Course Topic: Teaching Workplace Preparation

Course Instructor:

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Course Synopsis

Many of the courses we teach to prepare students to succeed in a particular workplace have to be customized to meet the specific language and culture demands of that workplace. As a result, workplace preparation teachers often become course designers out of necessity. In this course we will take you through a simple curriculum design framework to use when approaching the design of a workplace or occupation-specific language course. Following this framework will ensure that you have a course that meets the needs of the students, employers and other course stakeholders. It will also ensure that you create an effective, high quality course in a minimal amount of time.

Course Agenda

1. Introduction to a Basic Curriculum Framework
2. Curriculum Components

1. Introduction to a Basic Curriculum Framework

A curriculum is a series of documents that answer all the questions a teacher or administrator may have about how a course is to be delivered. Each component of a curriculum answers one or more of these questions.

Activity #1: Match the curriculum component with the questions about the course delivery that it answers using the word choices given below. The answer key can be found at the end of this handout.
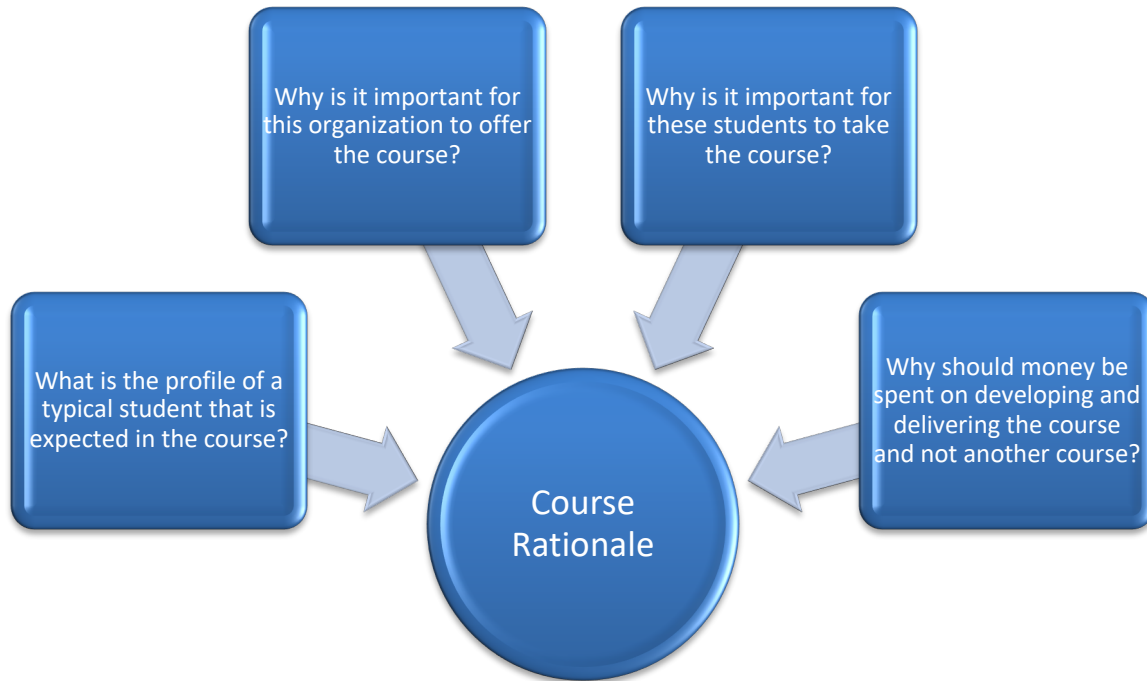
Entry assessment	Exit assessment	Syllabus	Course rationale
Materials selection	Needs analysis	Course objectives	Course logistics
Ongoing assessment	Course evaluation	Situation Analysis	

