

California State University, Long Beach

Template Standard Course Outline for General Education (The Master Narrative for a Course's Design)

*Adopted by the General Education Governing Committee, 9/2008
Last Updated by Lisa Maxfield, GE Coordinator, 10/21/08*

Instructions in italics

PREFACE:

The purpose of a Standard Course Outline (SCO)

The SCO is a document written by faculty to describe the learning objectives and pedagogy of a specific course. It is an instructional tool to be shared among faculty teaching the course. Unlike syllabi which are geared toward student audiences, an SCO provides information for the faculty teaching the course, acting as a set of guidelines to instruct and to assist all present and future faculty of a course. A well-balanced SCO will provide both rigor and flexibility. Sufficient rigor refers to requiring consistent criteria and standards to be adhered to across sections and semesters of teaching the course. Flexibility allows faculty members to align those requirements according to their distinct teaching styles. It is not advisable to use a syllabus to create the SCO; rather, the SCO should inform and foster the design of all future syllabi. An SCO also serves as a contract: all syllabi should conform to its specifications about what the course is designed to provide students as part of the curriculum as well as the methods by which those learning goals are accomplished.

A carefully crafted SCO should also serve as the foundation and design tool for course-level assessment planning, an integral component of discovering and implementing curricular change for enhancing students' mastery of the learning objectives.

An SCO should also acquaint faculty with university policies on instruction, such as those regarding class attendance, grading, and textbook selection.

Required sections for the SCO are given on the following pages, each denoted by a roman numeral. For most sections, "samples" are provided.

I. General Information

Consult with curriculum committee chair if necessary about numbering new courses.

- A. Course number:
- B. Title:
- C. Units:
- D. Prerequisites:
- E. Responsible faculty:
- F. SCO Prepared by:
- G. Date prepared/revised:

II. Catalog Description

Give catalog description (40 words maximum), listing prerequisites if any. If a new course, consult the catalog for examples (tips: do not list specific assignments or, usually, specific authors or texts).

III. Curriculum Justification(s)

State the need for the course in the department and how it fits in with existing curriculum.

As a GE course, explain under which CATEGORY CLASSIFICATION(S) the course will be designated as well as any special designations (HUMAN DIVERSITY, GLOBAL, CAPSTONE: INTERDISCIPLINARY, ADVANCED SKILLS, OR SERVICE LEARNING), and why. (See GE Policy PS 08-00 for classification criteria.) Refer directly to GE policy and describe clearly the ways that the course applies and fits in each classification being requested.

IV. Measurable Student Learning Outcomes, Evaluation Instruments, and Instructional Strategies for Skill Development

Provide a bulleted list of course outcomes (typically, no more than 5 outcomes).

For All GE Courses: List the GE Student Learning Outcomes (adopted by Senate in GE Policy PS 08-00) relevant to the course. State that these outcomes should appear on all course syllabi.

Outcomes should include both Content-based outcomes (addressing the topic area of the course) and Skill-based outcomes. The skill outcomes shall include at least one of the GE Shared Outcomes. "Shared" outcomes are the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that describe the universal purposes of general education. "Shared" outcomes are developed in courses across a wide variety of disciplines.

GE Content-based Outcomes relate to:

- **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**
 - Achieved through study in the Sciences and Mathematics, Social Sciences, Humanities, Histories, Languages, and the Arts

Note: The GEGC will not directly assess the discipline-specific content areas during the recertification. Instead, those outcomes will be expected to be incorporated into department

Program Review. GE recertification assessment will focus on the shared SLOs (SLOs that should involve many disciplines).

The Shared SLOs of General Education are:

- **Intellectual and Practical Skills, including**
 - Written Communication
 - Oral Communication
 - Critical Thinking
 - Quantitative Reasoning
 - Information Literacy and Technology Literacy
 - Teamwork
 - Creativity, Inquiry, and Discovery
- **Personal and Civic Responsibility, including**
 - Global Competencies
 - Intercultural Competence (cultural values/traditions-U.S.)
 - Ethical Reasoning and Social Responsibility
 - Self-Understanding
 - Foundation and Skills for Lifelong Learning
- **Integrative Learning, including**
 - Synthesis and Interdisciplinary Methods of Inquiry

For **EACH Outcome**, state:

