

Instructional design for online learning: Step-by-step guide

INTRODUCTION

The document aims to provide course designers for WP7 (Societal dialogue) soft skills courses for students and staff with guidance regarding minimum requirements, structure and expected learning outcomes of the first-tier courses of the soft skills curriculum. This endeavor forms part of Task 7.6 of the EUPeace grant agreement, which is “Strengthening EUPeace institutional embeddedness beyond disciplinary boundaries”:

EUPeace will offer **specialised courses on soft skills for challenge-based learning environments to Alliance students and staff**. These courses are developed together with the members, and are focused on critical thinking and problem solving, conflict resolution, mediation, constructively dealing with diversity, and inter-cultural awareness. **They will give students and staff the opportunity to think and experience EUPeace topics outside of academic settings** and ensure that the vision of EUPeace is embedded in the institutions beyond disciplinary boundaries.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

The course you are designing will be online, in English, 2-4 hours long, and designed for self-paced autonomous learning. Figure 1 summarises the main building blocks of your course.

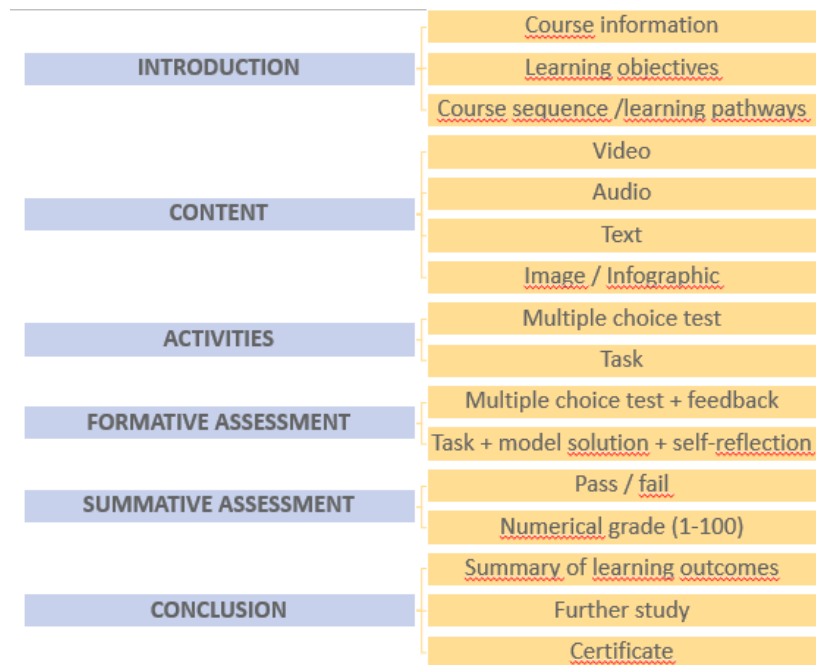


Figure 1. Building blocks of online course design

SUGGESTED DESIGN TEMPLATE

This tool is designed to help instructors plan **asynchronous sessions** by selecting and describing the learning activities they will use. The tool proposes **two types of activities**. The instructor chooses and sequences them according to the learning outcomes students must achieve in each session.

For each activity, the instructor should describe in sufficient detail **what the teacher and the students will do**, in what order, how, for what purpose, with what expected result and how the result will be assessed.

When designing your course, first of all determine the expected **learning outcomes** (LO). Then decide which **materials or contents** need to be associated to these LOs and in which format (video, audio, text, image) you want to present them.

Once you have determined the materials, select an **activity** (multiple choice test or task) to be carried out. When selecting and sequencing activities, consider three levels:

1. **What** activity will be carried out.
2. **How** it will be carried out—duration, sequence, priorities, organization, and management.
3. **Why** this activity is relevant at that point in the session or course, what learning purpose it serves, and how it contributes to the students' learning outcomes.

Following this process helps ensure coherence and relevance in the course design, supporting the development of the students' competences and learning outcomes. These outcomes act as guiding principles, helping the instructor justify *why* each activity is included.

Finally, propose **evaluation activities** that help students check what they have learned. Effective feedback—timely and meaningful—is essential. It may include:

- **Teacher-prepared feedback** on multiple choice tests or tasks (in written, video, or audio format).
- **Rubrics**, which guide grading but also help students understand expectations and self-assess. Rubrics are especially helpful for complex, long-term, or collaborative tasks.

Below is a proposal of building blocks to make up your course design, starting with general course information, followed by the different student sessions, each of which would be composed of sequences of content input, activities and assessment (formative and summative).

General course info

Course name:	Institution:
Competence addressed:	Designed by:
Length (in hours):	Target audience: students, faculty, staff, all of the above

For each session:

Session 1, 2, 3, ... title:

Learning objectives for this session
• • •

Session sequence Select from these tables and/or duplicate these tables as many times as you need for your purposes

The building blocks below can be combined in a variety of combinations, here are just two examples:

- **CONTENT + ACTIVITY + ASSESSMENT** (e.g., a pdf followed by comprehension questions in the form of a quiz, including automated feedback on correct and incorrect answers and a numerical grade)
- **ACTIVITY + FEEDBACK + CONTENT** (e.g., a self-assessment questionnaire including automated feedback but without numerical grade, followed by an explanatory video contextualising the questionnaire and suggesting additional readings).

For your course planning, combine these building blocks into sequences for each of the student sessions you have planned.

Content input

Title:	☐ Core content ☐ Additional content
Description:	
Format: ☐ PDF ☐ Audio ☐ Video ☐ Image (Info-graphic)	Estimated student work time: * Remember the rule of thumb: Calculate twice your own viewing/reading time.

Reflection

Title:	☐ Core content ☐ Additional content
Description:	
Format: ☐ Task ☐ Forum ☐ ...	Estimated student work time: * Remember the rule of thumb: Calculate 3 times your own work time.

Assessment and feedback

Title:	☐ formative ☐ summative ☐ both
Description:	Weight in total grade:
Mode of delivery: ☐ itemised test feedback ☐ global test feedback ☐ sample task solution ☐ self-assessment ☐ ...	Estimated student work time: * Remember the rule of thumb: Calculate twice your own reading/writing time.

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