Boosting High-Impact Design of Online Courses (HIDOC) with AI: Full 8-Step Guide

Each HIDOC step integrates a five-stage AI workflow to make your design process more efficient, evidence-based, and creative. Download HIDOC design documents (to help gather reference) and a course blueprint (to formulate a course design plan) from hidocmodel.com.

Step 1: Learner Analysis

Goal: Understand who your learners are—their traits, barriers, motivations, and prior knowledge.

1. Review the Step: Clarify what you need to know about your audience.

2. Gather Reference: Learner notes, demographics, prior feedback, and course context.

3. Use AI Prompts:

> Given these learner traits and barriers: [paste notes], list 5 missing considerations and draft 2 learner personas (goals, pain points, support needs).

4. Vet Results: Alignment with context, accuracy, inclusivity, and actionable insights.

5. Decide: Keep, refine, or re-prompt based on realism and design usefulness.

Step 2: Learning Outcomes

Goal: Write measurable, observable learning outcomes.

1. Review the Step: Clarify which skills or abilities learners must demonstrate.

2. Gather Reference: Program outcomes, Bloom's taxonomy, and existing assessments.

3. Use AI Prompts:

> Write or refine 3–5 measurable learning outcomes aligned with Bloom's taxonomy.

4. Vet Results: Verb precision, observability, Bloom's level, alignment to assessments.

5. Decide: Keep if measurable and aligned; refine verbs or scope; re-prompt if vague.

Simunich, B., Gregg, A., & Ralston-Berg, P. (2024). High-Impact Design for Online Courses: Blueprinting Quality Digital Learning in Eight Practical Steps. Taylor & Francis.

Step 3: Course Structure

Goal: Organize topics, modules, and assessments into a logical, balanced sequence.

1. Review the Step: Define the flow of learning from start to finish.

2. Gather Reference: Major topics, outcomes, course length, modality, time-on-task.

3. Use AI Prompts:

> Propose a logical module structure with titles, sequencing, pacing, and placement of key assessments.

4. Vet Results: Logical flow, workload balance, prerequisite ordering, clarity.

5. Decide: Keep if coherent; refine for pacing; re-prompt if generic or off-target.

Step 4: Assessments & Activities

Goal: Design formative and summative assessments aligned with outcomes.

1. Review the Step: Clarify what evidence will show learning.

2. Gather Reference: Outcomes, modules, existing assessments, time-on-task.

3. Use AI Prompts:

> Given existing outcomes, suggest a mix of formative and summative assessments.

4. Vet Results: Alignment, variety, workload feasibility, authenticity, engagement.

5. Decide: Keep, refine, or re-prompt based on outcome alignment and realism.

Step 5: Instructional Materials

Goal: Create or curate course content that supports learning and assessments.

1. Review the Step: Identify what content learners need to succeed.

2. Gather Reference: Lectures, transcripts, readings, media, and permissions.

3. Use AI Prompts:

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Generate new content:

Given the desired outcomes and assessments, suggest content to help learners succeed.

Repurpose existing content:

Convert this video transcript into a concise article (~600 words) with summary bullets and a 3-question self-check.

4. Vet Results: Accuracy, tone, citation integrity, copyright, and accessibility.

5. Decide: Keep, refine, or re-prompt for clarity, depth, or compliance.

Step 6: Instructional Tools

Goal: Select technologies that enhance learning while ensuring accessibility and policy compliance.

1. Review the Step: Identify tools that align with learning tasks and outcomes.

2. Gather Reference: Required tasks, LMS features, support resources, and privacy rules.

3. Use AI Prompts:

Recommend 3 tool options for [learning task] with setup steps, practice activity, accommodations, and FERPA/GDPR notes.

4. Vet Results: Policy fit, support load, learning curve, accessibility.

5. Decide: Keep if compliant and effective; refine for simplicity; re-prompt for better fit.

Step 7: Online Learning Support

Goal: Structure support and guidance to help students navigate the course confidently.

1. Review the Step: Clarify how learners will receive guidance and scaffolding.

2. Gather Reference: Common questions, tricky assignments, success checklists.

3. Use AI Prompts:

Draft a Week 1 "Start Here" checklist and an assignment walkthrough for [task]. Include time estimates and examples of success.

4. Vet Results: Clarity, tone, inclusivity, workload transparency, alignment.

5. Decide: Keep if student-ready; refine to improve tone or examples; re-prompt for clarity.

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Step 8: Continuous Improvement

Goal: Use data and feedback to identify opportunities for course enhancement.

1. Review the Step: Define how you will collect and use evidence for revision.

2. Gather Reference: Surveys, analytics, grade patterns, help-desk tickets.

3. Use AI Prompts:

> Synthesize survey comments into 4 themes with evidence quotes. Suggest 5 specific improvements prioritized by impact and effort.

4. Vet Results: Faithful summaries, practical priorities, measurable steps, no hallucination.

5. Decide: Keep accurate, feasible improvements; refine priorities; re-prompt if misinterpreted.

Summary Workflow (All Steps)

Stage	Focus	Key Questions
Review	Clarify purpose	What is the goal of this step?
Gather	Collect context	What materials and data do I have?
Prompt	Generate results	Does the prompt align with the intent?
Vet	Evaluate output	Are the results accurate and aligned?
Decide	Act	Will I use, refine, or re-prompt?

HIDOC + AI Pattern: Review → Gather → Prompt → Vet → Decide
(Repeat for each step to create a complete, AI-enhanced design process.)

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