This worksheet can help you identify the learning outcomes for your course that will serve as a “north star” - both for you in designing/teaching your course, *and* for your students as they play an active role in their own learning. Use this worksheet to:

1. Articulate the long-term impact you hope your course will have on students – that is, the “Big Dream” for your course (p. 1)
2. Identify what students would need to learn in order for this Big Dream to be achieved - that is, the learning outcomes for your course (p. 2 – 5)
3. Craft your learning outcomes with meaning, measurement, and maps as guideposts for your course (p. 6)
4. **Articulate the long-term impact you hope your course will have on students – that is, the “Big Dream” for your course (Fink 2013).** Before listing the kinds of things you hope students will learn in your course, it can be helpful to articulate the *long-term impact* you hope your course will have on students. Spend some time reflecting on each of the following prompts, and write your answers in the space provided, culminating with your articulation of your Big Dream for your course.

*Five years after this course is over, what do you hope your students will still carry with them?*

*What would you want to be true about students who took your course that is not true of other people?*

*Imagine that, years from now, someone asked one of your students how they were impacted by taking your course. What would you love that student to say?*

After this course is over,

my Big Dream is that students will...

1. **Identify what students would need to learn in order for this Big Dream to be achieved - that is, the learning outcomes for your course.** There are several different taxonomies/frameworks that can support you in doing this. One that is particularly applicable in higher education is Dee Fink’s Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013), which identifies six categories of learning that lead to lasting impact on student’s lives:

![A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated]()

Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013)

It is important to note that outcomes in different categories of Fink’s Taxonomy reinforce each other. For example, if students learn to use their content knowledge to identify creative solutions to challenging problems (**Application**), that will enhance their understanding of the content (**Foundational Knowledge**). Or, if they are able to make connections between what they are learning in your course and other realms of their life (**Integration**), they may become more interested in, and value, what they are learning (**Caring**).

**Ideally, you will up with a list of 6 to 8 significant learning outcomes for your course (though depending on what you teach, you may have fewer or may have more).** You may not have outcomes in *all* of the categories represented in the Taxonomy above, or you may choose not to use the Taxonomy at all. Regardless,

1. You can use the prompts on the next two pages to brainstorm *possible* learning outcomes, using this Taxonomy (if you find it useful), *then* …
2. Write down roughly 6 to 8 most important learning goals (if you already have some learning outcomes in mind, you can skip directly to this step on p. 5 of this worksheet)
3. **Questions to Consider in Brainstorming Potential Learning Goals[[1]](#footnote-1)** *(if you already know your most important learning goals, feel free to skip to p. 5)*

**Application Goals**

* What do you hope students will be able to *do* with what they learn? Might include things like manage complex projects, work effectively in teams, create a strategic plan, negotiate an agreement, etc.
* What ways/kinds of thinking are important for students to learn? Could consider expert “ways of thinking” in your discipline, as well as more general ways/kinds of thinking. Might include aspects of:
  + Critical thinking, in which students analyze and evaluate
  + Creative thinking, in which students imagine and create
  + Practical thinking, in which student reason about/solve problems and make decisions
* What important skills do students need to gain?

**Foundational Knowledge Goals**

* What key information (e.g., facts, terms, formulas, concepts, principles, relationships, etc.) is/are important for students to understand and remember in the future?
* What key ideas (or perspectives) are important for students to understand in this course?
* What “threshold concepts” are there in your field that, once understood, will transform the way in which students think about/approach your subject matter?
* What are the “essential understandings” for your discipline?

**Integration Goals**

* What connections (similarities and interactions) should students recognize and make …
  + Among ideas *within* this course?
  + Among the information, ideas, and perspectives in this course and those in other courses or areas?
  + Among material in this course and the students’ own personal, social, and/or work life?

**Human Dimension Goals**

* What could or should students learn about themselves?
* What could or should students learn about understanding others and/or interacting with them?

**Caring Goals**

* What changes/values do you hope students will adopt? What feelings? Interests? Values?

**“Learning How to Learn” Goals**

* What would you like for students to learn about:
  + How to be good students in a course like this?
  + How to learn about this particular subject?
  + How to become a self-directed learner of this subject, i.e., having a learning agenda for what they need/want to learn, and a *plan* for learning it?

1. Given all that students might learn in your course, what are *roughly* 6 to 8 significant learning outcomes that you want *all* students to come away with, and that you will use to guide the design of your course? Please note these in the space below.

***Note:*** *It’s OK if you have less than 6 or more than 8 outcomes – the key is that you have a number of outcomes that is manageable and possible to design around – remember, these are the north star for you and your students!*

***Also note****: Don’t worry yet about how you are wording these – the point here is just to just hone in on what you care about most - you will work on wording in the next step!*

My *draft* learning outcomes:

1. Now that you have experimented with big dreams and significant learning outcomes, we encourage you to **refine your student learning outcomes using three M’s as guideposts:** 
   1. **Meaningful**: How can you strengthen your *draft* outcomes to convey purpose, meaning, and inspiration for you *and* for your students?
   2. **Measurable**: How will you know whether students are moving toward these outcomes? What cues will you seek from assignments and activities to help you explore whether/how students are progressing toward these outcomes?
   3. **Maps**: If you prefer structure, consider completing this sentence stem using the ABCD method as a map for articulating your outcomes:

**\*A**udience: To whom does the outcome pertain? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**\*B**ehavior: What do you expect the audience to know/think/value/be able to do? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**\*C**ondition: When will this occur? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**\*D**egree: How much will be accomplished and to what level? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Example from Hogwarts: Defense Against the Dark Arts students (**A**udience) will be able to cast Expecto Patronum spells (**B**ehavior) at the end of the Fall 2020 quarter (**C**ondition) so that dementors disappear for a minimum of 60 minutes (**D**egree).

* 1. **More Maps**: If the course you teach is required for a particular major, consider going the extra mile by aligning one or more learning outcomes at the course-level with learning outcomes at the program-level. *How* and *what* you assess for a learning outcome can be catapulted to the program assessment level!

Use this space to continue honing your learning outcomes with the three M’s as guideposts:

References:

Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. John Wiley & Sons.

1. These questions are adapted from questions in L. Dee Fink’s “Self-Directed Guide to Significant Learning” (https://www.deefinkandassociates.com/GuidetoCourseDesignAug05.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)