# Planning the Course

# *Job Savvy: How to Be a Success at Work*, 2019

Most educators would agree that the key to teaching a successful course is careful, thorough planning. And, as noted in *Exceptional Teaching: Ideas in Action*, published by EMC Corporation, “Instructors assess, plan, implement, and evaluate . . . repeatedly. They do this based on many of the factors that make teaching learner-centered and on several other variables. Before students even think about entering or logging into the classroom, instructors make decisions about the course. These begin with identifying the heart of the course. That is, what, exactly, are the most important outcomes that students should achieve? And what plan of action can instructors devise that will help ensure those outcomes?” Establishing an action plan for a course typically includes four phases:

1. Developing the course outcomes

2. Determining the course delivery mode and structure (dividing the course into parts, each with outcomes)

3. Selecting the course’s instructional approach, resources, and activities

4. Developing an assessment strategy

# 1. Developing Course Outcomes

In developing course outcomes, consider the following key issues:

● When this course is over, in what ways will the learner be permanently changed?

● Should instruction result in

○ building knowledge?

○ developing higher-order thinking?

○ developing independent learning skills?

○ developing technical fluency?

● What problems are encountered that are related to course content?

○ What decisions are made?

○ What must be communicated?

○ How will the learner find out the work is satisfactory?

○ How will the learner receive feedback?

Considering the questions above, a set of end-of-course performance goals for a class could include the following student outcomes:

● Build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles, and viewpoints.

● Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and oral forms to persons inside and outside of the organization.

● Leverage existing digital technologies ethically and efficiently to solve problems, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

● Leverage the strengths of others to achieve common goals; use empathetic skills to guide and motivate; and organize, prioritize, and delegate work.

● Demonstrate personal accountability and effective work habits.

● Identify and articulate one's skills, strengths, knowledge, and experiences relevant to the position desired and career goals, and identify areas necessary for professional growth.

● Value, respect, and learn from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions.

# 2. Determining the Course Delivery Mode and Structure

Frequently, the course structure has been determined previously by your organization. However, if you are in a position to develop a plan or modify an existing structure, consider these questions:

● What topics in each subject area are essential for demonstrating the course outcomes?

● Is this the only course that will address this subject and skill set?

● What do students already know about each subject? What can they learn on their own, independent of your direct instruction?

● Where in each subject area will the instruction “begin” and “end”?

Your answers to these questions will help you divide the course content into parts and identify the associated learning outcomes (also called *performance objectives*). Note that course outcomes are marked by higher and more challenging skill sets and typically require the integration of many skills, while unit or chapter outcomes are more narrowly defined and focused.

## Course Delivery Mode: Traditional Classroom, Online (Distance Learning), or Hybrid?

The core considerations are the same whether you are planning a traditional onsite course, an online course (also called a distance learning course), or a hybrid of the two. However, the instructional differences in these delivery modes create distinct needs you must address in the planning stage for your course. A critical challenge in teaching online courses is the issue of interacting with students. How will you communicate with them? How will you get to know them? How will they submit assignments and tests? How will you deliver feedback?

Here are some additional questions to consider when planning an online or hybrid course, as suggested in *Exceptional Teaching*:

● What course management system will be used: JIST Gateway, or some other learning management system?

● Will students work independently offline? How will they use the course management system, JIST.com, cloud-based software, or some other method to review course outcomes, the syllabus, and assignment due dates? How will they communicate with you, take online quizzes, transmit completed work, and participate in chat sessions?

● Will you offer an onsite orientation meeting with your students at the beginning of the course? If so, how will you prepare to answer the questions students will likely have?

● Will students come to the campus to take exams? If not, will students be directed to offsite locations where exams can be administered to verify that the person taking the exam is indeed the person getting credit for the course? It is critical that this step be set up before the online class begins.

● What hardware configuration and/or software requirements must a student have to participate in your course?

Both the student and instructor resources offered with *Job Savvy 2020* can be adapted for use in an online learning environment, or a hybrid of traditional and online learning contexts.

