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# Course Development Guidance

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The intent of this document is to address common questions about the expectations and provide guidance on the requirements for submitting proposals for new courses. Each question on the form and expectation of the syllabus is based on best practices, policies, review protocols, principles of transparency, and principles of quality course design.

## Non-Duplication Assurances

### 1. Why do we have to affirm that one course does not duplicate another on campus?

Avoiding course duplications ensures efficient resource use, avoids redundancy, and maintains curriculum quality (Diamond, 2008). Preventing content duplication and preserving the distinctiveness of each program's curriculum is important to all departments. The author/proposer is responsible for avoiding proposing a duplicate course.

### 2. How do I search the university catalog to find similar courses?

Currently, the catalog can be found at <https://catalog.fhsu.edu/>. The most efficient way to search is to download the PDF version linked on this page. Open the PDF and do a search, often with the “find” command. Use keywords to explore similar courses in the catalog.

### 3. What evidence do I need to provide to demonstrate a proposed course is unique?

Key evidence to show a proposed course is substantively different than current offerings may include the course description highlighting distinctive topics, contrasting learning outcomes, assessments focused on different skills, and a matrix comparing content against related courses or similar.

Additionally, to ensure departments on campus are working together toward a shared goal, it is important to check with the department’s chair to ensure that the department sees no issues before the course comes to a committee for approval. Please do so via email and include their response as part of the uploaded documentation. Missing this step can result in your course being tabled until approval is confirmed.

## Course Syllabus Requirements

### 1. Why do we need to use the current template provided by the Provost's office or TILT?

Using an approved, standardized syllabus template ensures the inclusion of all required components, facilitates review/approval, and promotes quality and consistency across courses (Center for Teaching, Vanderbilt University, 2022). If the basic elements are included, stylistic changes and additional sections that adhere to accreditation requirements are welcomed.

### 2. How do I create Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) that are clear and measurable outcomes of learning?

Well-written CLOs use clear language and active, observable verbs that allow assessment of student competency and skill development (Suskie, 2018). "Write your learning outcomes from the perspective of how you expect students to be different by the end of the course (or program) in some observable way(s) (WVU Teaching and Learning Commons, N.D.)

### 3. What does it mean for CLOs to state what students will do with course content *after* learning it rather than indicating what students will do to learn the content?

Quality CLOs emphasize transferable skills and deeper learning outcomes, not just content coverage, so they should reflect enduring takeaways beyond the classroom (Barkley & Major, 2016). CLOs should communicate what the student *can do after* taking your course.

### 4. Why are the CLOs written with *action verbs* representing appropriate cognitive and critical thinking skills?

The verbiage in CLOs should reflect the cognitive processes and critical thinking skills aligned with the course purpose and curriculum (Anderson et al., 2001). Action verbs are helpful to ensure the outcome reflects what students *can do after* taking your course.

### 5. Why should textbook(s) be less than 10 years old?

Using a recent edition textbook, ideally published within the last 5-10 years, helps ensure currency, relevancy, and alignment to evolving disciplinary knowledge (Hanstedt, 2012). In courses such as technology-related courses, it is ideal to ensure the textbook has been published within the last 5 years. Any situations outside of this guideline should be explained on the course form.

## **6. Why should I provide a list of 4 to 5 major readings for Z-courses?**

Identifying key readings is evidence of the content students will engage in during the course. This is important because Z courses do not use a traditional textbook.

## **7. Why does the schedule need to include topics, learning activities, modules, assignments/assessments, and associated CLOs in a logical progression?**

A well-organized schedule with scaffolded topics and assessments provides transparency about learning tasks, pacing, and alignment to outcomes (Eberly Center, Carnegie Mellon University, 2022). A detailed schedule assists reviewers and students in understanding the course's flow, learning tasks, timing, and how the teaching, learning, and assessments are aligned and supported.

