

Rethinking Your Course: Moving to a Condensed Format

Use this short guide to help you through the process of condensing your course. This process, based on best practices, will help you maintain rigor while keeping the course manageable for you and for your students. If you need help or would like to discuss ideas, please get in touch with any member of the Instructional Design team (idteam@lasalle.edu).

Organizing the course

Step 1: Prioritize learning

Take a look at your syllabus and use the following questions to help you think about the concepts or topics you must keep, the ones you can merge together, and the ones you can leave behind or provide as a supplement.

- Which topics or concepts are essential to achieving the student learning outcomes for the course as well as the program?
- Which topics or concepts provide imperative or foundational knowledge (things students must know) and which topics or concepts provide knowledge for subsequent activities or courses (things students need to know)?

Step 2: Modify course structure to fit the timeframe

Once you've identified what's essential to achieving your course and program goals, it's time to sequence topics and activities so that they work well in the shorter timeframe. Use the following questions to help you think about your course structure:

- Are complex concepts addressed early in the course so that students have time to process ideas and you have time to assess their comprehension?
- Will students have enough time to complete readings, lectures, and assignments within the time frame?
- Will you have enough time to provide feedback in a timely manner?

Contact hours (in-class vs. out of class)

According to MSCHÉ's [Degrees and Credits](#) document, the total amount of time spent over a term for a 3 credit course is 45 hours of class time (direct contact with instructor) and 90 hours spent outside of class (student preparation). This table provides a few examples to help you frame your thinking.

Direct Contact: 15 hours per course credit	Out of class: 30 hours per course credit
Interacting with lessons (lecture materials, videos, simulations, etc.)	Reading
Participating in discussions	Reflecting on learning
Participating in synchronous sessions (GoToTraining, Canvas chat, phone calls)	Completing individual or group projects
Creating collaborative documents	Researching

For additional guidance, refer to the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s document, [Curricular Credit Policy: Ensuring Quality and Transferability](#), and La Salle’s [instructional equivalencies chart](#).

Step 3: Rethink your assignments

Consider the ways in which you can restructure your current assignments so they fit the new timeline. For example, if you usually schedule a large project due at the end of the course, breaking it into smaller assignments submitted throughout the term gives students the opportunity to receive frequent feedback from you as they work through course concepts. This strategy doesn’t reduce the workload or the standards, but rather redistributes how and when students demonstrate mastery. Other strategies include

- creating short, low-stakes quizzes to check for understanding.
- using frequent reflection activities to check-in with students and to increase instructor-student interaction.
- incorporating discussion-based activities that foster frequent student-student interaction.

Use this chart as a guide as you think about your assignments and the amount of time students may spend completing a particular activity.

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy

Higher order thinking skills	Example verbs for objectives	Course and assignment planning considerations
Create	design, develop, devise, generate, plan, predict, produce, reconstruct	Assessments at these levels require students to go beyond application and solve problems, make decisions, or generate new ideas. Activities such as projects or presentations provide a high level of engagement and require a significant amount of time for students to complete. Consider breaking these assessments into smaller components that can be submitted throughout the course.
Evaluate	appraise, argue, check, consider, criticize, interpret, judge, measure, recommend	
Analyze	categorize, classify, contrast, debate, differentiate, examine, organize, outline	Assessments at these levels help students demonstrate their knowledge by prompting them to create connections. Activities such as discussions, reflections, and case studies can engage students in this type of thinking. Students have to spend more time preparing for and participating in these types of activities.
Apply	conclude, construct, demonstrate, execute, implement, manipulate, use	
Understand	annotate, compare, describe, explain, indicate, match, paraphrase, summarize	Assessments at these levels can prepare students for assessments requiring higher order thinking skills. Low-stakes activities, such as short weekly quizzes, can check student comprehension or help identify misconceptions. In general, activities requiring lower order thinking skills require less time for students to complete.
Remember	choose, describe, define, identify, label, list, locate, recall, recognize, tell	

Lower order thinking skills

For even more verbs, check out [Bloom’s Digital Taxonomy](#).

Creating and managing the course in Canvas

Step 1: Create supports for students

A condensed format can be intense, so students will need additional supports to help them as they progress through your course. These supports can be:

- Organizational overviews that introduce new concepts, state expectations, and provide the connection between the week’s learning objectives and activities.
- Guiding questions for readings, videos, or lectures to help students focus on key concepts.

- Links to resources for specific assignments. For example, if you expect students to write a paper, direct students to the La Salle University's Writing Center or Purdue OWL.

The [rich content editor](#), available on Pages, Assignments, and Discussions, provides multiple options for building these types of supports. You can format text, embed links and videos, and even record short introductions.

Step 2: Organize your content

Another way to support students is to organize your content into weekly chunks. With Canvas Modules, you can create a [specific path](#) for students to follow or allow them to be more self-directed. You can add all types of content to a Module including Pages, Assignments, and Discussions.

Step 3: Establish a presence in the course

Because of the compressed schedule, students may need you to be more available to them. Some strategies for increasing presence include:

- Creating weekly announcements or reminders guide students in managing their time.
- Allowing students to comment on announcements.
- Providing frequent opportunities to meet with students in GoToMeeting/GoToTraining.
- Using optional surveys to check in with students to see if the pace of the course is appropriate.
- Providing timely feedback to keep students on track.