## Course Delivery Structure: Syllabus Suggestions

A comprehensive syllabus should help you and your students prepare for each part of the class. Syllabi are useful for traditional, on-campus courses as well as for courses delivered online. Generally, the following elements are included in a syllabus:

1. Course-identifying data

2. Prerequisites

3. Instructor contact information

4. Course outcomes

5. Required course resources

6. Major assignments

7. Grade composition

8. Class structure

9. Course schedule

10. College/school/federal/state/other requirements

Syllabus suggestions are included as part of the Planning resources provided in the *Instructor eResources*.

# 3. Selecting the Instructional Approach, Resources, and Activities

After the course outcomes and structure are determined, it is important to plan the main content of the course. This includes considering computer training, selecting student courseware and assessment materials, choosing instructional support materials, identifying resources for English-language learners, and reviewing other resources.

## Student Resources

Selecting high-quality student courseware is an important step in the planning process. Learning materials should be engaging and accessible. The *Job Savvy 2019* program offers several valuable learning tools to support course performance objectives, including these:

* *Job Savvy* workbook (printed book and/or ebook)
* “Activities” handouts
* Video presentations
* Review quizzes

### Student Workbook and Ebook

*Job Savvy* is about keeping a job and getting ahead. It is based on research into what employers actually look for in the people they hire. The curriculum is designed to develop critical job-survival skills, increase productivity, and improve job satisfaction and success. The many workbook activities reinforce key points and help develop new job-survival skills and plans. The narrative is easy to read and informative, with good graphic design, many examples, checklists, tables, case studies, activities, and section summaries.

In this sixth edition, *Job Savvy* continues to use the basic features that readers like while delivering more real-life activities directly to the students via margin activities and updating information about the work world.

The *Job Savvy* workbook is divided into 13 chapters, with each chapter focusing on a course goal. The chapter opener page includes the **Objectives**, which define the concepts and skills students will demonstrate after successfully completing the chapter. It also includes a link to **Video Presentations** showing students the key takeaways from each chapter.

The print workbook chapter content enables students to explore concepts learned in depth through concise text, video content, hands-on **Workbook Activities**,and educational **Games** (they are also provided in a Google Drive folder to download, print, or electronically fill-in and online submission to the instructor).An **Activities Supplement** handout is provided for each chapter to provide guidance on how to complete the margin activities (they are also delivered to the instructors) in a Google Drive folder. Interactive **Review Quizzes** are delivered in a Google Drive folder so the students can independently download and print them or fill them out on a computer. They are also provided to the instructors so they can download and print them out to deliver to the students in the classroom. The **Section Introductions** provide brief overviews of the features and concepts that are the focus of study. **Key Terms**, in boldface font, are accompanied by specific definitions and examples, and they are compiled in the **Glossary**. The glossary and videos may also be used as study tools to reinforce understanding of topics.

Page margins include the following student activities:

* **Journal Activity** allows students to privately reflect on topics learned by keeping a journal and answering/expanding on the questions in their journal.
* **Group Activity** allows students to explore concepts within small groups to further explore the concepts learned and add depth to their own knowledge and interpretations while practicing how to professionally and effectively communicate in small groups or teamwork scenarios.
* **Discussion Activity** allows the students to participate and share their knowledge, and ask questions in a large, formal setting—the full classroom—while practicing how to professionally and effectively communicate in large group settings.
* **Case Study** enhances student understanding of the concepts with real-life scenarios. Case Studies may be recorded in student journals, discussed in small groups, discussed in the classroom, or contemplated privately depending on classroom instruction.

At the end of each chapter, **Summing Up** highlights the key concepts and statistics covered by the chapter learning objectives and the **Review Quiz** enables students to determine how their understanding has improved after completing chapter work. A **Midterm Exam** and **Final Exam** may be delivered to students by the instructor at the end of the course.

### Instructor Guide

You as a facilitator have a robust instructor guide available by PDF on JIST.com and the ebook. This *Instructor Guide* contains a variety of tools to help trainers, teachers, and other instructors solidify the concepts and skills taught. The instructor may choose to incorporate these activities into their course, and may choose how to deliver them to the students (print out, provide online access via Google Drive, or some other secure delivery method).

