

Guiding Questions for Course Re-Design

Jank and Meyer (2019) developed a set of nine questions to guide educators in thinking about their course design in a practical and sequential way:

1. Who should learn? (original, adapted to: Who are our learners?)
2. What should be learned?
3. From whom should be learned?
4. When should be learned?
5. With whom should be learned?
6. Where should be learned?
7. How should be learned?
8. With what should be learned?
9. What for should be learned?

Below are some thoughts accompanying each point that combine what the authors suggest with our own Higher Education perspective.

1. *Who are our learners?*

The authors' original question took a philosophical stance in that all humans/society ought to learn in order to survive.

For us this means we commonly focus on the outcomes of our degrees (e.g. future veterinarians, teachers, artists, computer scientists, historians, etc.), and for our existing courses we should ask the question of who our learners are thus addressing the diversity of our learners. This will later on guide us when addressing the way learning is demonstrated.

2. *What should be learned?*

The authors discuss the decision-making processes (e.g. academic rigour and ethical appropriateness of chosen content; criteria for choosing content; who makes these decisions) within the context of primary and secondary education.

When we are asking ourselves this question we should begin with our ILOs and work from there: what is it that we want our students to be able to do/know at the end of the course?

Looking at our existing course we should ask:

- how much of the teaching content is aligned to the ILOs?
- What are areas required by professional bodies?
- What are the graduate attributes and skills we want our students to develop?

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- What are interesting side-stories—knowledge we would like our students to gain, for a more in-depth or wider experience?

The aim is to prioritise content that is covered by ILOs and assessment. We might then use the 'side stories' to experiment with different learning and teaching methods.

3. *From whom should be learned?*

The authors explore the role of teachers in various areas of society. We should ask ourselves from whom students should learn in the extended Higher Education context. For example:

lecturers, demonstrators, tutors, graduate teaching assistants, peers, librarians, learning developers, people from students' private lives, social media, professional body resources, OERs, etc.

4. *When should be learned?*

The *when* question is most relevant for higher education from a learning-theoretical point of view, as well as from a curriculum design perspective (i.e. order of content/sequential learning).

At this point the authors point out that all learning is subject to socio-economic and political influences, plus many more. In Higher Education this might mean professional bodies and their requirements, but also more practical elements such as time-tabling, availability of (guest) lecturers, etc. In our current situation with physical distancing being in place and thus *remote* teaching at the forefront, the question of synchronous versus asynchronous learning comes into play with different time-zones of learner as one of the deciding issues.

5. *With whom should be learned?*

Should students learn with peers, with mentors, with teaching staff? How much of it with peers, or with tutors, or with the course lecturer, or with guest lecturers? How will this be divided? This leads to the next question about the learning environment.

6. *Where should be learned?*

Usually, we would ask ourselves where the learning should happen and we choose from a wide range of options of formal and informal learning environments: e.g. classrooms, placements, labs, internet, Moodle, student dorm, café, or home. This question has never been quite as significant as it is now: will the learning be online, and where should it take place e.g. Moodle, Zoom, MS Teams; what learning will be in the physical environment, and where should it take place e.g. on campus inside or outside with physical distancing protocols in place, the Library, cafes or parks or museums, etc.? This is intrinsically linked to those of *when* and *with whom*.

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7. *How should be learned?*

While the immediate answer to this question should be 'students should learn actively' we need to explore how this can be achieved. This question is of great importance in the current situation as it has to address the need to support students in their transition to remote learning and exam taking. Aspects this question explores are:

- a) How do we address the diverse backgrounds of our learners? For example, how do we balance the diverse experiences learners bring to the formal learning situation, and how do address the various needs? Requirements for a quiet place to study, equipment, reliable internet, and once we have a physically distanced campus open what happens with students and staff who have to continue shielding?
- b) How do we teach our students how to learn in this unfamiliar (to us all) situation? Who can we involve to help us with this?
- c) How can students develop key competences, graduate attributes and skills?

8. *With what should be learned?*

While the authors explore various tools that can be used for learning from books to computers, in our current situation we have to prioritise what can and potentially cannot be accessed. Ask yourselves, for example, what you would do if the Library is not open, or only allows a few students in: how will they access printed resources? What equipment will they require for remote learning, what does their hardware and software need to be like? Where are your opportunities and where your boundaries?

At the core of this question is accessibility of whatever tool your students will learn with.

9. *What for should be learned?*

The authors consider this the most important question, exploring educational ideals and the necessity for developing citizenship in our learners while pointing out that a value-based answer to this question necessitates that concrete decisions must be measurable (Evaluation in the ADDIE system).

For us this question can be seen as summarising all of the previous eight with a particular focus on World Changing Glasgow, perhaps.

The authors readily admit that it is easy to ask these questions, but difficult to answer them. Nevertheless, they might aide our decision-making processes when **designing for remote learning with the transition to blended learning once physical distancing rules are altered to enable some face-to-face contact.**

Jank, W. and Meyer, H. (2019) *Didaktische Modelle*. 13th edn. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag GmbH.