

Checklist for Re/Designing Your Drexel Course

This checklist guides instructors in designing or revising a course using L. Dee Fink's [Integrated Course Design framework](#). It offers practical steps towards clarifying learning goals, aligning assessments, creating engaging learning experiences, and organizing materials, policies, and communication. Following these steps helps ensure a clear, supportive, and effective course that advances students' academic, professional, and personal growth.

Pre-checklist Activities

- *Course details*: Verify title, number, description, prerequisites, and program- or course-level learning goals/outcomes.
- *Scheduling*: Confirm inclusion in the AY27-28 curriculum.
- *Modality*: Identify the approved format (e.g., in-person, hybrid, or online).
- *Enrollment*: Check anticipated class size to guide planning.

Step 1:

Use Integrated Course Design to Write Significant Learning Goals

Fink's Integrated Course Design framework begins by clarifying the course purpose and context. This step focuses on articulating meaningful learning goals by considering the conditions in which learning will occur and the long-term impact of the course on your students.

- Clarify the core purpose of the course Start by reflecting on the central question: *What is this course really about, and why does it matter?* This helps anchor all subsequent design decisions.
- Draft a "Big Dream" statement Write a short statement describing how you hope students will be different (professionally, intellectually, or personally) long after the course has ended. This represents the long-term vision for student learning and growth as a result of the course.

- Analyze situational factors Identify key factors that shape the course, such as student characteristics, class size, and instructional modality. These realities should inform (not limit) your design choices.
- Articulate significant learning goals Define what you want students to know, be able to do, and value by the end of the course, drawing on [L. Dee Fink's taxonomy of significant learning](#).
- Review, refine and/or write learning goals Revisit your learning goals using your “Big Dream” and situational factors as a guide, ensuring they are meaningful, achievable, and aligned with the intended long-term impact on students.

Step 2:

Design Effective Assessments and Meaningful Feedback Strategies

In Integrated Course Design, assessments and feedback are intentionally aligned with learning goals to support meaningful learning. This alignment ensures that assessments measure what truly matters, rather than assessing unrelated skills or creating unnecessary hurdles. In this step, you will [design a mix of formative and summative assessments](#) that foster reflection, support improvement over time and offer multiple ways for students to demonstrate their learning.

- Clarify evidence of meaningful learning Identify how students will demonstrate their achievement of the learning goals (e.g., projects, exams, papers) and the expected level of competency for each goal.
- Align assessments with learning goals Develop an assessment plan to ensure all assessments measure one or more learning goals and all learning goals are measured by at least one assessment.
- Use varied assessment types Confirm your assessment plan includes sufficient formative assessments before summative assessment, providing students multiple opportunities for practice and feedback. Check that assessments emphasize

improvement over time and consider incorporating authentic assessments that reflect how students will be expected to use learning in real-world contexts.

- Scaffold larger projects and assignments
Consider ways to break larger projects into smaller, sequenced assignments to support skill development, reduce cognitive overload, [provide incremental feedback for improved performance](#), and promote academic integrity.
- Develop and share clear criteria for evaluation
Create rubrics, guidelines, or examples that clearly describe expectations of performance, helping students understand what is important and how their work will be assessed.
- Promote academic integrity
Design assessments that emphasize application, reflection, process, and iteration, building on strategies such as scaffolding with low-stakes quizzes and assignments, and providing frequent, targeted feedback. Clearly communicate the value of assessments to students and ensure they feel competent to succeed.

Step 3:

Cultivate Inclusive, Engaging, and Active Learning Experiences

In this step, learning activities are intentionally aligned with the learning goals to give students meaningful opportunities to build knowledge and skills through instruction and practice. A mix of activities should engage students, promote collaboration, and encourage connections to personally or professionally relevant applications. This step also includes planning what students will do before and after assessments to support progress toward the learning goals.

- Clarify how students will reach the learning goals
Identify the experiences and activities through which students will achieve the learning goals, considering intellectual, social, and reflective engagement.

