

Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling

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Time Frame 180 minutes

Essential Question(s)

How can I design a balanced college schedule that aligns with my academic goals and personal responsibilities, while ensuring I am fully prepared for the enrollment process?

Summary

This activity simulates the process of enrolling in college courses. Students practice creating a course schedule, evaluating scenarios that impact scheduling, and analyzing course requirements. Participants compare the course schedule to a degree plan and create a semester calendar. This scheduling activity complements the Future U: Mock Enrollment Educator resource and is an ideal prep activity before hosting the event.

Learning Goals

- Analyze degree plans, course catalogs, and semester calendars to understand how academic requirements and course offerings align.
- Evaluate personal situations and responsibilities to create a balanced college schedule that accounts for work, family, and extracurricular commitments.
- Identify knowledge gaps and obstacles in the enrollment process and develop strategies or seek resources to overcome them.

Attachments

- KWL—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling - Spanish.docx
- KWL—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling - Spanish.pdf
- KWL—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling.docx
- KWL—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling.pptx
- Scavenger Hunt (Sample Responses)—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling.docx
- Scavenger Hunt (Sample Responses)—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling.pdf
- Scavenger Hunt—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling - Spanish.docx
- Scavenger Hunt—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling - Spanish.pdf
- Scavenger Hunt—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling.docx
- Scavenger Hunt—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling.pdf
- Scenarios—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling - Spanish.docx
- Scenarios—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling - Spanish.pdf
- Scenarios—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling.docx
- Scenarios—Mastering the Maze of Course Scheduling.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Scenario cards (attached; one per group)
- Scavenger Hunt (attached; one per student)
- KWL (attached; optional)
- Student laptops or Chromebooks with internet access
- Highlighters
  (optional)
- Colored pens, markers, or pencils
  (optional)

10 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Preparing for the Lesson

Prepare the Padlet before the lesson. You will need a Padlet account. Use this link (http://k20.ou.edu/kwl) to remake the KWL template in Padlet. Replace the QR Code on slide 5 with the link of your remade Padlet to share with students.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to facilitate the following lesson. Display **slides 2-4** to introduce the essential question and learning objectives.

Transition to **slide 5** and ask students to access the Padlet. Inform participants that they will use the Padlet to complete a modified version of KWHL. On their individual devices, ask students to add a comment to the "Know" and "Want to Know" posts to activate their prior knowledge of postsecondary education. Once all students have added their ideas, read a few aloud and lead a discussion regarding what students already know and what they want to learn in this lesson. Note that students will return to this Padlet near the end of the lesson to reflect on what they learned.

Optional Handout

You can also choose to distribute the KWL handout (attached) instead of using the virtual Padlet tool. If so, provide one handout per student and collect the documents from students after this activity to keep in a safe place to pass back later in the lesson. Remove the QR code from slide 5.

30 minutes

Explore

Transition to **slide 6.** Ask students to choose from one of the four programs provided on the slide (Accounting, Biology, History, or Math). Tell students that this is a simulation, and they may not be interested in pursuing one of these programs in particular. Explain that this is practice to ensure that they can build a schedule that avoids conflicts with other courses.

Ask students to scan the QR code or type in the link to their chosen program. Next, they will select courses from the menu on the right and drag them to the appropriate slots. Inform students that the narrow boxes are used for the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday time slots while the thick boxes are used for the Tuesday and Thursday time slots. They will need to copy each course to the same time slots across the board. For instance, if they have a M/W/F class at 1:00pm, they need to copy that course box to all three days of the week at 1:00pm. Note that some courses are only allowed at certain time slots.

While doing the card sort, students need to pay attention to the criteria listed in the directions. Discuss these criteria with students:

- Their schedule can have no fewer than 12 credit hours and no more than 15 credit hours.
- They need 3-9 general education credits (red boxes).
- They need 3-6 credits for their major (blue boxes).

As students finish their card sort, check to make sure their schedules look good. Students can submit the form to find out if it is accurate. If there are errors in their schedules, ask them to find the mistakes and fix them.

After students have completed their schedule card sort, ask them to complete an I Notice, I Wonder reflection on a piece of paper. Tell students to turn and talk to the person next to them to share what they noticed and what they wondered after the activity. Encourage students to provide feedback regarding what their partners wondered.

Facilitator's Note

Schools that are hosting the Future U: The Enrollment Adventure are highly encouraged to complete this activity with students before the event.

25 minutes

Explain

Facilitator's Note: Preparing for the Lesson

Print and laminate **Scenario Cards** (attached) before the lesson.

Transition to **slide 7** and put students into 8 different groups, ideally groups of about 3-4 students. Pass out one scenario card to each group. Have groups choose one student's card sort schedule to complete this activity. In their groups, ask students to read the scenario. Now, return to the card sort and make adjustments to the schedule to ensure that all requirements of the scenario card are met.

Once students have modified their card sort with their group's scenario card considerations, provide students time to reflect using the Exclaim and Question strategy. Using **slide 8**, ask students to work as a group to write down one thing they noticed as they modified the schedule and one question that came up as they modified the schedule. Have groups share out either the exclaim or the question they wrote down with the whole class.

100 minutes

Extend

Optional Activity

Prior to the Scavenger Hunt, consider having students complete the Career Clusters survey to discover careers they may be interested in after college. Using the clusters, have students narrow down to one career that they want to pursue. They will need to do some research to understand what degree program they would need to pursue for that career.

Teacher's Note: Preparing for the Lesson

Review the Scavenger Hunt—Sample Responses (attached) to see an example of a completed scavenger hunt. Use this to scaffold students' learning.

