list the resources (web site links, books, videos, stories, handouts, etc.) you will need for the class.

Next Steps & Reflections

After the class is over, jot down notes for next year and reflect for a short time about the class.

Chunking of Content

It is highly unlikely any student can sit for three straight hours and take effective notes while listening to a long lecture-focused class. Human brains do not have the capacity to sustain such concentration, understand and make sense of the content during long classes.



A simple answer: To make your classes more engaging, chunk your content and activities into **10 to 20 minute segments**. Some segments should contain content and some segments should contain activities for applying the content. Your students need to interact with you and their classmates and should have a change of pace in the class.

Here are some suggestions for breaking down your lecture or class into more manageable pieces. It may change the way you teach and how your students learn.

1. Gather all the content required for your class.
2. Identify sub-sections or sub-topics within the content: consider where appropriate breaks could occur in terms of delivering the content.
3. Pare down each sub-topic into points that would cover approximately 10-20 minutes of either lecturing or some form of direct instruction to students.
4. In a 1 hour class you need about 2-3 sub-topics to fill segments throughout the class; for 3 hour classes you need about 4-5 sub-topics.
5. Between sub-topic segments, include an activity that involves students applying the content you have just taught. These activities could also be 10-20 minutes long and would allow students to interact with the material by having a chance to stop taking notes and engaging with their peers.
6. Examples of learning activities: a small group discussion, watching a small video related to the topic, solving sample problems, using clickers or flash cards to vote on answers to questions, engaging in a debate about the topic, students independently answering questions, reading a passage, teaching a peer, etc.
7. Your class plan should have content interspersed with activities.
8. Allow time for a break (10-20 minutes) within a 2-hour or 3-hour class.

The biggest challenge for most instructors is choosing and knowing how to implement various learning activities to apply content. As you experiment with this format for your classes, you may wish to adjust how much content and what sorts of activities work best for your students.

Class / Lesson Template: Section Explanations

This section describes each section of the template in the order an instructor should consider when planning a class. This template is an optional suggestion for VIU faculty to use to plan a class/lesson. See next pages for a sample template.

Learning Outcomes

- 1 – 2 taken from course outline: keep in forefront of mind when planning class
- Consider these when planning assessment and evaluation

Assessment & Evaluation

- Assessment: Informal feedback to students about how they are doing with respect to the learning outcomes and related course content (e.g., written and oral comments, practice test feedback, discussions, questioning) that do not have marks or grades
- Evaluation: formal grading and marks (e.g., tests, assignments, papers, mid-terms, exams)
- What assessment and/or evaluation strategies do you need to have so you are accountable for students' learning and addressing the course learning outcomes?
- What assessment should you include in your class? – e.g., sample questions, activities, quizzes/tests, homework, rubrics, presentations, etc.
- Ask yourself these questions:
 - What evidence will you look for to know whether or not your students actually learned what you intended for them to learn?
 - What will the evidence look like?
 - If the students are "applying" their knowledge of the content you just taught, how will you know that they understood those concepts? How will you record this?

Pre-Assessment

Jot down characteristics of the class, pinpoint certain students you need to keep in mind, and look at the overall needs of your students.

Student Accommodations

Remind yourself of students with learning disabilities or those who have been identified as needing some assistance with learning in your class. How will you be able to meet their needs with this class? List any strategies you might use (e.g., checking in with student, giving another example, allowing more time to complete an assignment, etc.). What principles of universal design can you consider in modifying content or providing alternatives for learning?

Student Academic Knowledge of Content

Briefly list the background knowledge that you expect your students to have of this content (e.g., Were there previous classes where content may have surfaced? What might they know from secondary school or general knowledge?). This will help you set the stage for planning the class. Sometimes instructors conduct short pre-assessment quizzes, which are not marked, to ascertain what students already know. These are called diagnostic tests.

Other Items to Consider

- Number of students: larger classes may require modifications to class content
- Social and behavioral characteristics of students: year of class (1st year, 4th year, etc.), maturity level, interest in topic, time of day class is held
- Preparedness: how prepared are your students for taking notes, doing readings, grasping main ideas of lecture, doing homework? This may affect how you structure your class, the level of assistance you may need to provide, and how slow/fast you can talk

Content/ Teaching & Learning Strategies

- Brainstorm all content for this class. Lay it all out so you can see scope of content.
- Chunk your content by arranging it into manageable 10-15 minute chunks or segments
- Plan for activities that allow students to apply their learning and intersperse these between the content chunks
- Sequence content and activities in a step-by-step fashion
- Include approximate timing (either in minutes or actual times for the class) to help you decide how much content to include and predict how long class components will take
- Include sample questions you wish to ask with anticipated answers.
- Be sure to include a wrap up or summary of the content before the class ends as it is crucial for students to be reminded of what you just covered.
- Consider a feedback mechanism (e.g., Minute Paper or Ticket out the Door) to elicit information from students about their learning and the class

Pre-Assessment & Resources

- Revisit student needs now that sequence of instruction and application is established
- Ensure that pre-assessment information has been taken into account in the class design
- Resources – list key websites, resources, handouts, readings, and books you need

Next Steps & Reflections

- Make short comments about how the class progressed: what went well, what did not work, what you would change for next year, what took longer or shorter, etc.
- Indicate any steps you need to take or do differently next year

Lesson Plan Template

Course Title:

Class Date:

Time:

Room:

1. Class Learning Outcomes

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2. Pre-Assessment

Student Accommodations to Consider:

Student Academic Knowledge of Content:

Other:

3. Content / Teaching & Learning Strategies

a) **Beginning** (*Introduction, Agenda, Hook*)

Item	Description	Timing
Introduction/ Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • welcoming students to class • post and/or explain agenda (components) of class 	Time – Time
Announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housekeeping items, announcements about class or upcoming tests and projects 	Time – Time
Hook to Start Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include a short hook (quick story, video, demonstration) to start students considering new content and get engaged in class 	Time – Time

4. Assessment & Evaluation

Include strategies here alongside appropriate class components.

b) Main (*Content and Application*)

Item	Description	Timing
Content 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief points about the content to present • Sample questions and anticipated answers 	Time – Time
Application-Content 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity to apply learning of content 	Time – Time
Content 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief points about the content to present • Sample questions and anticipated answers 	Time – Time
Application-Content 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity to apply learning of content 	Time - Time

c) Ending (*Consolidation, Next Steps*)

Item	Description	Timing
Consolidation of Class Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain class components + relationship to assignments • ask questions about main components 	Time – Time
Next Steps/Next Class Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include information about homework, preparing for next class, readings, possible feedback from students on class etc. 	Time - Time

5. Resources & Materials for Class

6. Reflections & Notes for Next Year