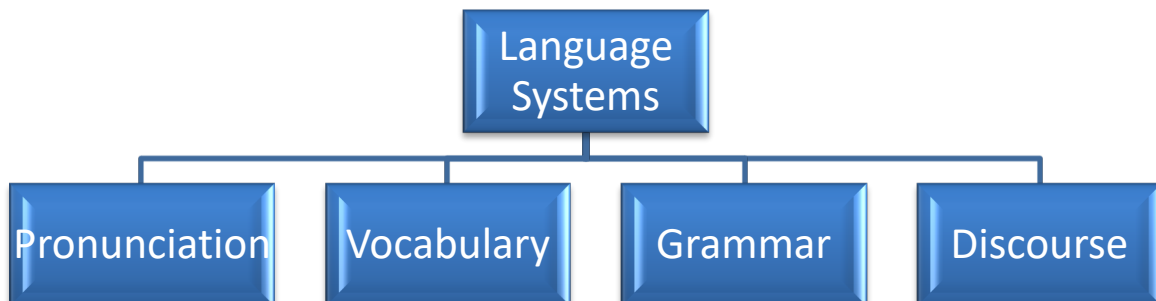| Curriculum Component	Questions the Component Should Answer
	1. What is the overall purpose of the course? Why is it important for students to take the course? Why is it important for the school to offer the course?
	2. In general terms, what do you want students to know and be able to do by the end of the course?
	3. What specifically do learners need to learn in order to meet the course objectives? How will this be determined?
	4. What environmental factors will affect how the course is structured and taught?
	5. What logistical factors will affect how the course is structured and taught?
	6. Based on the needs analysis and situation analysis, what specific content will be taught? How much time will be spent on that content? How will the course content be divided up? How will the course content be ordered? What teaching methods, techniques and activities will be used to teach the course content?
	7. What instructional materials will be used to teach the content? What materials will support the teacher's instruction?
	8. How will student eligibility for the course be determined?
	9. How will student progress throughout the course be determined?
	10. How will student success at the end of the course be determined?
	11. How will the overall effectiveness of the course be determined?

2. Curriculum Components

2.1 Course Rationale

The course rationale is a brief statement that answers the following questions:

Why is it important for this organization to offer the course?

Why is it important for these students to take the course?

What is the profile of a typical student that is expected in the course?