- Align teaching and learning activities with learning goals

Develop an instructional plan to ensure all learning activities directly support one or more learning goals. Consider which activities (e.g., reading, lectures, discussions, projects, labs, group work) students will need to complete to achieve the learning goals.
- Consider sequencing and establish a rhythm and pacing

Review your instructional plan to [sequence and reinforce learning across the course](#), progressively building knowledge and skills. Intentionally plan what students do before, during, and after each class or within an online module to leverage the unique features of those learning spaces. Organize modules, weeks, or units to create a clear, consistent, and manageable course flow.
- Balance direct instruction with active and collaborative learning strategies

Design unit, weekly, or individual lessons with a mix of direct instruction, individual practice, collaborative activities, and experiential learning. Reinforce direct instruction (readings, mini-lectures, demonstrations) with opportunities for recall and guided application. Use [active and collaborative activities](#) to promote reflection, problem-solving, and real-world application for long-term retention and transfer of learning.
- Refine and prioritize essential content

Review final instructional plans, keeping content and activities that are essential for achieving learning goals, removing material that does not directly contribute to meaningful learning.
- Communicate the purpose and value of teaching and learning experiences

Include instructions and explanations about how the teaching and learning activities support students to achieve the learning goals and their broader professional, personal, and academic growth. When students understand the purpose of activities, [they are better able to see their relevance, feel capable of succeeding, and participate fully in the learning process.](#)

Step 4:

Structure and Organize Your Course to Support Student Success

A well-structured course helps students understand expectations, navigate content and assignments, and focus on learning rather than logistics. Clear organization, consistent policies, and effective communication through the syllabus and Learning Management System (LMS) can improve motivation and confidence. In this step, you will review how your course is organized and communicated to maximize clarity, consistency, and easy access to support.

- Create a clear, motivating and effective syllabus
Compile all course elements from previous steps into a cohesive, clear, and readable syllabus (see [Drexel's accessible syllabus template](#)). Clearly communicate learning goals, expectations, schedule, assessments, grading, and policies, and explain how these support students' professional, personal, and academic growth. Highlight the purpose of activities and assessments, [helping students understand expectations, build confidence, and navigate support when needed](#).
- Align policies with student success
Write or revise course-level policies (e.g., participation, [GenAI](#), late assignments) to promote clarity, flexibility, equity and align them with your pedagogical approach. Make expectations explicit regarding participation, assessments, deadlines, and communication. Review assessments and policies to identify potential barriers, pain points, or accommodations, and adjust where possible to support all learners.
- Create a clear and navigable course LMS
Within your LMS, organize assignments, readings, and resources so students can easily find what they need. Use clear labels, consistent formatting, and logical sequencing to guide them. Include instructions, cues, and links to support services and campus resources. Ensure the LMS reflects the same clarity, consistency, and supportive tone as the syllabus. Add a welcome video or course tour to engage students before the course begins.

- Ensure course materials are accessible Review all readings, media, documents, and tools to confirm they meet accessibility standards (e.g., screen reader compatibility, closed captioning, alternative text). Make adjustments as needed so all students can access and engage with course content.
- Establish classroom guidelines and norms Share or co-develop community norms with students (e.g., on the first day or via a discussion board activity) to [promote an inclusive, supportive learning environment for all students](#).

Step 5:

Plan for Iteration, Reflection, and Continual Course Improvement

Courses evolve as we learn what works best for students. This step focuses on gathering feedback, reflecting on successes and challenges, and documenting decisions to guide future iterations. By reviewing your course design, assessments and policies, you can identify improvements, remove barriers, and ensure changes align with program-level goals and student needs.

- Collect start-of-course data Use surveys and pre-tests to understand students' backgrounds, prior knowledge, skills, interests, and professional contexts. This information can guide customization of course materials, identify areas where refreshers may be needed, and help anticipate how the course may need to adapt for different student populations.
- Use formative assessment to adjust instruction It's important to stay as flexible as possible and make adjustments to assignments and lectures in live-time. Use formative assessments (quizzes, polls, reflections, in-class exercises) and office hours to gauge student understanding and adjust lectures, activities, or assignments in real time to better support learning.

- Collect mid-course feedback

Create opportunities for students to share feedback on their learning experience, workload, clarity of materials, and engagement. This can be done via surveys, discussion boards, or short reflective assignments. Use feedback to identify immediate adjustments that could improve student experience and learning.
- Reflect on course effectiveness

Reflect on which activities, assessments, and strategies supported or hindered achievement of learning goals. Examine student performance, engagement, and feedback to identify strengths, weaknesses, and potential adjustments. Engage in [peer review of teaching](#) or sign up for a [teaching consultation](#) for a new perspective.
- Identify priorities and plan revisions

Based on reflection, student feedback and evaluations, and peer feedback, determine which changes should be made for future offerings. Focus on revisions that enhance learning, reduce barriers, improve accessibility, and support equity.
- Document design decisions and align with program goals

Keep detailed notes on design choices, revisions, and reflections for future iterations. Ensure that course changes align with program-level learning outcomes, institutional priorities, and evolving student needs.

Based on Fink, L. D. (2013). Creating significant learning experiences: an integrated approach to designing college courses (Revised and updated ed.). Jossey-Bass.