

Creating a Course Outline

Asynchronous Resource

Teaching + Learning

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Preface

Welcome to the asynchronous resource for creating course outlines!

Course outlines are an essential part of course design. They serve as a contract between Humber and our students. Course outlines articulate the goals and expectation for the course, including the outcomes, modules of study and assessments. Many new and experienced faculty have questions related to the content and quality of their course outlines, some of these questions include:

- What are the essential components of a course outline?
- How do I create a course outline that is clear and informative?
- How can I ensure that course learning outcomes are clearly written and aligned with learning activities and assessments?

By reviewing this asynchronous module on Creating a Course Outline, faculty will be able to:

1. Identify the components of a course outline.
2. Analyze a course outline that they use or created.
3. Utilize the course outline template and course outline checklist to help create a new course outline or to update their current course outlines.

The Purpose of Course Outlines

Course outlines are an integral part of course design and development. There are several purposes of a course outline. For instructors, course outlines are an opportunity to make sure the course goals are clearly articulated and aligned with the course activities and assessments. Additionally, the course outline is a planning tool that can communicate the schedule for the course. For students, course outlines serve as a “contract” or an agreement regarding the course described. Course outlines provide students with key information including course goals, expectations of students and a timeline for the expectations. Lastly, a course outline is a reference for colleagues who may be assigned to teach the course, administrators who oversee the course, and accreditation agencies. Others may refer to the course outline to identify what skills students acquired after completing the course. The information in a course outline provides insight on where the course fits within a program, and whether it is a prerequisite or a co-requisite for another course.

To summarize, the purpose of a course outline is:

- **To have a clear agreement between the student and the college.**
Clarifies course expectations, course goals, and includes policies, procedures and information regarding the student code of conduct.
- **To ensure transparency in information related to the course.**
Communicates key information related to course topics, deadlines and assessment expectations.
- **To demonstrate alignment of learning outcomes, learning activities and assessments.**
Decisions about class planning and assessment will align with program and course goals.

Creating a Course Outline

Even before you start developing the course outline, envision what the course experience will be like for the student. Consider these guiding questions from a student perspective:

1. What will I experience in this course?
2. What will I remember most about this course in 2 years, 5 years, 10 years after completion?
3. How will this course change me in some way?
4. What will I be able to do (vocationally) that I wasn't able to do before taking this course?
5. What new tools, strategies, or methods will I add to my "tool box" during this course?
6. What vital communication skills will I develop because of the time spent and work completed in this course?
7. What knowledge will I gain that will inform my work in the discipline?
8. How will I know how to evaluate my own competency development and how to plan for my own growth as a professional?
9. What professional attributes will I take with me to future courses in the program as a result of the learning and assessment experiences in this course?

Components of a Course Outline

When creating your course outline there are some essential pieces that you need to include:

Administrative Information:

Course name and number, academic year, instructor's name, program coordinator's name and Associate Dean's name all constitute administrative information.

Course Description:

A brief summary of the key learning experiences of the course. What is this course about? What will be the students' experiences in the course? What are some of the key topics or themes of the course? Include references to learning strategies that will be used to achieve the learning outcomes.

Course Rationale:

One or two statements that describe the "so what" of the course. What is the significance of this course? Where does this course 'fit' within the academic program in which it is situated?

Course Learning Outcomes (Course Goals)

Designing outcomes is essential to designing your course and is a required element to have in your course outline. Course learning outcomes are statements that are verb oriented and directed at

Components of a Course Outline

the students. For example: “Students will be able to identify key agricultural techniques used in the production of grains.” This example uses the verb identify. In the next example, the verb is analyze: “Students will be able to analyze population maps interpreting trends in public health data.”

Assessment Weighting (Evaluation Matrix):

