Reviewing Syllabi to Document Teaching Culture and Inform Decisions

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History of Syllabus Reviews at UWF

4 Syllabus Reviews completed 2008 - 2013

• Formative (2008) and summative (2010) evaluation of UWF Quality Enhancement Plan: *Describe campus use of strategies that promote active learning & student engagement*

• Assessment for Program Review for General Education (2011):
  *Create a curriculum map for GE SLOs*

• Library Information Literacy project (2013):
  *Describe where and how faculty promote IL SLOs*
Research Questions

Describe syllabus content
• Adherence to University policy (required elements)
• Evidence of “best practices” (learning-centered components)

Describe structure of a curriculum
• Alignment of courses/course SLOs with program level SLOs
• Describe where and how faculty promote specific SLOs (Information Literacy, Professionalism/21st Century Skills)

Describe culture of teaching and learning
• Evidence of active learning and student engagement
• Evidence of high impact pedagogical practices in courses
Syllabus Review Rubric

Rubric Elements describe components of syllabus content

- Name of course
- Student Learning Outcomes
- List of required texts and readings
- Description of the grading system
- Calendar of events

Elements scored as present/absent

Create simple, unambiguous elements

Scoring notes guide difficult judgments

Basic elements are described in a Self-Evaluation Rubric on the CUTLA web
Training Raters

Preliminary rater training

How to write measurable SLOs, describe elements of the rubric, define terms (active learning, high-impact pedagogical practices), review guidelines for scoring

Scoring syllabi & establishing reliability

- 5-6 syllabi reviewed independently by all raters
- Compute initial inter-rater agreement (pair-wise)
- Discuss how to score elements that produce disagreements
- Refine and clarify definitions and scoring guidelines
- Rescore training set of syllabi
- Score a new set of 5-10 syllabi
- 95% agreement (80% - 100% on individual elements)
Maintaining Rater Calibration & Reliability

Training / calibration
10% of population of syllabi

Being live scoring once raters achieve the calibration target
70% pair-wise agreement on individual rubric elements
≥ 80% average agreement across all elements

Weekly meetings check reliability and maintain rater calibration

• Rater pairs score 5-10 assigned syllabi from training/calibration sample each week
• Submit scores prior to meeting (researchers compute pair-wise percent agreements)
How reliable are raters?

Post-training reliability \((n = 6\) syllabi\)
- Average pair-wise agreement (all elements): 87%
- Range of pair-wise agreements (individual elements): 50% – 100% (86% elements > 75% pair-wise agreement)

Mid-review reliability \((n = 48\) syllabi\)
- Average pair-wise agreement: 91%
- Range of pair-wise agreements (individual elements): 70% – 100% (92% > 75% pair-wise agreement)

Overall reliability \((n = 110\) syllabi\)
- Average pair-wise agreement (all elements): 95%
- Range of pair-wise agreements (individual elements): 84 – 100% (100% > 75% pair-wise agreement)
What did we learn?

Significant improvements in syllabus content in 2013 compared to previous reviews

- 80.7% of syllabi included 17 or more of 23 required syllabus components
- Increased number of “best practices” that characterize a leaning-centered syllabus
- Increased evidence of engaging, active learning (high-impact pedagogical practices)
Impact: Librarians developed contacts for outreach efforts

Information Literacy

• Identify courses that describe Information Literacy SLOs
• Identify courses with assignments that align with Information Literacy SLOs
• Identify course instructors to approach for collaborations: develop assignments & create custom Library workshops to promote Information Literacy

Professionalism and 21st Century Skills

• Lists of courses with relevant SLOs and/or assignments
• Baseline data for a future QEP project
Reaching Consensus

Small Group Task:
Review the first 3 SLOs on the handout
Are these SLOs written in measurable language?
Do any of the SLOs align with Information Literacy?

Room Discussion of first 3 SLOs

Evaluate the next 4 SLOs
Measurable language?
Align with Information Literacy?

Room Discussion
KEEP CALM
IT'S ON THE SYLLABUS