Review of Course Materials

Overview

For this aspect of the teaching portfolio, you have the opportunity to analyze a colleague's syllabus and/or a specific lesson plan in regards to their pedagogical innovations and inclusive practices. Examining a course's materials allows us to predict the type of classroom the instructor fosters through the information presented in these documents.

QuickStart guide for Reviewee:
- Read the instructions and the glossary
- Pick a document to be reviewed
- Ask the Reviewer to examine chosen document using this guide

QuickStart guide for Reviewer:
- Read the instructions and the glossary
- Answer yes/no to the guiding questions
- Use comments to annotate within the document

Instructions to the Reviewee

If you would like to have a colleague review your documents, first pick which course material you would like them to review. The documents they can review are your syllabus or lesson plans. Pick a document that you are particularly proud of to showcase your teaching style.

Next, reach out to a colleague to review your chosen document. Provide them with this guide to assist in their review.

When they are finished annotating your document, they will send it back to you for your review. If you would like to ask the reviewer questions about the annotations, feel free to set up a meeting to discuss.

Instructions to the Reviewer

If your colleague asks you to examine their course materials, the documents you can review are your colleague's syllabi or lesson plans. When reviewing these documents, we recommend that you annotate directly in the documents to illustrate your examination.

The questions that follow are all yes/no questions. First, go through the list of questions below to determine whether or not the documents have these components. Feel free to check the boxes next to the questions to keep track of your answers. If you answer yes to a question, think about why you answered yes. Once you have the reasoning behind your choice, we recommend you annotate your course documents about where the evidence of your answer is located.

You may answer no to any of the questions below. Please note that answering no to a particular question does not mean that a course is poorly designed; each course is different, and each particular teaching style is unique. Feel free to annotate those as well if you wish.

When you are finished with the review, send the documents with your annotations to your colleague who requested the review. We recommend that you do not share the annotations with anyone besides the author/requestor of the documents.

How to Annotate:

Microsoft Word (recommended): highlight the words or sentences that point towards each question you answered yes to. Then, add a comment (either by right-clicking or through the Insert menu).

Apple Pages: highlight the words or sentences that point towards each question you answered yes to. In the toolbar, click on the sticky note icon. Or, in the review toolbar, click on the plus sign.

Glossary

We have provided a glossary for you. The terms defined in the glossary are bolded when they first appear in the document. We recommend that you read the glossary to establish a common understanding of the terminology used in this guide.

Alignment: when assessments asses the learning outcomes.

Assessment: any measure of a student's work or performance in a course (i.e. paper, presentation, participation, etc.).

Competency: a generalized goal that aligns with academic and professional skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Instructional strategy: any course activity that helps students complete the assessments and achieve the course's learning outcomes.

Learning outcome: goal that outline what students should be able to do by the end of the course. They are specific, measurable, and written from the students' perspective (i.e. Students should be able to define the parts of a cell).

Lesson plan: learning outcomes, assessments, and instructional strategies that occur on a specific day (i.e. in-class activities); can include Powerpoints, facilitation notes, etc.

Measurable: related to learning outcomes; the learning outcome includes an observable action.

Open Educational Resources (OER): course materials that are openly licensed and often free to use. Creative Commons has more information about OER.

Pedagogical approach: how you structure your courses based upon specific theories about learning and the practices that relate to said theories.

Scaffold: breaking assessments into smaller chunks with checkpoints to monitor student progress.

Specific: related to learning outcomes; the observable action is clearly defined.

Student engagement: evidence of students' involvement in the learning process (i.e. contributing to conversation, writing a reflection, etc.).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): a framework that encourages designing courses without barriers so that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

Written from the students' perspective: related to learning outcomes; learning outcomes that relate the students' actions, not the professor's

Guiding Questions for Syllabus and Course Design Reflection

In order to guide the review of your colleague's syllabus, we have provided you with several guiding questions. You do not have to answer all of these questions.

Learning Outcomes
- ☐ Are the learning outcomes specific and measurable?
- ☐ Are the learning outcomes written from the students' perspective?
- ☐ Are the learning outcomes skills, knowledge, attitudes, and/or interpersonal skills that the students can use after the course?
- ☐ Do the learning outcomes reflect common competencies for professionals/scholars in the instructor's field?
- ☐ Do the learning outcomes reflect the departmental learning outcomes?
- ☐ If teaching an AU Core course, do the learning outcomes relate to AU Core learning outcomes?

Assessments
- ☐ Are the assessments aligned to the learning outcomes?
- ☐ Are the assessments relevant to their future academic and/or professional work? Or their personal lives (i.e. critical examination of bias in advertisements)?
- ☐ Do the assessments reflect possible projects or work the students will be doing in the future?
- ☐ Are any of the assessments scaffolded?
- ☐ Do any of the assessments involve work outside of class in the community? Will the students' work impact the community involved?
- ☐ Are there opportunities for the students to choose the delivery method of their work (i.e. paper, podcast, presentation, video, website, etc.)?
- ☐ In accordance with Universal Design for Learning, do the students have choices for either the delivery method or the topic?

Course Content
- ☐ Does the course content support student achievement of the course's learning outcomes?
- ☐ Do the readings reflect a diversity of authors, topics, and/or viewpoints?
- ☐ Are the assigned readings and resources presented in a variety of formats, like journal articles, videos, screencasts, podcasts, online periodicals, etc.?
- ☐ Does the instructor use any openly licensed materials, like Open Educational Resources?

Course Policies
- ☐ Is there a policy that they have crafted that is innovative, thoughtful, or inclusive?
- ☐ Can you determine if the instructor intended to foster a specific type of classroom with the policies you have created?
- ☐ Do the course's policies support the students in the classroom and outside of it?
- ☐ Do the students have multiple ways to participate and show their engagement in the course?

Overall Syllabus
- ☐ Can you determine if the instructor used a particular pedagogical approach to guide the syllabus creation process (i.e. constructivism, connectivism, etc.)?

Guiding Questions for Lesson Plans

In order to guide the review of your colleague's lesson plan, we have provided you with several guiding questions. You do not have to answer all of these questions.

Learning Outcomes
- ☐ Are the learning outcomes listed in the lesson plan? If so, do they relate to the course's learning outcomes?
- ☐ Do the learning outcomes for the class reflect skills, knowledge, attitudes, and/or interpersonal skills that the students can use after the course?

Assessments
- ☐ Does the instructor know if their students are making progress towards or are achieving the class' learning outcomes?
- ☐ Does the instructor use a variety of assessment methods, i.e. diagnostic, formative, and/or summative assessments?
- ☐ Do this particular class session's assessments relate to and/or build upon previous assessments?

Student Engagement
- ☐ What are the components that encourage a high level of interaction between students?
- ☐ Is there a high level of interaction between the instructor, content, and/or themselves (i.e. self-reflection)?
- ☐ What kinds of in-class activities are included (i.e. group work, individual work, reflection, peer review, etc.)?
- ☐ What are the instructional strategies that are used in the class (i.e. lecture, live polling, discussion, exit tickets, etc.)?
- ☐ Does the instructor use any technology tools? Do they enhance they class?
- ☐ Does the instructor provide multiple ways for students to interact with the content, in accordance with Universal Design for Learning?

Facilitation Notes
- ☐ Does the instructor have any facilitation notes? If so, do you think their role in the classroom affects their students' work?