COURSE OUTLINE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Last updated: September 3, 2025

I. Minimum components of a course outline

To ensure consistency and compliance with Queen's University and Ontario Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security ("the Ministry") requirements, the following elements are the minimum information to include in all course outlines:

1) **General course information**
   a) Course title
   b) Course code
   c) Course component(s) (as defined in the [Academic Calendar](#))
   d) Year and term
   e) Number of units
   f) Course mode of instruction (as defined in the [Academic Calendar](#))
   g) Meeting location and time (if applicable)

2) **Instructor information**
   a) **Instructor Name, title, and contact information** (email, office location, and office hours).

3) **Course description**
   a) **Calendar Description**: The official description from the University calendar.
   b) **Course-Level Learning Outcomes[1]**: Clearly defined, measurable statements that describe what a successful student will be able to know, value or do by the end of the course.

4) **Assessment and evaluation**
   a) **Overview:** List all assessments in the course, including at minimum, assignment: due dates, weighting[2], and the course learning outcomes (CLO) each evaluates.
   b) **Assessment summary**: Provide an overview of assessments in a structured format, such as the example provided below, aligning with the elements articulated in 4a:

Assessment	Due Date	Weighting	CLOs assessed
Assignment 1	MM/DD/YYYY	XX% of final grade, or X/1000 marks	LO #1, LO #3
Midterm exam	MM/DD/YYYY	XX% of final grade, or X/1000 marks	LO #2, LO #4
Group project	MM/DD/YYYY	XX% of final grade, or X/1000 marks	LO #1, LO #2, LO #5
Final exam	MM/DD/YYYY	XX% of final grade, or X/1000 marks	LO #3, LO #4, LO #5

---

[1] Development of CLLOs to align with approved Faculty-level curricular processes.
[2] Weighting indicates either: the percentage of the final grade allocated to each assessment or the total marks an assessment is worth in relation to the sum of marks in the course (1000 in this example).

c) **Policies on Late Submissions, Missed Assessments**: Clearly outline course policies for late or missed work, including any penalties or accommodations.

5) **Course schedule and activities**
   a) **Course Schedule**: With the format and level of detail determined by the instructor, include a topic-by-topic, week-by-week or class-by-class outline of topics, readings, assignments, and due dates[3].

6) **Required materials and costs**
   a) **Textbook and learning material costs**: Name, cost, and any restrictions on the use of second-hand copies for all required and optional learning materials[4], to meet the Ministry's 2024 directive. If the cost for the current year is not available, the most recent available cost should be listed, with a note indicating that it may change.
   b) **Field trip costs:** If applicable, specify whether field trips are compulsory or optional, provide a cost breakdown for travel and accommodation, and note if fees are subject to change[5].

7) **Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) Tools**
   a) **AI Use Statement**: State whether the use of GenAI tools is permitted or not in the course. The statement should reflect one of the following positions:
      i) **Permitted**: Specific uses of GenAI are allowed in the course. Specify:
         (1) Whether use is permitted throughout the course or only for certain learning experiences or assessments.
         (2) What kinds of use are permitted (e.g., idea generation, editing, drafting).
         (3) Any restrictions on use (e.g., not allowed for final assignments or exams).
         (4) What disclosure (e.g., including the tool used and purpose) or citation is required, if any.

      ii) **Not Permitted**: Use of GenAI tools is not allowed in any part of student work for this course. Submitting AI-generated content constitutes a departure from academic integrity as defined by university Academic Integrity procedures.

8) **Link to institutional statements document**
   a) Provide a link to the Queen's Institutional Course Policies and Resources webpage, where students can access standard institutional policies, including:
      i) Academic Integrity
      ii) Accessibility and Accommodation
      iii) Technology Use
      iv) Mental Health and Wellness Resources

---

[3] The course schedule is not considered fixed and can be altered as needed by the instructor, with the exception of due dates, whose amendments are guided by article 2 in the course outline policy.
[4] Defined as materials that students retain as personal property, including:
- Materials used in the production of items that become the property of the student (e.g., clickers, art supplies, lab manuals),
- Clothing retained by the student (e.g., lab coats), or
- Digital learning resources that are the property of the student including test/assessment tools.

[5] All field trip costs must comply with Queen's University Ancillary Fee Protocol and the Guidelines for Compulsory Course-Related Fees. These fees must first be approved through the formal course-related fee approval process before adding to the course outline.

Where an academic unit maintains its own articulation of institutional course policies and resources, a link to that unit-specific resource may be provided in place of the Course Policies and Resources webpage.

Note: The institutional course policy and resources webpage will be maintained as a centralized and authoritative resource to help ensure consistency across course outlines. While the list above highlights key examples, it is not exhaustive. Additional policies or resources may be added to the statements document as approved or created.

Accessible course outline formats

To support diverse learning needs, course outlines will be provided in formats that are compatible with assistive technologies. As detailed on the Accessibility Hub, use file formats such as accessible Word, PDF or HTML files. Ensure structured headings for navigation, include text transcripts of visual information, use high-contrast text, and select a readable font size to enhance readability. For further support, the Human Rights and Equity Office offers Creating Accessible Documents training, online.

II. Suggested components for a learner-centred approach

The following syllabus elements are optional, but recommended. These components encourage student engagement, transparency, and a supportive learning environment, drawn from key literature on the relationship between the design, development and content of course outlines and student success.

1) Approach to instruction
   - A description of the instructor's approach to teaching, commitment to learner-centred practices, or methods used to foster students' learning and collaboration.