Instructor resources are available through the *Instructor Resources—Workbooks* at Jist.com and in the *Instructor eResources* in an innovative web-based ebook at Jist.bookshelf.emcp.com. The instructor materials include the following items:

* **Planning Resources**, such as this ***Planning the Course*** article, **Chapter Goals and Learning Objectives**, **Alignment Charts** (NACE and SCANS) to understand how *Job Savvy* aligns to reputable national standards, **On-the-Job Training Guide** that describes how to use *Job Savvy* in a one-on-one training approach for new instructors (this content provides instructional aids and makes it easy to use *Job Savvy* in either the classroom or the workplace), ***Tools for Assesing Student Progress*** article, and **Video Lesson Plans** to offer guidance on how to incorporate the topical videos into your course.
* **Delivery Resources**, including **Video Presentations** to review the main points of each chapter, **Discussion Questions**, and **Additional Resources**, including Internet Resources and the JIST.com/blog (providing current information about jobs and any updates of courseware). Instructors and students are provided with chapter **Activities Supplements** handouts that supplement the margin activities in the workbook. Instructors are also provided with **Review Activities** to prompt students to apply the skills practiced in the workbook to solve various job-related challenges. These review exercises help with knowledge retention. Topical **Videos** are also provided to the instructor. These videos focus on key topics and may be shown to the class.
* **Assessment Resources**, including chapter-based **Review Quizzes**, a **Midterm Exam**, and **a Final Exam** present a wide variety of problems that ask for multiple choice, true/false, or fill-in-the-blank answers. The exams ask for short written descrip­tions of the skills needed to solve more complex real-life work situations. This allows students to test their comprehension and recall of concepts, terms, and skills. Instructors also receive **Answer Keys**.

## Resources for English Language Learners[[1]](#footnote-1)

One of the fastest growing groups of students in higher education is comprised of students whose first language is not English, and whose English is not yet equivalent to that of native English speakers in lexicon and syntax. The wide differences in fluency among limited English speakers makes your planning for meeting their needs somewhat more complex—and very important.

Chances are that you already know you will have some students whose language skills are not up to the level we expect or want. What? You’re not the ESL instructor? Not your job? Think again. Your job is to help *all* the students in your course meet the intended outcomes. So plan how you’re going to do this for your limited English speakers. Begin by assessing early on the language abilities of your students. Try these measures:

1. One method is a “one-minute preview.” Tear some sheets of paper into four parts and give each student a piece. Ask them no more than two questions and give them one minute (okay, two) to write their answer. The question could be about their language skills, but it might be better to ask them something else. That way you get a short writing sample plus information about something else, such as why they are taking the course, something they would like to learn, the types of activities they enjoy, or what they are most worried about in the course. You don’t need to be an English teacher to see which students will need help. Use your common sense.

2. If your class is small, conduct a discussion early in the course. Make sure you hear each student answer a question or ask one.

3. If you are conducting a pretest for the course, include some questions that ask students if they need to improve their English or their writing skills.

4. Tell students to check with you if they think they will need language help or extra exam time for reading assignments or tests.

In addition to the suggestions above, consider whether or not you need to prepare a list of terms for each session or unit that might be troublemakers for English language learners. Do you need to have students arrange for tutors to assist with completing the unguided assessments? Do you need to dedicate a session or part of one to instruction on how to prepare the work you expect?

# 4. Developing an Assessment Strategy

The final phase of planning a course is to develop an assessment strategy based on the purpose of evaluation and on your philosophy of what constitutes a high-quality assessment. The obvious purpose of assessing student learning is to determine whether or not students have achieved the goals of the course and, if they have, to what degree. Other functions of evaluation might include motivating students, determining the overall effectiveness of your teaching, and meeting accreditation requirements.

What is your philosophy of assessment? In determining your response, consider the following suggestions from *Exceptional Teaching*:

1. Assessment should contribute to student learning by asking students to apply their skills in out-of-school or workplace situations.

2. Timing, content, and form of assessments should be planned as an integral part of the course design.

3. The purpose of every assessment should be clear.

4. The type of assessment—its content and format—should be appropriate for the purpose.

5. Assessments should be scored as consistently and objectively as possible.

6. Assessments should provide students with feedback on their learning.

7. Assessments should emphasize intellectual traits of value: analytical reading, thinking, decision-making, and research skills along with individual creativity and individual intelligence.

