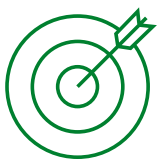
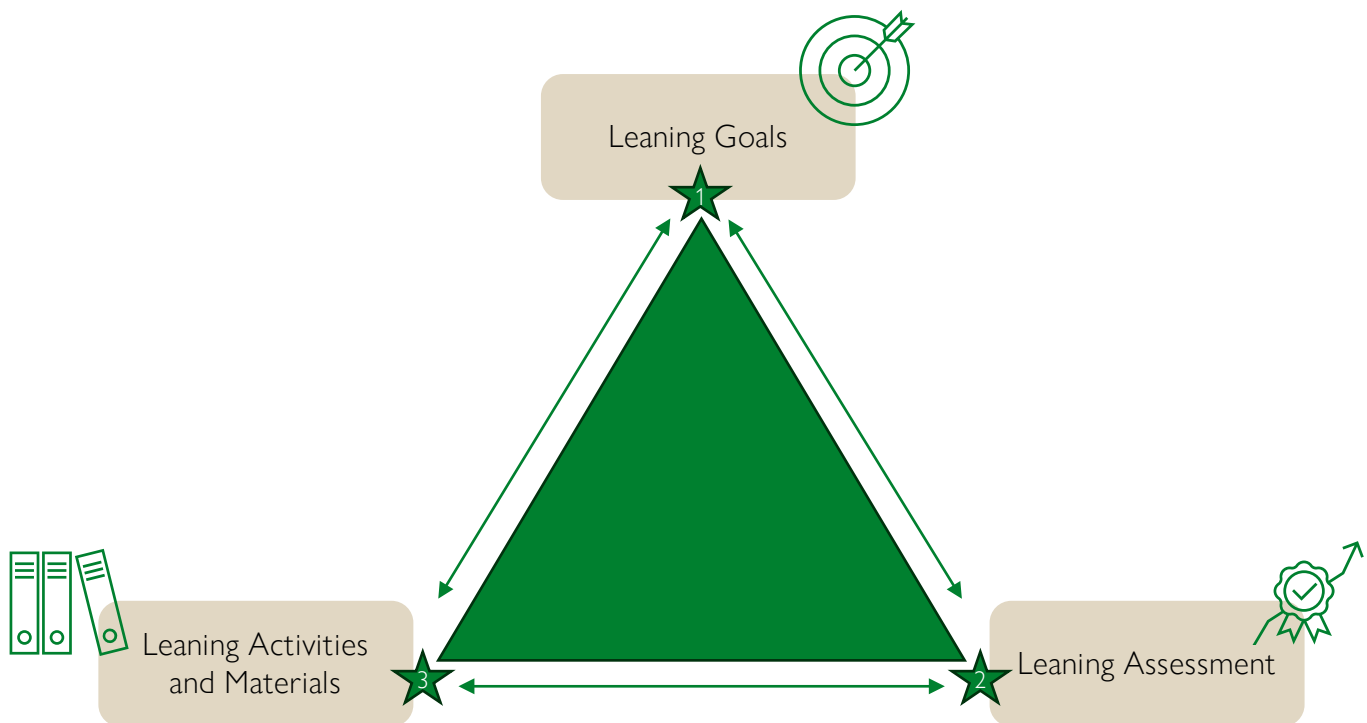


# Backward Design

The backward design approach outlined by Wiggins & McTighe (2005) states that teaching units should be designed on the basis of the learning objectives. Derived from these, the second step is to design the learning assessment. Only in a third and final step should lecturers think about how to convey the content.

## Backward Design Stages



**Learning Goals:** What do you want students to learn?

The learning objectives provide information about the competences students should have acquired after completing the learning unit (further information can be found in the teaching guide on learning objectives).





### Learning Assessment: How will you know students have learned it?

2

The second step is to determine forms of learning assessment so that students' progress in achieving the learning objectives can be evaluated (further information can be found in the teaching guide on exams).



### Learning Activities and Materials: What content and activities will promote achievement of the learning goals?

3

The final stage involves designing suitable teaching/learning activities and materials to support students in achieving the learning objectives (further information can be found in the remaining teaching guides).

(Stapleton-Corcoran, 2023)

## The Potentials of Backward Design

Lecturers often take a forward or content-centred approach when designing lecture sequences and/or course modules. This begins with the selection of learning content, followed by the development of learning activities, the creation of learning assessments and finally the formulation of learning objectives. However, this approach harbours the risk of inconsistent teaching concepts and therefore fragmented learning experiences for students. In contrast, the Backward Design offers the following potential:

**Student-centredness:** Backward design focuses on student learning and understanding rather than on teaching and instructional aspects. The determination of learning activities based on their fit with the learning objectives leads to the design of learning that is orientated towards the intended development of the students.



**Transparency:** In contrast to a content-centred approach, where students often do not see the connection between what they have learned and the exam questions, backward design creates clearer and more coherent learning experiences. It ensures that exams reflect the actual content taught, which reduces misunderstanding and frustration among students.



**Intentionality:** The definition of learning objectives provides lecturers with a guideline for the design of learning assessments and teaching activities.



(Bowen, 2017)

### Sources

- Bowen, R. S. (2017). *Understanding by Design*. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. [Link](#)
- Stapleton-Corcoran, E. (2023). *Backwards Design*. Center for the Advancement of Teaching Excellence at the University of Illinois Chicago. [Link](#)
- Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.