- A. **STUDENT PERFORMANCE BENCHMARK(S)**. *Student Learning Outcomes must be expressed into specific student behaviors that can be measured. Benchmarks are specific statements of what students are expected to learn and be able to do upon successful completion of the course. TIP: Benchmarks are deemed “measurable” when they reflect language that is action-oriented and assessment-driven. Use verbs that require a demonstration. As an illustrative example, consider a course for which the content area is Irish literature. A non-measurable benchmark might be “students will understand the portrayal of women in Irish literature” (problem: how do we “see” when a student understands?). A measurable benchmark might be “students will construct persuasive arguments that address the issue of gender in Irish literature”. Note: As of Fall 2008, the GEGC is working on the development of the benchmarks for the shared SLOs.*
- B. **EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS (ASSIGNMENTS)**. *Describe procedures and measures that would be suitable to evaluate student’s mastery of course content and skills. These might include quizzes, a research paper, essay exam, oral presentation, etc. TIP for GE Courses: GE courses represent curriculum that embraces abilities-based learning, encouraging skill development in concert with content mastery. Students are expected to demonstrate and improve their thinking, writing, etc. Thus, objective measures, like multiple-choice exams, should be supplemented by significant opportunities for skill learning.*
- C. **INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT**. *Describe what you will do as an instructor to teach the objective. TIP: Be certain to focus on instructor activities. Writing provides a good example. SCOs often state that “students will write 3 5-page papers,” but students do not learn to write merely by the act of writing. Teaching writing skills involves, but is not limited to, explaining rubrics for writing expectations both*

before and after the assignments, reviewing components of well-written essays with the class with examples from actual student essays, incorporating feedback on drafts with opportunities for revision, etc.

Sample:

MEASURABLE BENCHMARK FOR WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SLO: After taking this course, students will be able to demonstrate advanced writing processes, including developing ideas, effective note-taking and drafting, formulating and revising thesis statements, outlines, and arguments.

EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS: Specific assignments will vary by instructor, but typical assignments include take-home essays, research papers, and in-class essay exams.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: A writing rubric evaluating content, organization, reasoning, rhetoric, and writing conventions will be used. Standards for good analytical writing will be discussed in class before and after written assignments.

V. Outline of Subject Matter

Include a course schedule that is not too detailed. Do not list page numbers in textbooks, precise assignments, or other details, but give a broad outline of topics to be covered. Outline may be organized thematically (by grouping related topics) or sequentially, showing topics for each week (or sets of weeks). Include a disclaimer to allow for different ways of teaching the course, such as the following:

This is a broad outline of topics to be covered. Subject matter and sequence of topics may vary by instructor.

VI. Methods of Instruction

Explain the nature of classroom activities. Is the course primarily lectures? Should there be opportunities for class discussion, group work, one-on-one instruction, student presentations?

In cases of GE Foundation, Explorations, and Advanced Skill courses, provide any/all of the following: evidence for written/oral communication in the course, evidence of critical thinking and problem solving that involves more than factual recall, and information on how the instructional strategies designed to advance skills are appropriate to the course and level.

If the course is a large lecture format, explain any opportunities for class discussion, student interaction, small group work, or other factors that would enhance active learning in this classroom environment.

If film or other audio-visual materials are used in the course, indicate all of the following: 1) why those particular materials are necessary for the course, 2) the amount of class time devoted to those materials, and 3) a pedagogical justification for why the materials require in-class viewing/listening, rather than out-of-class preparation time.

Sample:

Because this is a critical thinking course, it is expected that formal lectures will be minimized and that students will be regularly and actively engaged in practicing their thinking skills through exercises and discussions. Individual instructors will decide on the specific methods

used in this course, but it is suggested that students will participated extensively in different formats for learning, including demonstrations, small-group activities, and oral presentations.

VII. Extent and Nature of Technology Use

State if and how instructors will require students to use technology as a tool for their learning.

Sample:

The use of technology will depend on individual instructors, but may include Beach Board, should include the development of familiarity with web resources specific to the course, and may include assignments that involve the evaluation of web materials on the subjects. Students may be made familiar, if they are not already, with relevant search databases in the library. Film and video, as well as music, may be used in the classroom.

