

Countdown for Course Preparation

Planning for your course is not necessarily linear, and you will likely return to modify earlier stages. Here are a few ideas to consider as you prepare for your course.

When to Start	What to Consider
Three or more months before	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students: Find out what your students are like, what they expect, and what background they have. 2. Goals: Consider your larger goals for the course. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What matters most for you? b. What will be meaningful for your students? c. Why does your course matter? 3. Program: Talk to your colleagues. Find out what is the role of the course in the program/curriculum? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Is it required? Are there courses that come before or after? 4. Learning Outcomes: Draft course learning outcomes and goals (revise again later). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What should students know, be able to do, what attitudes should they have? b. Begin to consider how you might know students learned the outcomes (assessment).
Three months before	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resources: Choose your learning resources. What will help your students learning? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Should you use a textbook? Most publishers will send you sample copies to review. b. Coursepack, e-book, online links, reading list, supplies c. Consider whether resources should be required or recommended? 2. Begin to plan a Blackboard Site (Learning Management System) to support your students. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Login : blackboard.uwindsor.ca b. UWindsor help files: uwindsor.ca/blackboard c. Service Request: uwindsor.ca/bbhelp 3. Check availability of resources. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Eg. library policies for reserve books, availability of computer resources b. Find out about course budgets for photocopying, films, field trips, etc.
Two months before	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning Activities: Begin to plan the learning activities. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Most learning occurs outside the class, plan the activities students will engage in outside of class as well as inside. b. Consider a diversity of methods. What will help your students learn each outcome the best? What will engage the students? Will High Impact Practices be appropriate for your course? 2. Assessments: Begin to plan the assessment methods. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How will you know students have learned? Are you assessing what matters most? b. How can you be clear to the students what they have to do?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. How will you grade? Do you have a rubric? d. When do you have to submit course grades? How do you submit them? <p>3. Syllabus: Begin to draft the course syllabus/outline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The syllabus will help students understand what is expected of them, and what they can expect from you. The learning outcomes will help with this. b. Consider logistics, what is possible? c. How many learning hours does your course require (inside and outside of class)? Is it reasonable considering students have other courses? (for standard courses it is common to have 1 to 3 hours out of class for each hour in class) d. Be clear when and how learning will be assessed. e. The tone of your writing can help motivate students even before they arrive. f. See <i>Learning-Centred Syllabus Checklist</i> for more details to consider including http://ctl.uwindsor.ca/ctl/links-sd
One month before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lesson Plans: Begin preparing lesson plans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Refine your choice of appropriate teaching methods. How can students learn best for the different learning outcomes? (there are many, many methods and techniques) b. Select appropriate technology. Consider “Will this help my students learn more effectively?” c. Refine your Blackboard site, and consider how you would like to use it to communicate with students; and to help students communicate with you, with each other and engage with the material. 2. Clarify plans for out-of-class learning (assignments, etc.). 3. Consider building in mid-way feedback to see how things are going.
Two weeks before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Check your resources. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Are the learning resources available to students, can students buy or access them? 2. If possible, have a colleague look at your course syllabus to see if you are clear, and if you have overlooked anything. 3. Visit the classroom you have been assigned. Look to see what technology is included, and whether the furniture will support the kind of learning activities you have planned. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Classroom Directory will give you a picture and a list http://apps.medialab.uwindsor.ca/classrooms/ 4. Begin a portfolio – a teaching portfolio or dossier will be helpful when you discuss your teaching with your head, and will also be helpful when you teach next year.
One week before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set a welcoming atmosphere: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consider sending a welcome e-mail to your students, and/or posting one in Blackboard. b. Finalize your lesson plan, especially for the first class. Consider how you would like to start the class.

McKeachie, W.J. & Svinicki, M. (2006). *McKeachie’s Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*. (12th edition). Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.