# Activity: Situational factors to consider

## Instructions

Before (re)designing your course, it is helpful to identify the situational factors that may affect your course design. The following table, adapted from Dr. Dee Fink (2013) and University of Buffalo (n.d.), includes many important factors and constraints for you to consider.

**\*Why Positionality:** Positionality refers to where one is located in relation to social identities and power relations (gender, race, class, ethnicity, ability, geographical location, etc.) that shape “where they know from.” Through this, knowledge itself becomes situated, produced, and positioned in relation to all kinds of locations and relationships (Haraway 2016). In the context of this document, we encourage you to think of your positionality as not just who you are but also about what you can do in your role as an educator. Using and understanding our positionality helps us take an agentic perspective, as persons who have a role to play in altering dominant relations of power and promote justice in teaching and learning.

**Course Name:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| **Context of Teaching and Learning** | 1. Number of students |  |
| 1. Course level  * college foundational course * college advanced course * lower undergraduate * upper undergraduate * graduate * other (please specify) |  |
| 1. Course duration and/or timing |  |
| 1. Course delivery  * Fully online (fully asynchronous) * Online with some synchronous sessions * Other (please specify) |  |
| 1. Teaching collaboration  * course level (i.e., co-instructors, TAs, graders) * departmental level (i.e., department head, other instructors, guest speakers) * university wide (i.e., student service units) * other (please specify) |  |
| **Nature of the Course** | 1. Why you teach the content that you do?   For instance:   * Is it mandated by the profession? The government? * Are there types of knowledge that you inherently see as more important? Why is that? * Is there space for different perspectives in the course? |  |
| 1. What constitutes knowledge and which knowledge is privileged in the course? |  |
| 1. What are the dominant paradigms operating within the course and related professional areas? |  |
| 1. Is the course primarily theoretical (cognitive) or practical (skill-based)? |  |
| 1. Is the subject primarily convergent (working towards a single right answer) or divergent (multiple interpretations)? |  |
| 1. What are the foundational concepts, scholars, texts, or canons in the course/discipline? |  |
| 1. In what ways does the course recognize and address the dominance of western-centric pedagogies, content, and philosophy? |  |
| **Overall Course Goals** | 1. What Indigenous knowledges, international, anti-racist and/or intercultural perspectives should students learn? |  |
| 1. What Indigenous, international, or intercultural skills and/or attitudes should students develop? |  |
| 1. What different ways of knowing and learning should students be engaged in? |  |
| 1. What personal bias and privilege should students examine in the course/subject field? |  |
| 1. Other course goals (please specify) |  |
| **Learning Expectations** | 1. Learning expectations of students by the instructor? |  |
| 1. Learning expectations of students by the faculty/department? |  |
| 1. Learning expectations of students by the university? |  |
| 1. Learning expectations of students by the discipline/profession? |  |
| 1. Does the course provide opportunities for students to express and explore their own learning goals? |  |
| **Exploring Perceived Positionality\* of Learners** | 1. Identity and backgrounds (i.e., first language, race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, nationality, etc.)? |  |
| 1. Additional student demographic considerations  * Are the learners geographically dispersed? * How many are adult learners/study part-time? |  |
| 1. Learning beliefs, expectations, values, and preferred learning approaches? |  |
| 1. Prior experience, knowledge, skills, and attitudes about the subject? |  |
| 1. Life/professional goals in relation to the course?  * Are your learners seeking professional accreditation? |  |
| 1. Are there two or more distinct audiences (e.g., from different programs/fields of study)? |  |
| 1. Reasons for enrolling in the course?  * e.g. Required, optional, or for interest course * How and why will your learners use what they learn in the course? |  |
| 1. Challenges/barriers in the course? |  |
| 1. Level of autonomy in learning? |  |
| **Reflecting on own Positionality\* as Educator** | 1. Identity and backgrounds (i.e., first language, race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, nationality, etc.)? |  |
| 1. Prior experience as a learner (particularly at the post-secondary level and in the online space)?  * Have you always been able to study full-time, without the distractions of part-time jobs or family responsibilities? * What were your biggest challenges learning in online courses? * What helped you succeed in online courses? |  |
| 1. First-time or veteran instructor of the course? |  |
| 1. What do you consider your primary role as an online instructor? |  |
| 1. Teaching philosophy (i.e., values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, attitudes of effective teaching)? |  |
| 1. Confidence/perceived competence for teaching the course? |  |
| 1. Challenges in teaching (i.e., course design, assessments, implementation of instructional strategies, communication with students, etc.)? |  |
| 1. Experience with internet access/educational technology  * Have you had consistent access to the internet? Has cost been a factor? * What is your process for getting comfortable with new technologies, or do you avoid them? |  |
| 1. Pre-assumptions or biases about students (i.e., expectations of educator, academic behaviors, level of autonomy in learning, etc.)? |  |
| 1. Obstacles and barriers may cause to students (i.e., power distance, different backgrounds, identity or learning experience, etc.)? |  |

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### References

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