VIII. Information about Textbooks / Readings

Ensure compliance with University Policy PS 79-08 that defines Choice of Textbooks.

If there is a required text for the course, state so here. If not, provide a brief list of possible textbooks and readings to be used. Include a disclaimer such as the following:

Sample:

The following is a short list of textbooks that are most likely to be used for this course. Instructors may assign one or more of these and/or include other relevant texts/readings. Instructors may be asked to justify the use of old textbooks, if updated texts are available.

IX. Instructional Policies Requirements

List course policies that every instructor must follow.

Include a reference to University policy on instructional issues.

Make it explicit that such policies should appear on course syllabi.

Sample:

Instructors may specify their own policies with regard to plagiarism, withdrawal, absences, etc., as long as the policies are consistent with the University policies published in the CSULB Catalog. It is expected that every course will follow University policies on Attendance (PS 01-01), Course Syllabi (PS 04-05), Final Course Grades, Grading Procedures, and Final Assessments (PS 05-07), and Withdrawals (PS 02-02 rev).

All sections of the course will have a syllabus that includes the information required by the syllabus policy adopted by the Academic Senate. Instructors will include information on how students may make up work for excused absences. When class participation is a required part of the course, syllabi will include information on how participation is assessed. When improvement in oral communication is an objective of the course, syllabi will include a rubric for how oral communication is to be evaluated.

X. Distance Learning / Hybrid Courses

If some or all sections of the course are to be taught, in part or entirely, by distance learning, the course must follow the provisions of PS 03-11, Academic Technology and the Mode of Instruction. Include a statement about how distance learning is being used, and how the department is ensuring that learning in those sections is comparable to traditional courses.

XI. Bibliography

Include a one-page current bibliography of references, possibly with a disclaimer, like the following:

Sample Disclaimer:

This is a highly selective bibliography to provide instructors with a primary set of resource materials. For brevity, important works may be missed from this list. The list is intended to show the range of materials available to our students. Relevant course materials may also be found in periodicals, both in print and electronic form.

XII. Student-Level Assessment

Student-level assessment refers to the assignments and grading we do in the course. If the course has mandatory assignments (e.g., term paper, in-class essay final exam, 3 oral presentations) or mandatory formatting of assignments (e.g., multiple-choice questions should comprise no more than 50% of the total point value of exams), identify them here. Each course should provide a bulleted list of assignments with approximate percentages of course grade breakdown for various assignments.

Include a disclaimer, like the following:

Sample Disclaimer:

The exact set of course assignments will vary depending on the instructor. University policy requires that no single evaluation of student achievement may count for more than one-third of final grade. Appropriate assignments may include...

XIII. Course-Level Assessment Plan

Required for all GE courses:

*The GEGC has adopted course-level assessment planning guidelines for the recertification of GE courses. **Assessment work for each GE course should be conducted throughout the (usually five-year) cycle prior to its recertification due date.** The due date is the time for reporting that work (not doing it). To facilitate this process, courses new to GE will be asked to outline the assessment plan in the SCO, so the GEGC can provide models and feedback about assessment strategies.*

XIV. Consistency of SCO Standards Across Sections

Part of the usefulness of an SCO is derived from the need for consistency of standards, across sections (for multi-sectioned courses) and semesters (for ALL courses). Present and future instructors of the course should follow the instructions given in the SCO to ensure consistency of pedagogical practices. This section outlines possible activities for the course coordinator(s) to measure consistency. Additionally, this section should state that all future syllabi will conform to the SCO.

TIP: The Curriculum and Educational Policies Council recently adopted a policy on Coordination of Multi-Section and Sequential Courses to provide some guidance on the duties of a Course Coordinator. This policy should soon be forwarded to the Academic Senate for consideration.

Sample:

The course coordinator will review the SCO and offer advice and/or materials to each faculty member new to teaching the course. All future syllabi will conform to the SCO. The course coordinator may offer or require regular review of instructors' course materials as well as anonymous samples of student work.

XV. Additional Resource for Development of Syllabi

The Academic Senate has adopted a policy specifying required content for course syllabi. Instructors are encouraged to consult the Academic Senate web site for further information.

HELP IS AVAILABLE:

If you have questions or would like further information, please contact the Office of Undergraduate Studies and Academic Advising at (562) 985-7538.