Why should money be spent on developing and delivering the course and not another course?
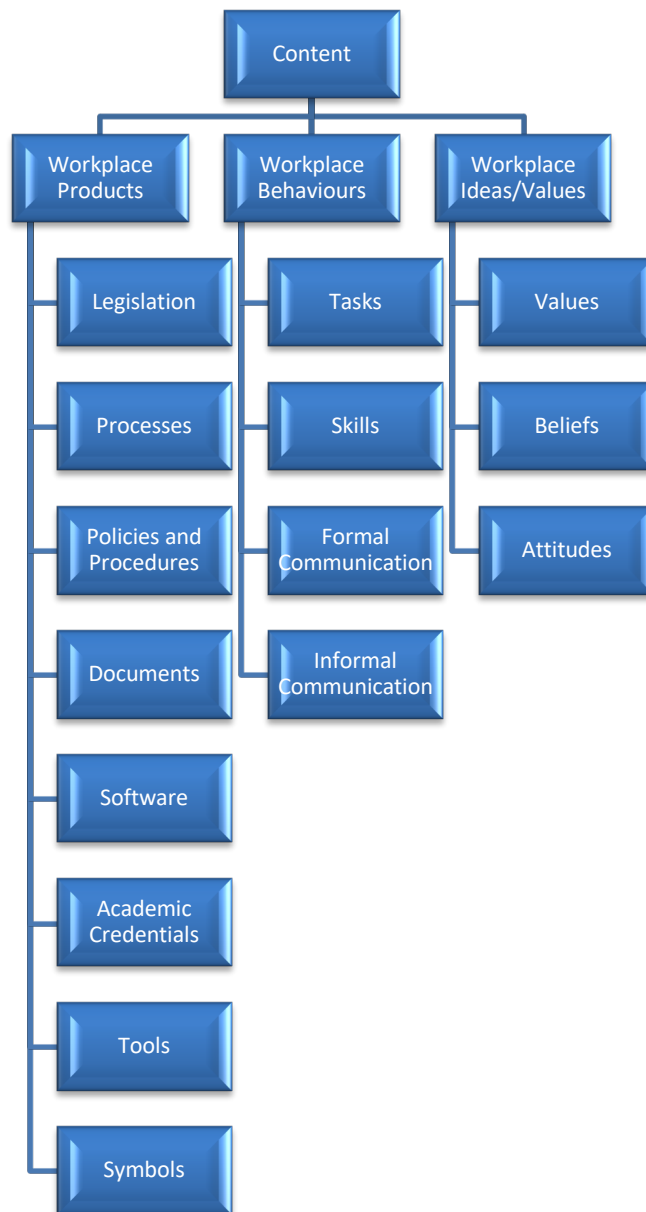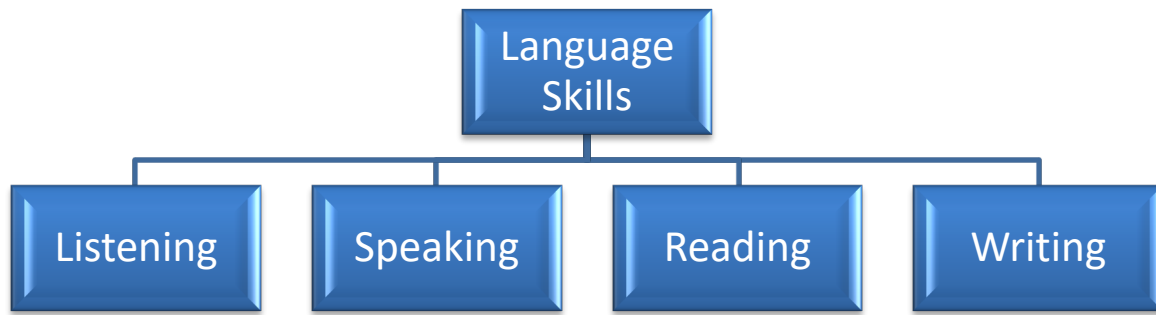
Course Rationale

A solid course rationale answers why this course should even be offered in the first place. Having a solid course rationale and communicating it clearly, helps you secure funding for your course.

2.2. Course Objectives

Course objectives may focus on any or all of the following: the **language systems**, **language skills**, and **content** specific to the workplace setting or occupation. Each of these may be further divided:

Language Systems

Pronunciation

Vocabulary

Grammar

Discourse

Language Skills

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

Content

Workplace Products
- Legislation
- Processes
- Policies and Procedures
- Documents
- Software
- Academic Credentials
- Tools
- Symbols

Workplace Behaviours
- Tasks
- Skills
- Formal Communication
- Informal Communication

Workplace Ideas/Values
- Values
- Beliefs
- Attitudes

Even a quick glance at the diagrams above will tell you that there are a LOT of choices when it comes to objectives for your workplace or occupation preparation course. The scope of language, skills and content to be learned is huge. So, what do you do? You have to prioritize. In order to make your decisions regarding priorities, you need information about what will give "the most bang for your buck". In other words, what are the key things that students need to learn in order to be successful in that workplace or occupation. By prioritizing you will be able to make your course objectives manageable, realistic and effective. The information that will help you prioritize for your objectives is gathered through the next two components of the curriculum: the needs analysis and the situation analysis.

2.3 Needs Analysis

A needs analysis does not just include getting information from prospective students. Other stakeholders that need to be included in the needs analysis for a workplace or occupation specific language course are: representatives of the education institution, course administrators, employers (current or prospective), members of the professional organization, and funders. Each of these stakeholders will have a different perspective on the needs that should be addressed in the course.