8. Assessments should be conducted at specific, planned checkpoints.

9. Assessments should be conducted in a positive learning environment, with every effort made to lower students’ test anxieties.

10. Assessments should allow students to demonstrate their accomplishment of outcomes in various ways, including ways that fit their individual learning styles.

## Determining the Number, Level, and Type of Assessments

Using your philosophy of assessment as a guide, begin to formulate your evaluation and grading strategy by answering the following course-level questions, as presented in *Exceptional Teaching*:

● Do I want a course pre-assessment?

● Do I want a comprehensive course assessment—one that will determine students’ mastery of the major intended outcomes for the entire course?

● Do I want a pre-assessment for each unit or chapter?

● Do I want a comprehensive assessment for each unit or chapter—one that evaluates students’ mastery of the major intended outcomes for that unit or chapter?

● Do I want interim or checkpoint assessments that evaluate students’ mastery of intended outcomes of learning chunks within units or chapters? If so, how many? How often?

● Once my system is in place, will my students know that I value how and how well they think?

The questions above will help you establish approximately how many assessments you wish to include and their place in the course. The next decisions concern which types of assessment to use: traditional cognitive (objective) tests and/or performance-based assessments. Each of these two major categories of tests has its best uses. Traditional cognitive tests such as multiple-choice exams usually work best for testing information recall, comprehension, and analysis. They also are reliable and efficient, and relatively easy to score. On the down side, objective-type tests are criticized for not representing how students will use their new skills in an unfamiliar setting or in the real world of work.

Here’s where performance-based testing rises to the fore. Requiring students to demonstrate what they have learned and to apply it in a realistic context that closely approximates a real-world situation measures how well students can do what the course intended to teach them. As emphasized in *Exceptional Teaching*, “Authentic, performance-based assessments ask students to integrate what they have learned and apply it to resolve an issue, solve a problem, create something new, work collaboratively, or use their written and oral communication skills. Authentic assessments stress the process of learning as well as the outcomes of learning.”

Typically, instructors develop an assessment strategy that uses the strengths of both major types of assessments. The *Instructor eResources* provides access to the “Tools for Assessing Student Progress” article, which describes the objective and performance-based testing tools available for *Advanced Excel 2016.* You can customize the Grading Sheet (also accessed from the *Instructor eResources*) for your assessment plan.

## Creating a Grading Plan

By choosing the types of assessments that will measure students’ achievement of course and program outcomes, you will already have established a schema of the major grading components. The next step is to weight the scores as preparation for entering them into a grade calculation system—for example, an Excel spreadsheet (an Excel spreadsheet version of the Grading Sheet for *Job Savvy* has also been provided to you).

Decide whether you will include nonachievement factors, such as effort and attendance, in students’ grades. If so, consider how to measure those elements. While it is simple to track attendance, it is not so easy to objectively evaluate effort and attitude. Some experts recommend that instructors provide regular verbal and written feedback on nonachievement factors, but confine grades to academic achievement.

# For More Information and Help

The customer service and technical support teams for *Job Savvy*, 2019, are ready and willing to answer questions or offer suggestions about using the rich components of this highly interactive program. Use the following information to contact these departments:

• Customer Service: [service@jist.com](mailto:service@jist.com)or 800-328-1452 (option 1). Phone support is available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (CST).

• Technical Support: [techsupport@jist.com](mailto:techsupport@jist.com) or 800-328-1452 (option 2). Phone support is available Monday through Sunday, 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (CST).

Our editorial and digital development teams are always glad to hear from instructors (and students) who have concerns about the course materials and creative ideas for using, enriching, and expanding the program. Please contact customer service or your sales representative if you have thoughts you would like to share with those teams.

Much of the content of *this Planning the Course article* is based on information found in *Exceptional Teaching: Ideas in Action*. To order a copy of this resource, please contact customer service.

1. Excerpted from *Exceptional Teaching: Ideas in Action*, published by EMC Corporation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)