

Creating an Integrated Course Outline and Engaging Syllabus

The **Official Course Outline** is a “*contract among the student, instructor, and institution* giving the fundamental required components of the course which the student is guaranteed to receive from the instructor and institution. More than just specifying the required components of the course, the outline of record states the content and level of rigor for which students—across all sections of the course—will be held accountable. Courses are designed to provide a coherent body of knowledge to prepare students in a particular subject.”

“A **syllabus ‘or green sheet’** describes how the individual instructor will carry out the terms of that contract. Syllabi give specific dates, grading standards, and other rules of conduct of a course required by the individual instructor. A course outline gives the basic components of the course required to be taught by all instructors. A syllabus allows the individual instructor to include methods and topics which may go beyond the course outline. It gives the instructor the opportunity to bring out his or her particular talents and strengths.”

From: **Components of a Model Course Outline of Record – Academic Senate for CA Community Colleges** – Adopted November 1995

The course syllabi (or green sheet) must align with the Official course outline. The course syllabus provides the specific course details.

Student Learning Outcomes are *student* focused.

Course Student Learning Outcomes (CSLOs): Broad measurable statements of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes a *student* will have attained upon *completion* of a course. (Ohlone College, 2008)

Student Learning Outcomes, College Level: Broad measureable statements of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes a student will attain as a result of their Ohlone College experience. Individual courses, programs and services at Ohlone will assist the student in promoting personal, cultural, and intellectual growth, as well as intellectual curiosity and analytical thinking. (Ohlone College, 2008)

Student Learning Outcomes are written as measurable student-centered behavioral objectives which demonstrate critical thinking and meet the stated needs of the course.

Writing CSLOs is reflective and creative process. When creating course level SLOs:

- Focus on what the student can do to demonstrate competence.
- Include a measurable expectation.
- Use active verbs (Bloom’s Taxonomy). Critical Thinking is reflected in outcomes that use verbs from Bloom’s Taxonomy at the analysis, synthesis and evaluation levels.

- Here are some questions to consider when creating SLOs to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes a *student* will have attained upon *completion* of a course.
 - Knowledge:
 - What knowledge do I want the student to gain from my course?
 - What cognitive level of Bloom's Taxonomy do I want to use? Why?
 - Example: What will the student analyze, design, evaluate etc. upon completion of the course?
 - Write a SLO that reflects the knowledge students will achieve how they will achieve it.
 - Skills and Abilities
 - What skills do I want the student to gain from my course?
 - What will the student be able to do upon completion of my course?
 - What psychomotor level of Bloom's Taxonomy do I want to use? Why?
 - Write a SLO that reflects the skills and/or abilities the students will gain and how they will achieve it.
 - Attitudes
 - What attitudes will the student display upon completion of my course?
 - What psychomotor level of Bloom's Taxonomy do I want to use? Why?
 - Write a SLO that reflects the attitudes the students will display and how they will achieve it.
- Avoid teacher-centered language, such as "to teach".
- Avoid terms such as "know", and "understand" substituting terms such as "examine".

Objectives are specific *incremental steps* that clearly work toward the accomplishment of the student learning outcomes (SLOs). They are measurable and short-term in nature.

- All courses have SLOs which are included on the Official Course Outline and on the course syllabi or green sheet.
- Objectives *may* be used within the syllabi; examples: for each specific class meeting or to delineate specific theory and lab course requirements.

Each Student Learning Outcome must be supported by appropriate course content, assignment(s), and method(s) of evaluation/assessment. All must be aligned at the same level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Course Content correlates with all student learning outcomes. Specifically include a detailed outline of the course content. When appropriate, delineate both lecture and lab content.

- Questions to consider:
 - What content will I cover that correlates to the CSLO?

- What *teaching/learning methodologies* will I use to facilitate student learning at the expected level?

Assignments clearly demonstrate how students will obtain learning outcomes.

Assignments reflect all outcomes and content, including theory, lab, clinical lab, and field trips.

- Degree-applicable courses must include assignments that require students to think critically and apply concepts taught in the course. Indicate how students will achieve independent, higher order thinking. Refer to Bloom's Taxonomy.
- Questions to consider:
 - What assignment will demonstrate the student has achieved the SLO and how will I know that?
 - What criteria (performance standards) will I use to evaluate the students achievement?
 - How do I determine “A”, “B”, “C”, “D” or “F” work?
- **Reading Assignments**
 - List and/or provide examples of the type of reading assignments that will achieve the student learning outcomes and correlate with the topics in the course outline.
 - Example: Weekly assigned readings, which may include reading profession journals or textbook chapters.
- **Writing Assignments**
 - Ohlone College requires courses to include a writing assignment when appropriate. If a writing assignment is not required, state the rationale, e.g., primarily skill demonstration or computational. Written components of examinations are not identified as writing assignments
 - Specifically identify the type of writing assignments, such as essays, lab reports, journals, research papers, critiques, etc. State the main goal of the assignment.
 - Examples:
 - Research paper - synthesize and evaluate the five most important causes of the American Civil War.
 - Journal, include reflections upon your readings.
- **Projects, Activities and other Assignments**
 - Indicate all other course projects, activities and assignments with specific examples. Include computational or non-computational problem solving and skill demonstrations in this section.
 - Examples:
 - Prepare graphs, tables, and calculations in the analysis of laboratory results.
 - Assemble simple electrical circuits, make measurements, complete the necessary computations, present the results.

- Complete three case studies in which students locate legal and ethical dilemmas and discuss the course of action they would take. Students are expected to integrate course content to support their answers.
- Home practice is the essential component for attaining any kind of skill set on a musical instrument. Students practice warm-ups, review tunes, new repertoire, and note-reading every day in practice and in class.

Evaluation is the judgment of a *student's work* to determine the learning achieved, the grade earned, and/or the graduation requirements satisfied. (SLOPE approved 3/4/04)

- State the performance standards used to assess the level of mastery of each learning outcome.
- State methods of evaluation to assess student learning outcomes.
- Examples include: exams, oral presentation, portfolio, discussion, skill demonstration, successful completion of research paper or project, or other (according to pre-established criteria).

Assessment is focused on improving student learning through the following steps:

- Collecting and analyzing results of how all students who take the course each semester are able to meet each course SLO.
- Determining if any changes are needed in teaching strategies, curriculum, and/or any other part of the teaching/learning process, including how you give student feedback.
- It is recommended that assessment be “embedded” in the student evaluation process. That means using the same tools for both evaluation and assessment.
- Examples include: the examples listed under evaluation, classroom assessment techniques (CATs), exit essays, final exam, (according to pre-established criteria).
- Questions to consider:
 - How will I know if the student has met this SLO?
 - What evaluation and assessment materials will I use?
 - What performance standards will I use?
 - How will I collect assessment data on the group(s) of students taking my course?
 - How will I know if my assessment results are useful or meaningful?
 - How do I plan to use the assessment results?