There are various ways to collect information about what needs the course should address:

Questionnaire or Survey

- Yes/no questions
- Choice questions (either... or...)
- Short answer questions
- Long answer/open-ended questions

Observations

- Job shadowing

Interviews

- Individual
- Group
- Focus group

Document Collection

- Memos
- Letters
- Reports
- Proposals
- Forms
- Correspondence

Legislation Review

- Laws governing the workplace
- Laws governing the profession or occupation

2.4 Situation Analysis

In the situation analysis piece of the curriculum, you want to take a good hard look at contextual issues that may constrain how the course is delivered and/or the overall success of the course. The situation analysis is crucial for an occupation specific language course because it will uncover issues or challenges that have the potential to completely derail the course delivery. These challenges need to be uncovered before work is put into developing the syllabus and before course delivery; plans can then be put into place to overcome the challenges. The following are categories that will help you determine the situational constraints you will be operating under with the delivery of your course.

Social Factors

- Is the profession or workplace regulated?
- What are the professional organizations for the occupation?
- Are there employer/employee relationship issues in the occupation and/or sector?
- Is there a union in the sector or workplace you are looking at?
- How much are good language skills needed or valued in this sector?
- Are there safety issues that need to be addressed through language?

Institutional Factors

- Does your organization have the time to devote to the project?
- Does your organization have access to the profession, occupation or sector the course is aimed at?
- Does your organization have the resources to deliver the course, including staff with the required expertise?
- Does your organization have the credibility to deliver the course?

Instructor Factors

- Do you have instructors with both ESL teaching experience and sector/occupation experience?
- Are your instructors willing to do the research to learn the new subject matter?
- Do your instructors have the appropriate TESL certification?
- Can you afford to pay the instructors what they expect, given their expertise?
- Do you have enough teaching hours for the instructor?
- How will you deal with the awkward teaching hours that may be required for the course (early morning, late evening)?
- Are the teachers disciplined enough to teach as language experts, not subject experts?
- Can you arrange for the class to be team taught by a language expert and a subject matter expert?

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Learner Factors

- Do the students want to be in the course or is the employer forcing them to be there?
- Will there be enough students?
- How do the students' colleagues or peers perceive their participation in a language class?
- How will the students' lives outside of the classroom (work, family, financial issues) constrain their classroom performance?
- What kind of reward or payoff will students get for taking the course (get a job, licensing, a pay raise, a bonus, keep their current job, get a promotion, get a certificate, get employer recognition)?
- What expectations do the students have of themselves, the course and the outcome of the course?
- Do the students buy into the value and necessity of language training?
- Will you have a homogenous student group in terms of language ability? Work background? Educational background?

