

Workshop Reflection for TI 0912 - 007 Foundations of Course Design

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Workshop Summary

The "Foundations of Course Design" workshop at the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning provided a comprehensive overview of essential instructional design concepts, emphasizing the application of constructive alignment and backward design in course development. The session kicked off with a case study that encouraged participants to identify and reflect on key aspects of course design. Working in breakout groups, participants engaged in discussions that set the stage for exploring key elements of effective course design, including alignment and scaffolding. The facilitator then delved into Bloom's Taxonomy and shared a course design evaluation checklist, offering practical tools for aligning learning outcomes, activities, and assessments.

The workshop also highlighted the role of inclusivity, diversity, and Indigenous epistemologies in course design, advocating for a learning environment where students feel respected, valued, and connected. By adopting these principles, instructors can create courses that are culturally responsive and student-centered.

A significant takeaway from the session was the use of constructive alignment, which focuses on ensuring that the learning outcomes, instructional activities, and assessments are purposefully interconnected. This approach is rooted in the idea that meaningful learning occurs when students actively engage with content through well-structured learning experiences that align with course objectives. Additionally, the session emphasized backward design, a method where instructors first identify desired learning outcomes, then determine the appropriate evidence of learning, and finally plan learning activities and instruction.

Application of Theory and Practice

As a doctoral student studying in Werklund School of Education and an instructional designer for the post-secondary institution, I recognize the critical role that constructive alignment and backward design play in effective course design. These concepts align closely with my professional work in designing and developing courses that promote meaningful student learning and engagement. For instance, in a recent course, Risk Management, I redesigned, I started by reviewing the program-level learning objectives, course-level objectives, textbook topics, and weekly module objectives to ensure alignment across all elements. This mirrors the approach discussed in the workshop, where the focus is on creating a coherent structure that links learning outcomes, assessments, and activities.

One aspect I particularly appreciated was the emphasis on scaffolding learning experiences. This concept is very important in online courses, where students often navigate learning independently. In my practice, I apply scaffolding by including practice quizzes and weekly self-assessments that align with each week's topic, offering students multiple opportunities to engage with the material and receive formative feedback. During the session, the facilitator highlighted the importance of providing varied opportunities for practice and feedback, which aligns with my strategy of incorporating engagement activities to foster interaction and self-directed learning in an online environment.

The workshop also reinforced the importance of constructing learning experiences around big, open-ended questions. In future course designs, I plan to use this approach more explicitly, developing questions that promote critical thinking and exploration. For example, I might frame the course around questions such as, "How can we apply risk management principles to real-world scenarios?" This would encourage students to move beyond memorization, focusing instead on the application and integration of concepts.

Inclusivity and diversity in course design were also key topics that resonated with me. The workshop emphasized the need to create a learning environment that acknowledges and respects diverse perspectives. In my teaching practice, I aim to foster an inclusive space where students feel safe to express their ideas and learn from one another. Moving forward, I plan to incorporate more culturally responsive content and actively work to bridge awareness with action by examining my own biases that may impact my teaching decisions.

Overall, the workshop provided a valuable reminder of the importance of aligning learning outcomes, activities, and assessments while incorporating diverse pedagogical approaches and inclusive practices. By adopting these principles in my teaching practice, I can design courses that not only support student success but also encourage deep, reflective, and meaningful learning experiences. The insights gained from this session will guide my ongoing work as I strive to create online learning environments that are engaging, equitable, and effective.