Transition to **slide 9** and provide each student a copy of the **Scavenger Hunt** handout (attached). For this activity, students need individual laptops with internet access. Provide students an overview of the different things they will be searching during their scavenger hunt.

Move to **slide 10** and provide students time to select an institution listed on their handout or write in a school they are interested in that may not be listed. After selecting a school, they should visit that school's website to find a program they would like to pursue. Ask students to write in the degree (i.e., Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Art) and their major (i.e., Elementary Education, Computer Engineering, Journalism). Provide time for all students to establish this information before moving on.

Teacher's Note: Grouping

After students have selected an institution and degree program, consider grouping students with similar plans to work together through the scavenger hunt.

Next, students are going to seek all requirements for their chosen degree program. Transition to **slide 11** and prompt students to search for the program requirements and list 8 required courses and 2 elective courses on the Program Requirements chart in the Scavenger Hunt handout. Tell students to list courses from at least 5 different subject areas. Demonstrate how to find course requirements for a degree program. Tell students that if the degree program requires a certain number of credit hours from electives, they should research their options for electives and choose the ones they are most interested in taking to meet that requirement.

Next, transition to **slide 12** and tell students that they will be creating a mock course schedule for an entire semester, which is generally about 16 weeks long. To do so, ask students to find their degree program's plan of study, examine one semester from that plan, and circle or highlight 12 hours of required and recommended courses from their Program Requirements chart. Next, ask students to find the institution's schedule of courses and choose a semester and year that is currently available. (Note to students that colleges only post the schedules 1-3 semesters ahead.) Students will search for the courses they circled or highlighted on their requirements chart to find what days and times each course is available.

They will then list the course code, course title, instructor, delivery of the class, meeting days and times, and the meeting location on the Course Section Details Table in the Scavenger Hunt hadnout .

Move to **slide 13**. On the Semester Calendar in the Scavenger Hunt handout, ask students to write in the dates of their chosen semester. Next, have students fill in the calendar with their chosen courses on the first week and then copy this to the remaining weeks for the semester. Encourage students to use different colors for each of their courses on their semester calendar schedule.

Move to **slide 14** to finish the scavenger hunt. Tell students that there are key dates they need to be aware of each semester and that those dates are found on the institution’s academic calendar. Ask them to find their institution's calendar and add the key dates to their semester calendar.

15 minutes

Evaluate

Facilitator's Note

You may take a moment before the reflection to review discussion expectations and norms (respectful listening and speaking, response expectations, disagreement procedures, talking and listening balance, etc).

Use **slide 15** to facilitate students' reflections. Ask students to reflect on their experience designing a balanced college schedule during the activities using the Aha! Huh? Uh uh instructional strategy. Explain to students that they will frame their reflections as follows:

- Aha! - Moments of insight or clarity that stood out during the activities
- Huh? - Parts of the scheduling activity that were confusing or unclear
- Uh uh - Ideas that didn't sit well or aspects of the scheduling activity that were disagreeable or troubling

Transition to **slide 16** and give students 5–10 minutes to jot down their thoughts in each category. Ask them to share one response from each category with their group. Then, group members will respond to each other. Use the questions on the slide to guide this conversation.

Prompt students to refer back to their KWL chart (either the Padlet or the handout) from earlier in the lesson and facilitate a class discussion. Go through each of the prompts one at a time. Ask a volunteer from each group to share interesting points from their group's discussion.

Start with "Aha!" moments to highlight positive takeaways. As students listen to their peers' Aha moments, ask them to note what they learned on the "L" column of their KWL chart. Ask them if any of their ideas for what they wanted to learn became Aha's for them.

Move to "Huh?" responses to address common areas of confusion and check if there were helpful ideas in the group that addressed these areas. Review any of the ideas they listed in the "Want to Know" on their KWL chart. Determine what they did not get answers for and are still confused about. Provide clarification as necessary.

Conclude with "Uh uh" reflections to explore diverse perspectives and respectfully discuss disagreements.

Research Rationale

Research suggests that a lack of awareness surrounding the college transition can negatively impact students' ability to transfer successfully, particularly for seniors who are first-generation college students (Ricks & Warren, 2021). These students have fewer peers and family members who can provide insights and emotional support through the process (Ober et al., 2020).

Students recognize that college will be more rigorous, less structured, and require more personal responsibility from them. They need opportunities to identify and show themselves that they have the organizational, self-regulation, time management and study skills that will help them succeed (Ober et al., 2020; Ricks & Warren, 2021).

Course registration, applying for scholarships, and getting involved in campus life are topics often cited as confusing and complicated, creating barriers to students making the transition into college (Ricks & Warren, 2021). Increasing students' college knowledge regarding navigating the admissions process, completing applications, and submitting financial aid forms supports college enrollment of first-generation high school seniors (Ober et al., 2020).

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Aha! Huh? Uh uh. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/4414
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Exclaim and question. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/94
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Future U: The enrollment adventure. Educator resource. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/educator-resource/3839
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I notice, I wonder. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/180
- K20 Center. (n.d.). KWHL graphic organizer. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/127
- K20 Center. (n.d.) Padlet. Tech tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/1077
- K20 Center. (n.d.). QR codes. Tech tools. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/244
- Ober, T. M., Ahn, J., Ali, A., Homer, B. D., Moner, A., Azam, A., & Ramos, N. (2020). A mixed-methods analysis of mechanisms to support college enrollment among low-income high school students. Translational Issues in Psychological Science, 6(2), 118.
- Ricks, J. R., & Warren, J. M. (2021). Transitioning to College: Experiences of Successful First-Generation College Students. Journal of Educational Research and Practice, 11(1), 1-15.