Change Factors

- Is the workplace or occupation ready for change?
- Is the employer ready for change?
- Are the employees ready for change?
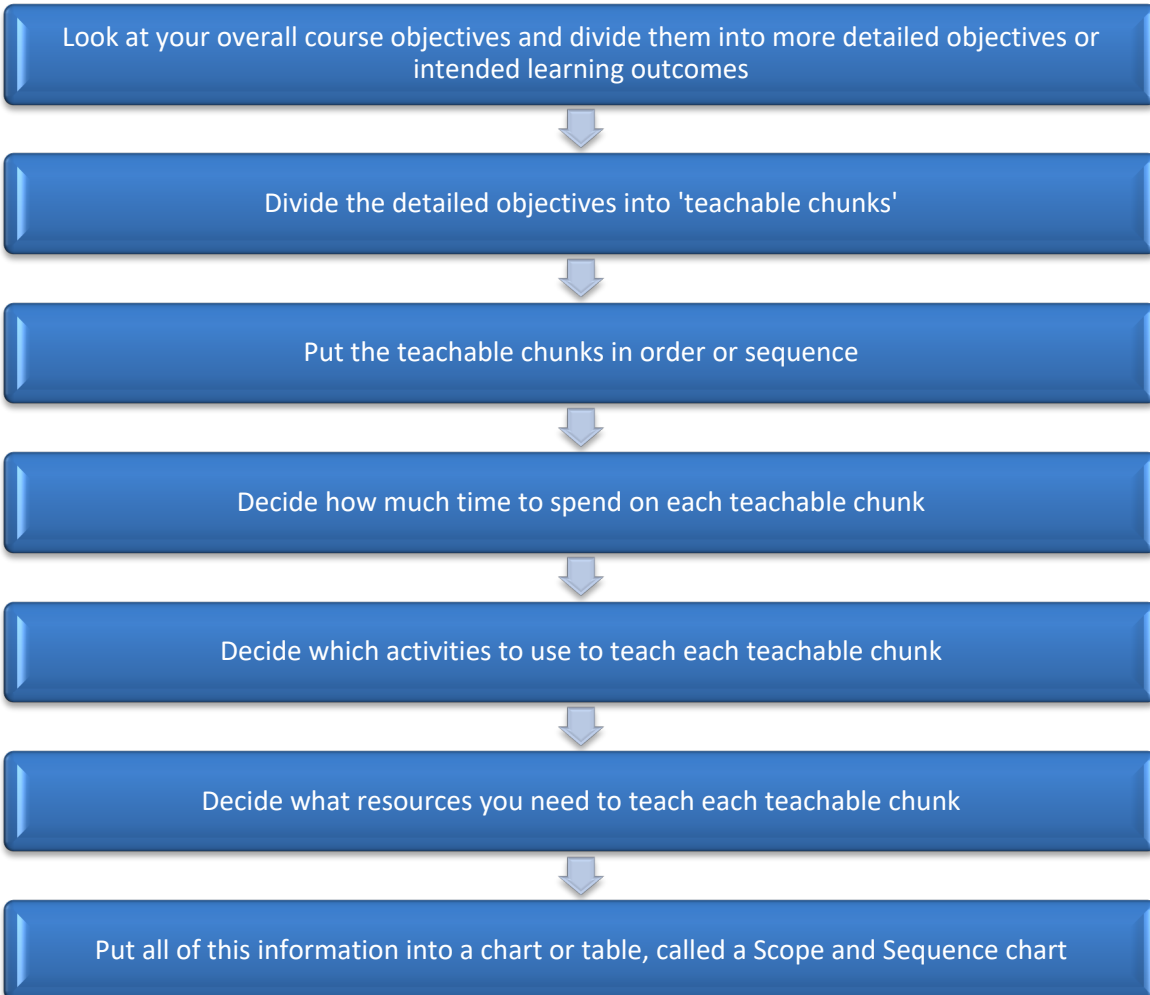
2.5 Course Logistics

As you are planning a course, you also have to ask yourself logistical questions so that the implementation of the course goes smoothly. Some logistics questions to think about include:

- ✓ How long will the course be?
- ✓ How many classes will there be?
- ✓ How long will each class be?
- ✓ What days of the week will the classes occur on?
- ✓ What time will the classes start and finish?
- ✓ How will attendance be tracked?
- ✓ How will assessment results be tracked?
- ✓ What policies will you put into place with regards to attendance and classroom behaviour?
- ✓ What other course policies will you have?

2.6 Syllabus

Your syllabus is a document that lists in detail the language systems, language skills and content that will be covered in the course. To construct your syllabus go through the following stages:

> Look at your overall course objectives and divide them into more detailed objectives or intended learning outcomes

> Divide the detailed objectives into 'teachable chunks'

> Put the teachable chunks in order or sequence

> Decide how much time to spend on each teachable chunk

> Decide which activities to use to teach each teachable chunk

> Decide what resources you need to teach each teachable chunk

> Put all of this information into a chart or table, called a Scope and Sequence chart

