

Writing a Course Description

Purpose of the Description is to:

1. Inform the student of the brief content of the course for the purpose of evaluating and enrolling in courses.
2. Provide information on the transferability of the course - allows students to tell prospective Universities and employers what the course was about in a short, content-filled way.
3. Describe the course to a prospective student by making the course sound interesting, and
4. Include prerequisites and/or co-requisites

Description Requirements

1. Start with an action verb (ex: explores, identifies, examines, presents, introduces, enhances, promotes awareness of, expands)
2. Write brief descriptive phrases – it is unnecessary to use complete sentences or predications.
3. Use phrases like “with emphasis on” only if it is significant to point out that one or more of the several topics are the primary focus of the course.
4. Avoid using phrases such as “a study of” or “an examination of” since it is assumed that all courses analyze, examine or study the subject matter.
5. Cover main topics that are helpful in determining transferability. (Example: applications, graphs, functions, formulas, and proper mathematical notation are emphasized).
6. Use less than 45 words; combine like components under a more all-inclusive description
7. Include a course addendum if it is specific to an individual instructor (not in the course catalog)

Additional Information about developing a Course Description:

1. The description should help the student decide whether a course is relevant to his or her course of study. The syllabus is an argument whether for the course or for a point of view presented in the course. And provides a more complete list of material used in the course.
2. The description should provide the student with a useful tool for planning his/her programs. It is not meant as a marketing tool to entice the student to enroll in a particular course or a particular instructor's version of the course.
3. The non-specialist should be able to identify the general area under consideration with a course and not see an exhaustive list of field-specific terminology.

Examples

Poor description	Better
<p>This course is designed to give students an introduction to the field of Psychology, to develop a broad understanding of Psychology's diversity, and to discover how Psychology relates to the challenges of everyday life</p>	<p>First term of a two-term sequence in introductory psychology covering the history of psychology, scientific methods, the brain and nervous system, sensation and perception, states of consciousness, human development, learning, memory, language and cognition.</p>
<p>This course surveys the contributions and experiences of women in selected global cultures from prehistory to the present. This course is also occasionally offered in an independent study format. Offered at irregular intervals</p>	<p>Examines the historical and cultural variations in family life and sexuality in the 19th and 20th centuries in an international context (including the United States) through topics such as courtship, marriage, reproduction, violence, colonialism, homosexuality and work. Prerequisites: WR115, Rd115, and MTH20 or equivalent placement test scores, audit available</p>
<p>MTH060: Designed for review or for the beginner, this course is an introduction to topics in algebra. Expressions, equations, and inequalities are explored numerically, symbolically, graphically and verbally. Prerequisite: Pass MTH20 with a C or better or placement into MTH60.</p>	<p>Introduces algebra, integers, rational and real numbers, algebraic expressions, linear equations and inequalities in one or two variables, and systems of equations and inequalities. Recommended prerequisite: MTH20 or equivalent.</p>
<p>NUR90: The primary focus of this course is to prepare the student with the knowledge and skills needed to provide safe physical care to patients in long-term care facilities.</p>	<p>Covers the knowledge and skills needed for the safe physical care of patients in long-term care facilities. Follows curriculum approved by the Oregon State Board of Nursing in preparing for the Oregon Nursing Assistant Exam. Prerequisites: RD90 and WR90; proof of Measles immunization; Prerequisite/ concurrent: current TB test and pass a criminal background check.</p>