2) Expanded course description and rationale
   - Additional context about the course, such as key themes, applications, or its relevance to students' academic and professional development.

3) Integrating Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing
   - Describe how materials by Indigenous authors, scholars, and Traditional Knowledge Keepers have informed course content.
   - Describe how your engagement with the land, its histories and the Peoples on whose traditional territory you teach has informed and shaped specific learning experiences in the course.
   - Note the community protocols or permissions followed when incorporating Indigenous knowledge or materials, such as observing traditional offerings or obtaining formal permission from a Traditional Knowledge Keeper.

4) Commitment to reconciliation
   - Outline how the course responds to relevant TRC Calls to Action.
   - List Indigenous-led engagement opportunities and how they connect to course activities or themes.

5) Integration of student feedback
   - Describe how feedback from previous students has informed changes or enhancements to current course design, content, or delivery. This could include adjustments to assessments, teaching methods, or learning resources.

6) Assessment criteria and examples of high-quality work
   - Including assignment descriptions, rubrics, grading criteria, or sample submissions help students understand evaluation standards and expectations.

7) Timelines for receiving feedback
   - Indicate when students can expect to receive feedback on their assessments and assignments; consider specifying the anticipated turnaround time for submitted work.

8) Alignment of assessments with course learning outcomes
   - Explain how the learning outcomes align with assessments. This transparency helps students understand the purpose of assignments and their connection to overall course learning outcomes.

9) Feedback opportunities
   - Outline specific opportunities for students to receive feedback and improve, such as any revision or resubmission policies.

10) Opportunities for student choice
   - Highlight any areas where students can exercise choice, such as selecting lecture or project topics, or assessment formats. Choice helps to promote students' ownership of learning and can accommodate diverse interests and strengths.

11) Learning resources and support
   - Include recommendations for study strategies, links to campus resources (e.g., student academic success services, library, student mental health services), or relevant online tools.
   - Encourage engagement with additional resources outside the classroom related to course topics.

12) Communication policy
   - Outline expectations for student communication, including instructor response times, when you will not respond to email (e.g., weekends) and use of office hours.

13) Inclusive and respectful classroom expectations
   - Outline expectations for creating a learning environment that is inclusive, respectful and culturally safe. Include guidance on what contributing respectfully and engaging with diverse perspectives looks like in the context of the course.

14) Connection to future learning
   - Describe how the skills, knowledge, or values developed in the course will be useful in future courses or professional settings. This can help students see the long-term value of their learning.

III. Suggested components for an accessible course outline

The following suggested components are intended to help instructors design courses that anticipate student needs and reduce barriers to participation. While these elements are not required at this time, they reflect recommendations in the Proposed Postsecondary Education Standards (Final Recommendations Report, 2022). These are proposed provincial standards under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and would inform future legislated requirements.

Components
1. **Detail instruction and assessment formats**
   Course components (e.g., lecture, seminar, laboratory, studio) and the mode of instruction (e.g., in-person, blended, asynchronous online, synchronous online) are required in the *General Course Information* section of the course outline. Instructors may also consider providing finer-grained details within those components, so students know what specific formats and tools to expect. Examples include:
   - Instructional formats: whether lectures are recorded, whether tutorials include group discussions, or whether labs include demonstrations.
   - Assessment formats: whether quizzes are online or in-person, whether projects involve group collaboration, or whether presentations are synchronous or asynchronous.

   Providing this detail goes beyond the official component and modality designations and helps students plan for their learning needs, including arranging accommodations where necessary.

2. **Identify technologies used**
   - Identify technologies that will be used for instruction (e.g., learning management system, polling tools, third-party platforms).
   - Identify technologies that will be used for assessments and learning activities (e.g., LMS quizzes, online collaboration tools).

3. **Provide course outline in an accessible format**
   Queen's course outline standards require that outlines be provided in accessible formats. To help meet this requirement effectively, best practices include:
   - Using structured headings and lists.
   - Providing alternative text for images and meaningful link text.
   - Avoiding the use of colour alone to convey meaning.
   - Ensuring PDFs are properly tagged for screen readers or providing outlines in Word or HTML formats.
   - Including captions or transcripts if audiovisual elements are embedded.

4. **Detail institutional policies and processes**
   All course outlines must already include the required accessibility statement and links to Queen's accommodation policies. Instructors may also consider including additional information that supports accessibility, such as:
   - Links to processes for requesting course materials in alternate formats.
   - Information on how students can raise or resolve accessibility-related concerns specific to the course.

- References to program-specific accessibility supports or guidelines.

5. **Articulate essential requirements**
   While not currently legislated, instructors are strongly encouraged to indicate which course requirements are essential to meeting the learning outcomes.

   - *Essential requirements* are the core knowledge, skills, and abilities that students must demonstrate to meet the learning outcomes of a course or program, with or without accommodations. These requirements are considered fundamental to the integrity of a course or program. While the standards themselves cannot be altered or waived, the ways students demonstrate them may be adapted.
     - This working definition is provided for guidance and aligns with the Ontario Human Rights Code and inclusive course design practices; FAS accommodations resource for Faculty offers further detail.
     - Any future definition of essential requirements will supersede this one.

   Where possible, link assessments to those essential requirements to clarify their role in demonstrating student achievement.

This section adapts and incorporates material from:

Zaza, C. (2024). *Postsecondary Course Accessibility Guide Reference Manual.* University of Waterloo. Licensed under CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0.