**Guide for Course Outlines in the Faculty of Science**

**General Information**

* Normally, informative course outlines will range from 3 to 6 pages
	+ They are longer if week-by-week or lecture-by-lecture descriptions are included
* Course outlines may be provided on the web (e.g., Waterloo LEARN) or in hard copy.
	+ If posted on-line only, a hard copy must be provided to students who request one.
* Normally, the elements/sections, listed below, should be included.
	+ Items marked with an asterisk (\*) indicate that specific types of information are mandatory (e.g., student assessment, discipline and grievances)
* A mock template, acting as a place holder for information is provided: [Faculty of Science Course Outline Template](https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/sites/ca.centre-for-teaching-excellence/files/uploads/files/Faculty%20of%20Science%20course%20template.docx)

**Contact Information**

* Identify instructor(s), teaching assistants
* Indicate contact info: office or help locations, telephone numbers, email addresses.
	+ Some details (e.g., TA info) may not be available when the initial outline is posted
* Include office hours (if any)
* Indicate preferences regarding students making contact. For example:
	+ Use course-identifying subject line in email, such as “BIOL 130 query”
	+ Students must use office hours, class or tutorial time rather than email to pose questions (in high enrolment courses)
	+ Emails received on holidays or weekends will not be addressed on those days
	+ Emails are normally addressed in the mornings or within two days

**Course Description**

* Include an informative course description.
	+ As a minimum, use the official calendar description
* An enhanced version is preferred; details to consider include:
	+ Where the course fits into a discipline
	+ To whom the course might appeal
	+ How or where knowledge gained from the course may be applied
	+ How the course draws from and relates to other courses in the program/plan
	+ Lecture format/features (e.g., lectures, seminars, chalkboard, PowerPoint, etc.)
	+ Relevant details, if there is a web presence
	+ Teaching and learning activities students might expect (e.g., small group discussions, collaborative labs, special projects, etc.)
	+ Other unique course features

**Learning Objectives**

* Should be described from the students’ perspective
	+ What will they learn, be able to do, or better appreciate
* Can be broad or narrow and focused on course details
* Ideally reflect one or more overarching institutional/program or plan philosophies
	+ e.g., learning to think critically, communicating clearly, examining issues in a global context
* Should be measurable, where possible, and specific
* Can be at the departmental/school or discipline level. For example:
* Molecular biology: explain techniques used to monitor DNA, RNA or protein abundance, recognizing the benefits and limitations of each technique
* Computational chemistry: calculate potential energy surfaces for chemical reactions
* Solid state physics: explain the operation and use of several modern electronic devices, including the p-n junction, transistors, opto-electronic devices, etc.
* Earth history: examine the concepts and approaches used in the stratigraphic analysis of rocks and sediments
* Clinical reasoning: Demonstrate the critical thinking skills necessary to make a diagnosis, solve the patient’s problem or assess risk

**Resources**

* Include details regarding (for example):
	+ Course texts (required, recommended)
	+ Course notes
	+ Laboratory manuals
	+ Library reserves
	+ Relevant URLs
	+ Other materials required (e.g., clickers, calculators – programmable or not)

**Topics**

* Provide a list of primary and secondary topics
	+ Ideally, outlines include week-by-week or lecture-by-lecture information

**Assessment \***

* Describe how grade assessment will be done
	+ What are the values of exams, assignments, essays and any other tools used
	+ Explain expectations, if there is a participation element, including attendance
* Include dates of tests and due dates for assignments essays, quizzes, etc.
* Indicate if missed graded elements (e.g., mid-terms) can be re-scheduled or if the grading scheme will be modified (e.g., missed course element weights added to the final exam weight)
* Indicate specifically:
	+ What differentiates acceptable from unacceptable collaboration
		- Consider employing group assignment disclosure forms
	+ Penalties for late submissions and the impact on calculating the course grade.
		- Consider whether weekends, holidays or reading week days count when determining a late submission penalty
	+ Policies for missed course elements, including exams
	+ Whether accommodations will be considered, including what must be in place to consider them. For example:
		- Verified Verification of Illness Forms (VIF), counseling letters, death certificates for funerals attended, etc.
		- Deadlines for submitting documentation (e.g., within 48 hrs of event for a VIF)
		- Students should bring their VIFs to the Science Undergraduate Office (SUO) for verification and filing
* Remind students that they are expected to check the appropriate uWaterloo websites for details concerning final examinations and various course drop deadlines

**Plagiarism software**

* Students must be informed if plagiarism-detecting software will be used to screen student submissions
* Students must be given a reasonable option if they do not want to have their assignment screened by Turnitin. Alternate suggestions are available through the Office of Academic Integrity’s [Guidelines for Instructors](https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/guidelines-instructors)
* The following statement must be added to your course outline:

***Turnitin.com:****Text matching software (Turnitin®) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all materials and sources in assignments is documented. Students will be given an option if they do not want to have their assignment screened by Turnitin®. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin® in this course.*

* For more information, visit [Turinitin at Waterloo](https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/integrity-waterloo-faculty/turnitinr-waterloo)

**Commitment Expectations**

* Estimate the average number of hours/week that students should devote to the course
	+ Base estimate on all course aspects (e.g., lectures, labs, tutorials, readings, assignments, etc.)
	+ Consider whether to sub-divide time expectations by activity
	+ Identify, if there are periods of uneven work load
* If on-line discussions occur, indicate what students can expect from you as instructor (or from TAs, if applicable). For example, you may intend to:
	+ Challenging ideas, correct misunderstandings, provide additional insights, or
	+ Stay in the background without contributing to the discussions

**Expectation of Academic Integrity \***

* Provide clear expectations of Academic Integrity
	+ The [Office of Academic Integrity](http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) provides numerous resources on academic integrity for students, faculty and staff
* Include clear statements regarding what differentiates acceptable from unacceptable collaboration
	+ Relevant examples might help students avoid problems For example:
		- Re-creating test questions and answers without the express permission of the course instructor
		- Obtaining, distributing or receiving unauthorized academic material without the express consent of the course instructor
		- Sharing unauthorized course-related materials via hard-copy, email, social media or LEARN
		- Using LEARN email lists to sell or distribute unauthorized academic material.
	+ Consider reminding students that the same level of academic integrity is expected on an assignment worth 2% as one worth 50%
* The following statements must be included in all course outlines:
	+ ***Academic Integrity****: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. The* [*Office of Academic Integrity*](http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) *provides relevant information for students, faculty and staff. Students are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. Completion of the* [*Orientation to Academic Integrity Tutorial*](http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/) *is encouraged and familiarity with* [*Policy #71*](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71)*, (Student Discipline) is expected. Students who are unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or need help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or understand ‘rules’ for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from their course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean of Science for Undergraduate Studies. For information on typical Policy 71 penalties, students should check* [*Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties*](https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties)*.*
	+ ***Grievance****: Students, who believe that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable, may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Students should read* [*Policy #70*](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm)*, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt, students must contact the departmental/school administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.*

***Appeals****: A decision or penalty imposed under Policy 33 (Ethical Behavior), grievances under Policy #70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) or Policy #71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed, if there is a ground. Petitions may not be appealed. Students who believe they have a ground for an appeal should refer to* [*Policy #72*](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm) *(Student Appeals).*

**Students with Disabilities**

* Instructors should consider incorporating this statement into their course outlines:

[*AccessAbility Services*](https://uwaterloo.ca/disability-services/)*, located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If students require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of their disability, they should register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.*

**Course Rules/Considerations**

**Exam Period Policies**

* Include a statement about travel during exam periods such as:
	+ *Student travel plans are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.*
* Include the exact dates of the exam period for that term
* Remind students to determine their exam schedule (normally posted 5 to 6 weeks into the term). For example:
	+ *For the Fall exam schedule, start checking toward the end of October.*
	+ *For the Winter exam schedule, start checking in the middle of February.*
	+ *For the Spring exam schedule, start checking in the middle of June.*
* Indicate if students, eligible to sit the final exam on an alternate date, will write the exam on one of the Make-up Exam Friday dates, run by the Science Undergraduate Office
* To learn more about uWaterloo’s [final examinations](https://uwaterloo.ca/registrar/final-examinations), contact the Registrar’s Office.

**Changes to Course Outlines**

* Include a statement, if appropriate, that some course details may be revised (e.g., topics covered, emphasis on certain topics, etc.)
* Inform students, as soon as possible, about course changes to allow ample response time (this applies to on-line and hardcopy outlines)
	+ Draw attention to these changes (e.g., bold font/underline) in the revised outline
	+ Indicate the date/version of the revised outline
	+ Be able to provide an archive of the outlines provided during the term
	+ Course elements that **cannot** change are the:
		- Grading scheme
		- Elements related to evaluation

**Other Special Rules/Considerations**

* Include other rules or policies that students should know. For example:
	+ Protocols for LEARN service disruptions (e.g., assignment access and submission)
	+ Protocols for participating in course chat rooms or e-submission of assignments
	+ What to do if they have a concern related to how a lab assignment was graded (e.g., who to contact)
	+ Any policy about recording (audio, video) lectures
	+ Preferred citation style for assignments or essays (consider including a source of guidance for this information)
	+ How unclaimed student submissions (e.g., assignments, quizzes) will be handled
		- Instructors must hold on to them for a year, unless students are notified that they will be kept for a shorter length of time
		- Material will be securely destroyed

Marlee M. Spafford, Professor; Associate Dean of Science, Undergraduate Studies

(Updated November 2016 by Lisa Kabesh, Communications Associate, Centre for Teaching Excellence)