2.7 Materials Selection

When we think of materials selection, we automatically think about textbooks—which now often include additional materials such as workbooks, audio, video and internet support. While textbooks can provide a basic structure or framework for your syllabus, they become out of date very quickly. This is problematic, particularly with workplace and occupation-specific language instruction, because the content changes very quickly. Another problem with textbook materials for workplace and occupation courses is that the content has been simplified, almost to the point that it can be insulting to the students.
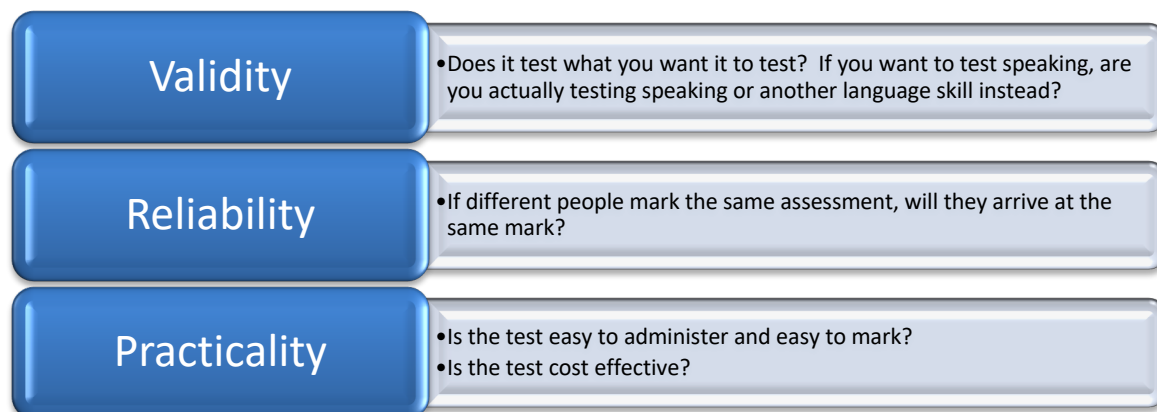
Given the above, authentic material is strongly recommended. Authentic materials are current, motivating, relevant and very specific to the particular context towards which your course is directed. Authentic materials you can use in your workplace or occupation course include:

2.8 Entry and Exit Assessments

You need to decide what language ability students have coming into the course and how you will determine this. Then you need to decide how you will assess student language ability at the end of the course. Your entry assessment needs to accurately place students, but it also needs to be easy to create and easy to administer. Your exit assessment needs to accurately measure any change in language ability as a result of the course, but it also needs to be easy to administer.

Your entry and exit assessment needs to have the following three characteristics:

Validity	• Does it test what you want it to test? If you want to test speaking, are you actually testing speaking or another language skill instead?
Reliability	• If different people mark the same assessment, will they arrive at the same mark?
Practicality	• Is the test easy to administer and easy to mark? • Is the test cost effective?

Why <u>MUST</u> you have both an entry and exit assessment? Because your stakeholders (funders, employers, professional organizations) want to know what kind of change has occurred as a result of the students taking the course! If you can demonstrate change, you can argue for the usefulness of the course and secure further funding. If you cannot demonstrate change, or if you go off into a detailed, theoretical explanation of why you cannot measure change, you will lose the buy-in of your stakeholders.

With entry and exit assessments, you may not always be able to use the most valid and reliable assessment (for example a standardized test) because it is simply not practical. You must always balance validity, reliability AND practicality. What are some other options for assessment if a standardized test is not practical, for example because it is too expensive or your course is not long enough to generate a measurable change? Consider these alternatives:

- ✓ "Can do" checklist
- ✓ Statement of achievements, actions or tasks
- ✓ Student goal achievement
- ✓ Student portfolio of work
- ✓ Performance based test or task
- ✓ Employer perception of change
- ✓ Student self-evaluation
- ✓ Student perception of change
- ✓ Interview with student
- ✓ Anecdotes of the impact of change told by the teacher or the student (success stories)

2.9 Ongoing Assessment

In addition to your entry and exit assessment, you also need to decide how often you will assess student progress throughout the course, how you will go about assessing progress, and how much each assessment will be worth.
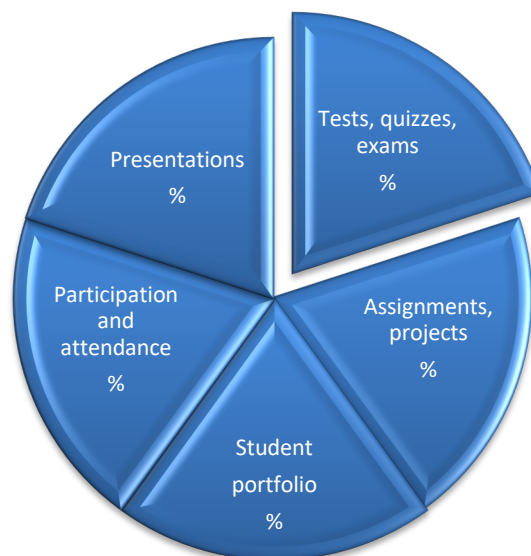
2.10 Course Evaluation

