

Understanding By Design Overview*

1. WHAT ARE THE DESIRED RESULTS?

At the end of the course:

- What key big ideas will students understand?
- What essential questions will be addressed?
- What knowledge and skills will students gain?
- What curricular and established goals will this course meet?

2. WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE OF STUDENT UNDERSTANDING AND PROFICIENCY?

- What is acceptable evidence that students have gained the desired understandings, knowledge, and skills outlined in Stage 1?
- Considering the six facets of understanding, what are the best tools to determine acceptable evidence of understanding?

3. WHAT LEARNING ACTIVITIES & INSTRUCTION WILL FACILITATE THE DESIRED RESULTS?

- What learning activities and teaching promote the understandings, knowledge, skills, student interest, and excellence developed in Stage 1?
- How can the WHERETO framework be useful in developing learning activities that maximize learner engagement?

* This form is a framework of questions based on *Understanding by Design* 2nd Edition, (Wiggins & McTighe 2005.) which is intended to be a tool to articulate learning outcomes and to support alignment of assessments and learning activities in the development, deployment, and the activity of a course.

BIG IDEAS

Big ideas are central ideas that allow for coherent connections within a field of study and provide conceptual anchors for addressing new information. These big ideas provide a conceptual lens for study and a framework for meaning. They point at the heart of expert understanding in a subject. However, big ideas can often be counter-intuitive and prone to misunderstanding by the learner, but once uncovered by the student, big ideas have great transfer value across locations, subjects, and time.

SIX FACETS OF UNDERSTANDING

The following Six Facets of Understanding provide a set of questions that can help shape a multifaceted view of what makes up mature understanding of a big idea.

Explanation

Are students able to explain the big ideas in their own language, develop connections with other ideas, and can explain their processes and reasoning in their work?

Interpretation

Are students able to interpret the big ideas of the course and translate them to another context?

Application

Are students able to apply their knowledge and skills in new situations and contexts?

Perspective

Are students able to articulate differing points of view regarding a topic, recognize underlying assumptions, and take a critical stance?

Empathy

Are students able to empathize with other points of view?

Self Knowledge

Are students able to self-assess their own learning and development?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

These questions address the heart of a particular problem, task, or field of study. These questions can be helpful guideposts in the design and the learning process. Essential questions are not easily answerable; they stimulate thought and inquiry and likely generate more questions. By exploring these questions, learners can discover the deep riches in a given subject.

Example Essential Questions

- To what extent does art reflect culture or shape it?
- What is the difference between scientific fact, scientific theory, and a strong opinion?

PRIORITIZING IDEAS & CONCEPTS

Courses are time limited, and no subject can be covered in its entirety in the course of 6 - 13 weeks. This limitation requires us to make decisions about which ideas to preference in the time allotted during courses. You may find these questions helpful when considering which ideas and concepts to address in a course.

- Which ideas and concepts are worth being familiar with?
- Which ideas and concepts are important to know and to do?
- Which ideas and concepts are big ideas that are central to understanding?

WHERE TO

This framework of questions may be helpful in shaping the design, structure, and order of the learning activities for a course.

Where & Why

- How will students know where they are headed in the course and why?

Hook

- How will the learning activities hook and hold the attention of the student?

Explore, Experience, Enable, & Equip

- How will the learning activities help students explore and gain experience addressing the big ideas?
- How will the learning activities enable and equip students to perform and use the big ideas?

Reflect, Rethink, Revise

- How will the learning activities encourage students to rethink their understanding of the big ideas and reflect on their performance?
- How will learning activities be revised based on the developing learning needs of the students?

Evaluate

- How will the learning activities help students evaluate their own learning and understanding?

Tailor

- How will the learning activities be tailored to address the individual students based on their interests, learning styles, prior knowledge, or personal needs?

Organize

- How will the learning activities be organized to best help students learn, maximizing student engagement and minimizing misconceptions?