## **8. Why should the assignments/assessments be described and explained well enough for students to understand what is expected of them in the syllabus?**

Thoroughly describing expectations for assignments and making connections to CLOs provides clarity for students, transparency in assessment, and thoughtful curriculum alignment (Suskie, 2018). Assessments linked to CLOs provide a purpose for engaging in the activity. Additionally, students should understand how the assessments are evaluated, such as with a rubric, peer-assessed, standardized grading tool, etc.

## **9. Why do the grading procedures need to detail the point or percentage breakdown of course assignments/assessments in the grade?**

Detailing grading procedures and how each is weighted in the final grade provides transparency and clarity for students (Suskie, 2018). Simple calculations are best practice.

## **10. Why does the grading scale need to enumerate each range to the 100th decimal percentage, e.g., B = 87.00 to 93.99?**

Precisely defined grading scales with discrete percentage ranges help ensure consistency in applying grades across students (Walvoord & Anderson, 2010). Using two decimal places helps to avoid grade appeals, which can be time-consuming, frustrating, and additional work for committee members. In lieu of a detailed rounding policy, using two decimal places in the grading scale can reduce grade appeals tremendously.

## **11. Why are all policies and procedures required by the Provost's office, the College, and the Department required?**

Communicating all mandatory institutional and departmental policies provides official information on expectations, resources, and practices to students (Nilson, 2022). While not required, using the links to these policies can be an efficient way to ensure you have the most recent version of the policy in your syllabus.

### **600 / 600G**

#### **1. How do I justify why a course needs to be at the 600 level?**

KBOR defines the 600-level course as “Upper division, undergraduate, primarily for juniors and seniors, with an enrollment of less than 50% master’s students” (KBOR Policy Manual, 2018, p. 16). These courses offer undergraduates advanced course content beyond the general bachelor’s degree. They are used in accelerated programs, 4 + 1, and other alternative program designs.

#### **2. What are the reasons for having the course number be at the 600 level?**

Offering the course for advanced UG work, with the opportunity to engage graduate students in the same content at a higher level, is a benefit. Designed well, graduate students can learn leadership skills while engaging in graduate-level work on the content.

#### **3. Why do the CLOs, assignments, and grading scales need to be separated for UG and GR?**

“Since expectations for graduate students in 600-level courses are, as required by the Kansas Board of Regents, markedly different from those that apply to undergraduates, it makes sense to weigh various assignments differently on two separate scales. When major projects—term papers, literature reviews, public presentations, etc.—are required of graduate students, the grading scale should reflect the importance of these activities. Giving graduate students credit for attendance or class participation is, in the vast majority of cases, not a good practice. In addition, as a general rule, the FHSU Graduate School discourages the use of pass/fail assignments” (FHSU Graduate School, 2016, p. 1).

“A variety of substantial additional assignments for graduate students. Syllabi for 600-level courses should always identify two or more additional requirements for graduate students. Simply stating that higher quality work will be expected is not enough, nor is the common practice of establishing a different length requirement for a term paper (say, ten pages for undergraduates, fifteen for graduate students). Graduate students should, most certainly, hand in longer papers that consult a higher number of sources and reflect a higher level of synthesis and comprehension. However, this requirement should

be combined with other assignments not given to undergraduates” (FHSU Graduate School, 2016, p. 1). Rigorous, time-intensive, and higher critical thinking assignments should be required of graduate students and clearly described in the course syllabus (FHSU Graduate School, 2016).

“Graduate students should always read more than the undergraduates in a 600-level course. A good practice, then, is to list additional required readings for graduate students and to do so” on the course schedule (FHSU Graduate School, 2016). “Quizzes and written examinations—or, worse, examinations made up entirely of multiple-choice questions—should never be the sole means of evaluating the performance of graduate students in 600-level courses. For graduate students, instructors should supplement quizzes and written examinations with oral examinations, writing assignments, presentations, contributions to discussion boards, and so forth” (FHSU Graduate School, 2016, p. 2).

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