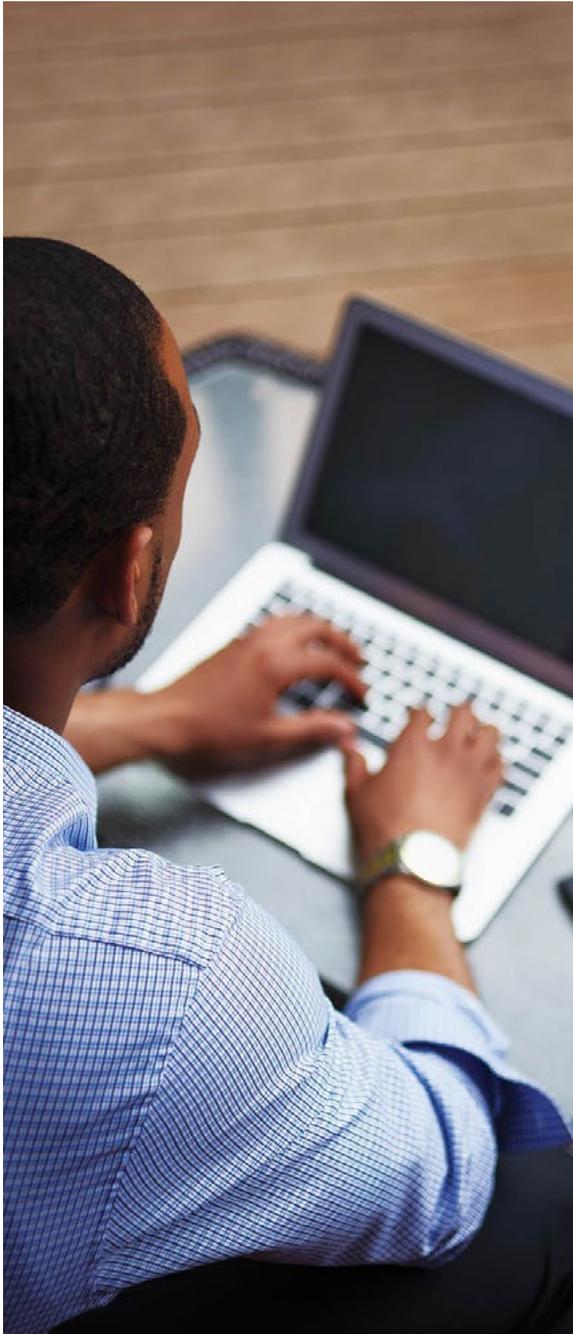
The assessment weighting section (evaluation matrix) is a grading guide that allows students to see what weightings can apply to the different assessment elements of a course. An example of an evaluation matrix is below.

Sample Assessment Matrix

ASSESSMENT	WEIGHT
Discussion Posts (12 in total)	12 x 5% = 60%
Journal Entry	5%
Wiki Posts (2 in total)	2x 10% = 20%
Action Plan	15%
TOTAL	100%

As well as including the overview of assessments, a grading scale should be included for the students so they understand levels of performance.

Components of a Course Outline



Critical Path (Modules of Study):

Once the learning outcomes are developed and you understand how you want to assess your students, you can create activities that will facilitate the learning that needs to be done for students to achieve the outcomes. Course activities should work in parallel with the assessment plan. If students need to provide evidence of learning by completing a multiple choice exam, then the activities in the schedule should prepare them for this assessment. Lectures, readings, small group and whole group discussions can all be activities that help the student meet the course learning outcomes. The critical path or modules of study is organized in thematic units and presents the topics to be covered, dates, learning outcomes aligned with the thematic units, and the associated readings/texts/viewing materials to be done in a columnar format so it is easy to refer to and to read. Instructors should highlight due dates of assignments or dates of tests in the critical path. An example of a module of study is on the following page:

Components of a Course Outline

Sample Modules of Study

MODULE & TOPIC	COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES	RESOURCES	ASSESSMENTS
Module 1 Exploring Cultural Awareness (Weeks 1-3)	1, 2, 3, and 4	Course material posted in Blackboard	Discussion Boards Posts; Wiki Post; Journal Activity
Module 2 Examining Internationalization and the Culture Lens (Weeks 4-8)	1, 2, 3, and 5	Course material posted in Blackboard	Discussion Board Posts; Wiki Post
Module 3 Understanding the Impact of Social Identities and Culture Mindedness (Weeks 9-14)	1, 2, 4 and 6	Course material posted in Blackboard	Discussion Board Posts; Action Plan

Components of a Course Outline

Required resources, tools, equipment, texts, readings, or materials:

Include all resources and materials that the students will need to successfully complete the course, including any lab materials. You can include a list of readings for the course, references to textbooks, online readings, webinars, podcasts and any other multimedia source that is part of the resource list.

Other course policies:

Consider outlining your expectations regarding attendance and participation. Include hyperlinks to Humber's policy and procedures as they relate to the student code of conduct. This is also a place to discuss issues such as academic integrity, responding to microaggressions and accessibility matters.

Any institution-required statements:

In addition to the Land Acknowledgement and the Equity Diversity and Inclusion Statement, your Academic Faculty or program may require that you include standardized statements in their course outlines about issues related to classroom conduct. Check with your Academic Faculty and/or department to see if such requirements exist.

Resources for Outline Creation

Course Outline Templates:

The [Degree Course Outline Template](#) and [Non-Degree Course Outline Template](#) are examples that you can use to format your Humber Course Outline. The templates have example language of key content areas of the course outline. Review the templates for format and content before you begin creating your own outline.

Using the Course Outline Checklist:

Use the [Course Outline Checklist](#) to make sure you include all the key components of the course outline. Use the checklist throughout the course outline and course development process.

Before you even begin creating the course outline, review the Course Outline Checklist to understand what is expected in each section of the course outline. As you **create** the course outline and during course development, use the Course Outline Checklist to keep you on track while you design what your course is going to look like.

When your outline is **finished**, use the Course Outline Checklist to check that each component of the outline is complete and for peer review of course outlines.

Reviewing Your Course Outline with a Teaching + Learning Consultant

If you would like to review your newly created or recently revised course outline with a Teaching + Learning consultant, email your request to ctl@humber.ca