Finally, at the very end of the course you need to determine whether the course has been effective. The first thing you need to remember is that the course should be evaluated from a number of perspectives:
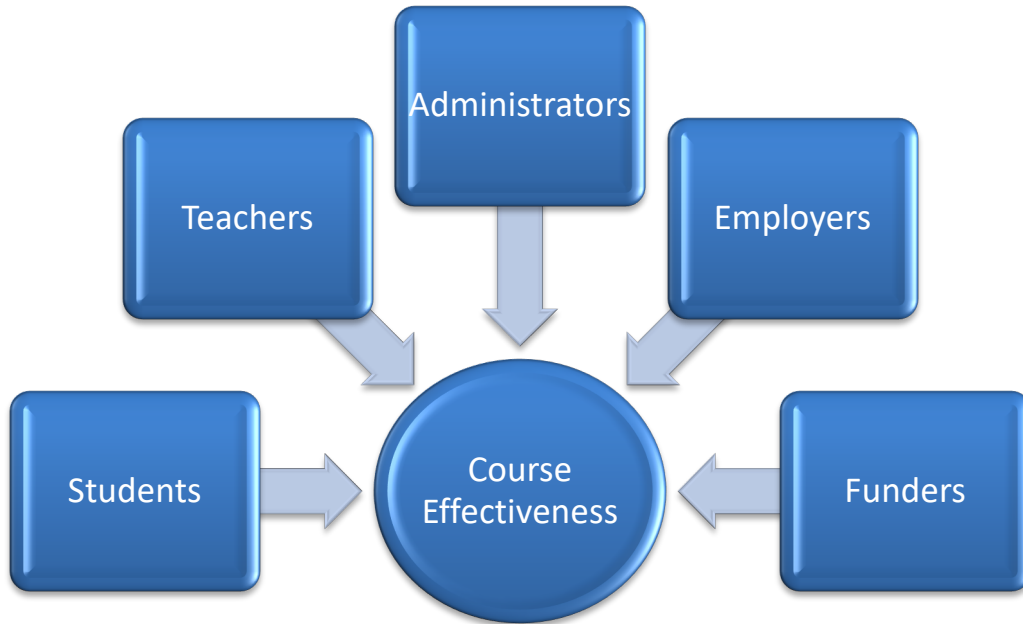
The list of tools you can use for course evaluation is almost the same as the list of tools that you can use for needs analysis found at the beginning of the course design process:

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Questionnaire or Survey

- Yes/no questions
- Choice questions (either... or...)
- Short answer questions
- Long answer/open-ended questions

Observations

- Teacher observations
- Outside evaluator observations

Interviews

- Individual
- Group
- Focus group

Document Collection

- Samples of student work

Make sure you get evaluation feedback from all stakeholder perspectives. Course evaluations can be used to make changes for subsequent courses. Feedback from course evaluations can also be used in your final report to the funder(s). Finally, course evaluations can be used to drive subsequent funding applications. If you delivered the course well, let it be known. If you met with challenges, acknowledge them and indicate what you learned from those challenges and how you will deal with them next time.

Now you are ready to start designing your course. Follow this process in its entirety and you can't go wrong!

Thanks for participating!

Answer key for Activity #1:

1 = Course rationale	7 = Materials selection
2 = Course objectives	8 = Entry assessment
3 = Needs analysis	9 = Ongoing assessment
4 = Situation analysis	10 = Exit assessment
5 = Course logistics	11= Course evaluation
6 = Syllabus	