



## Planning Your Course: A Decision Guide

### **1. Where are you? Size up the situation.**

- A. Which students do you expect will enroll in this course? (number, prior knowledge and experience, motivation, etc.)
- B. What role does this course play in the overall JD experience of the students who take it?
- C. How does it relate to other courses in related areas? What courses does it build on? What courses follow it?
- D. Is it tested on the Texas Bar Exam? If so, what knowledge and skills will students need for that purpose?
- E. What kind of learning space will you have? (What classroom are you in? Are the desks tiered? Does it have movable chairs? What media equipment is available? Do you need additional training in a particular teaching technology?)

### **2. Identify 3-5 general outcomes for the course.**

- A. What do you want students to be able to DO once the course is over?
- B. What would students have to KNOW in order to do the items listed in question "2.A" above?

### **3. Assessment of Learning:**

- A. How would you know if the students achieved these outcomes? (How can you assess student learning/achievement?)

### **4. Determine how you will assess student learning and achievement.**

- A. FOR EACH OUTCOME specified above, what information can you gather that shows how well the outcome was achieved for each student individually? For the class as a whole?
- B. For which outcomes are multiple-choice exams sufficient? Essay exams? Project assignments? Writing assignments? Other "products" or valid evidence of learning outcomes sought?

### **5. Determine the specific learning activities for the course. What are the students going to do?**

A. FOR EACH OUTCOME listed in #2, what learning activities will generate the kind of learning you envision?

B. Is "hearing" sufficient? Or "reading"? Or "doing"? Or does the learning outcomes require some combination of activities?

**6. Choose appropriate teaching strategies to achieve your outcomes:**

A. How can you help your students achieve the outcomes you have set? (What general structure of learning activities will best assist the students in achieving the outcomes you have established?)

You are trying to move your students from novices to higher levels of proficiency in the subject you are teaching.



**7. Develop a sequence of activities, a week-by-week schedule for the whole term. When are you going to do what?**

**8. Identify Resources: Who/What can help? What resources do you need (and can you get) to support each of the outcomes listed in #2? (people, places, and things, including media)**

**9. How are you going to grade? Develop your grading system.**

A. Your system should reflect the full range of learning outcomes and activities. (Remember, NOT everything has to be graded.)

B. The relative weight of each item on the course grade should reflect the relative importance of that activity.

**10. De-bugging the design: What could go wrong? Analyze and assess this "first draft" of the course.**

A. What kinds of situations might arise as you implement this course? e.g., Will students be motivated to do the work? What if they're not?

B. Does the design encourage student involvement?

C. Will students get sufficient feedback on their performance?

D. How can you prevent (or at least minimize) problems?

E. Make the necessary modifications in the design.

**11. Plan an evaluation of the course itself and your own teaching performance. How will you know how the course is going? How it went?**

A. What kinds of mid-term and end-of-term feedback will you need?

B. What specific questions about the course do you have? How effective are the particular learning activities? To what degree are the outcomes for the course achieved? etc.

C. What sources of information can help you answer these questions? Analyzing student performance, student feedback and interviews, questionnaires, peer observers?