



Mapping Your Course

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The whole idea of developing a course map is to create and communicate how the course flows for those taking it, and those who put it together. A course map will show how the components interact with each other so the learning outcomes are met. The word "map" invokes a visual representation of how the elements fit to create a coherent sequence that's most effective. Many times more than one map is possible, alluding to the proverbial paths one can take to reach a destination. The visual path, though, has to begin somewhere. In a practical sense, developing a course map began with the syllabus. This now will allow for a better visual representation of what your course will look like because you have identified the specific components of your class--now its time to see how they connect.

The Use of Modules

There are several ways you can begin to conceptualize your course. Some faculty will begin to think about their course in terms of content themes, while others will contextualize their course by competencies, skills, and learning outcomes. Some faculty will think about their course in terms of weeks in a semester, and still others by a larger influence--department, college and university goals. One benefit in using a learning management system is the ability to organize and group content in any of the ways previously mentioned. Through the use modules, a class can be compartmentalized, yet remain connective, and is a way to constructively align the components of a class. In addition, it makes the process of scalability easier when you have to modify a course according to a different calendar.

Diaz and Strickland (2009) have provided a process to map a course through modularization, which may be a good starting point for faculty transitioning to an online format for the first time. In summary, here are the five key steps:

- Identify the module's objectives. Note that objectives are typically granular, action-oriented, and more specific than course goals, which may be more general in describing what students are meant to accomplish. Take a moment to consider what the instructor will do to support or meet those objectives and what the student will be asked to do to meet those objectives.
- In an online course, an instructor has the ability to diversify the way in which a student interacts with content. For instance, an instructor may use any of the following methods or tools: lecture, readings, activities, research, writing, projects, discussions, demonstrations, multimedia, cases, team work, assessments or others.
- Begin to define the components of your module. What are the types of interactions or activities that will make up your modules on a regular basis? Do you have case studies? Readings? Videos?
- How will you measure student learning? What assessments can effectively show the objectives are being met?
- Determine the relationship of your objectives to the course goals or other content in the course. In other words, how well does this content align or support the rest of the course?

Creating a table, or using another graphic organizer, can help you visualize this information and facilitate the mapping process more effectively:

Course Module:				
Objectives	Online Delivery	Activities/Assignment/Interaction	Assessment(s)	Relationship to course goals and content

We recommend visualizing the course in some way, so that it is easier to map how the class is aligned and connected.