

Planning Your Course

Great teachers R.I.S.E. Their courses are responsive, informed, supportive, and engaged. They consider the following as they prepare their syllabus, introductory materials, and design the course.

- **Learning Objectives:** Learning objectives are statements that help us think about what we want students to learn. High quality learning objectives avoid describing what students will understand or know and instead are written with verbs that reference performance-based behaviors or achievements rather than mental states. Good learning objectives help students know what they should expect to know or be able to do at the end of the course and guide selection of course materials, assessments, and assignments. [Learn about creating effective learning objectives.](#)
- **Course Materials:** Resources selected for inclusion in the course (textbook, notes, additional readings, videos, etc.) should be selected to optimize student engagement and learning. Ideally, course materials will reflect a diversity of voices in the discipline and a diversity of formats (textual and visual) and will have clear connections to the goals outlined in the learning objectives. Learn more about [considerations for selecting instructional materials](#) [And choosing materials to optimize online learning](#)
- **Measuring Student Learning:** Assessments are anything used to measure student learning. These can be formal or informal activities that allow us to ascertain students' level of understanding of course concepts. They provide opportunities for students to receive feedback to grow in their understanding. Assessments should be frequent, varied, and aligned with the course learning objectives. Automatically graded, low-stakes quizzes or non-graded "one-minute essays" may be useful to gauge understanding of basic concepts, while longer reflective essays, projects and comprehensive, high-stakes exams foster understanding of more complex considerations. [Consider these examples of different assessment types](#), then [utilize this checklist to help you create Transparent Assessments](#).
- **Accessibility:** Students may display a temporary or permanent need to process course materials in alternative ways. Instructors need to take steps to ensure that materials can be accessed for students to learn regardless of the students' circumstances. Several tools in Canvas, such as the Canvas accessibility checker and DesignPlus webpage design features can review course pages for appropriate formatting. Support from an additional application, [the UDOIT Cloud 3.0](#), licensed through Canvas, can provide a more comprehensive review of materials and through a few clicks, can reformat materials or point to easy corrective measures. Learn more about these tools [the NMSU ICT recorded workshops](#).
- **Course Grades:** Student learning is enhanced when students understand how they are being evaluated, how each assignment aligns with course learning objectives, and how the results of each contribute to their final grade. Grading schemes can be adapted to your goals for the course and your approach to teaching, but in all cases should be transparent, equitable, and provide clear guidance for achieving expected outcomes. Learn more about [approaches to grading that can support student success](#).
- **Instructor Policies and Expectations:** Communicating your expectations for attendance, participation, work submission deadlines and other aspects of class engagement is key to aiding students to meet your expectations. Many of these expectations can be communicated in the syllabus, however, it is also helpful to remind students of your expectations in the instructions of course assignments. [Review a list of considerations for establishing course policies.](#)

Planning Your Instruction

Great teachers R.I.S.E. Their instruction is responsive, informed, supportive, and engaged. They consider the following as they plan for how they will provide instruction:

- **Active Learning:** Students who engage in active learning obtain and demonstrate a deep understanding of course concepts. In all class formats, students need opportunities to reflect on and thoughtfully engage with material without being evaluated. Providing regular pauses in lectures, engaging in activities in which students work through problems independently or in groups, and including entry or exit ticket exercises are some ways to engage learners in synchronously taught courses. In asynchronous courses, quizzes, reflections, group meetings and discussions are ways to promote student learning and gauge student understanding. [Learn more about active learning techniques that you can easily integrate in your courses.](#)
- **Student to Student Engagement:** Instructors often overlook the power of students as a resource for learning. While texts, videos and lectures provide a foundation of information, opportunities for students to interact with one another build community within your course and allow students to process and test their understanding of course concepts in a less intimidating manner. [Learn more about fostering student-to-student connections.](#)
- **Clear, Timely Feedback:** Students often lack the ability to measure their own level of understanding or performance as they begin learning new concepts and skills. Providing students regular and timely feedback on their performance helps them identify what areas they have mastered, where they can still improve, and helps guide their future efforts. [Learn more about giving effective feedback.](#)
- **Supporting Growth:** Students need opportunities to demonstrate growth and ongoing development. Allowing students low-stakes opportunities to make mistakes, sharing areas of common misunderstanding in assignments, encouraging revision, and even offering your own learning journey can help provide a better understanding of the process of learning, guide their performance, and build confidence as they acquire new knowledge. [Read more about how to cultivate a Growth Mindset in your course.](#)
- **Communication and Connection:** To promote productive and open interactions with and among students, instructors should plan for how they will regularly communicate with students as a class and as individuals. Setting expectations for interactions, monitoring student engagement, and planning to provide regular feedback helps ensure that communication in your course is timely, clear, respectful, and supportive. [Read about the benefits of effective communication in the college classroom.](#)
- **Accessibility and Inclusion:** Course accessibility doesn't end at design. Instructors should regularly reflect on how the materials and activities they utilize are accessible to and achievable by learners of different backgrounds and abilities. Instructors should ensure that student accommodations are readily implemented and provide an environment that supports the growth and integrates the experiences and perspectives of diverse students. [Consider these opportunities to build inclusive classroom environments.](#)

Planning to Grow

Great teachers continue to R.I.S.E. Their instruction is responsive, informed, supportive, and engaged. They use multiple course of data and reflection to plan for how they will continue to develop. They:

- **Identify opportunities for professional development.** Instructors who regularly engage in professional development activities stay current on evidence-based teaching practices and technological resources to enhance their teaching skills. Maintaining a growth mindset around our own teaching, helps prepare us for teaching new generations of students. Check out upcoming professional development opportunities or recorded workshops through the NMSU [Teaching Academy](#) and through NMSU [Academic Technology](#).
- **Engage in self-reflection:** Performing regular evaluations of your own teaching allows you critically examine various aspects of your course. Instructors should consider what is working and what is not working in their courses both during the semester and once the semester is ended. Such self-reflection helps check the alignment between your goals and activities, review the content and its presentation, and identify strengths and areas for improving the course in the future. Consider utilizing the R.I.S.E. DIY Self-Assessment of Teaching.
- **Review and reflect on student feedback:** Feedback is not one-directional. Instructors can benefit from incorporating opportunities at different intervals during the semester to gather student feedback on the course. Having students provide insight on their learning and experiences at one or more times during the semester offers instructors the opportunity to identify and make timely adjustments to areas where the course could be improved for students' benefit. Consider using the R.I.S.E. Student Feedback Tool as a midterm or supplemental course evaluation tool.
- **Seek feedback from peers.** Having faculty peers review your course can provide new insights on the materials, design and/or dynamics of your course. While peers within your discipline can offer expert-level perspectives on the content, resources and learning objectives, observations from peers from outside of your discipline can provide valuable feedback from a non-expert point of view. Feedback from both types of peers can provide confirmation of course elements that are well-designed, as well as identify areas where you might consider modifications. Use R.I.S.E. Web tool for peer observation of asynchronous instruction or the R.I.S.E. Live tool for peer observation of live instruction.