

# Developing Course Outlines



**ALGONQUIN**  
COLLEGE

Lifesaver # 3

Course outlines are essential components of all courses in all credentials offered at Algonquin College.

Within the College, course outlines integrate and situate the course in a program of study. They support student learning, manage student expectations, and provide information for students seeking prior learning assessment and recognition.

Course outlines also serve functions for the College in its public dealings. When the components of course outlines are compiled on a program basis, they allow the College to ensure compliance with program standards: those of Vocational Learning Outcomes, Essential Employability Skills (EES) Outcomes, and General Education Requirement as outlined by the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities. Course outlines communicate course information to prospective students, educational institutions, employers, and professional associations. Finally, course outlines facilitate faculty recruitment, selection, and development.

The purpose of course outlines is to document the curriculum at the course level and to support the learning process by identifying course learning requirements, evaluation methods, learning activities, and learning resources.

## **Course Outlines and Course Section Information**

The two products resulting from the process of documenting course curriculum are the course outline and the course section information.

Course outlines are reviewed and approved annually, and revised as necessary. All courses with the same title and number have a common course outline. One course outline is developed, and this outline applies across all sections and all schools and departments during an academic year.

Course section information is prepared on a section-by-section basis each term that the course is offered. In essence, course section information is the syllabus or weekly schedule that is shared with students each semester. Different sections of the same course offering may have different course section information. The course section information is developed by the faculty member teaching that section during that particular term.

Some of the information in the course section information is reproduced from the information in the applicable course outline, and all of the course section information is related to the course outline. As a pair, the two documents are the most important administrative documents for a course.

### **INSIDE**

- Course Outlines and Course Section Information.
- Preparing to Write Your Course Outline.
- Situating Your Course Within Your Program.
- Components of the Course Outline.
- Preparing Your Course Outline for COMMS.

## **Preparing to Write Your Course Outline**

The following directives, documents, and websites may be helpful in the development of your course outline:

### **Directives**

- Directive E-33: Course Outlines and Course Section Information
- Directive E-11: Grading Policy
- Directive E-1: Evaluation of Student Learning
- Directive E-41: General Education Courses
- Directive E-44: Essential Employability Skills

### **Lifesavers**

- Lifesaver #10: Putting a Course Outline into Action: Planning your Course Delivery
- Lifesaver #2: Guidelines for Writing Course Learning Requirements
- Lifesaver #5: Guidelines for General Education Course
- Lifesaver #9: Guidelines for Essential Employability Skills

### **Curriculum Documents**

- Program of study documents, including Ministry program standards, College program monographs, or web site information
- Previous course outlines

### **Algonquin Web Sites**

- Essential Employability Skills web site
- General Education web site

## **Situating Your Course Within Your Program**

Your course's curriculum is positioned within the broader context of your program's curriculum, and as a result, there are program learning outcomes that must be addressed. Therefore, your course outline needs to reflect how your course relates to the other courses in the program.

## Professor Of The 21st Century

The content of this Lifesaver is related to the following Professor of the 21st Century Teaching Competency:

### 7. Designing Courses and Programs.

The questions that you need to answer include the following:

- What are the program learning outcomes for the entire program, and how does my course contribute to their achievement?
- How does my course fit within the larger program of study? How does my course support other courses? Is my course a prerequisite for another course? Or is another course in the program a prerequisite for my course?
- What is the purpose of my course within the program? Does my course contribute in a vocational way, and/or does it contribute to the achievement of Essential Employability Skills? Alternatively, does my course contribute to a General Education theme area and/or to the achievement of Essential Employability Skills?
- What does this course contribute to the profile of a successful graduate from this program?

### Components of the Course Outline

The components of the course outline are the following:

1. Course Information,
2. Course Description,
3. Relationship to Program Learning Outcomes,
4. Course Learning Requirements/Embedded Knowledge and Skills,
5. Learning Resources,
6. Learning Activities,
7. Evaluation and Earning Credit, and
8. Related Information.

The first three components are usually found on the first page of the course outline. (See **Figure 1**: Example of the first page of a course outline.)

#### 1. Course Information

The following elements comprise the Course Information portion:

- **COURSE TITLE**: the name of the course.
- **COURSE OWNER**: the school or department that normally offers the course.
- **COURSE NUMBER**: as assigned by the Registrar's Office, normally three letters followed by four numbers.

- **APPLICABLE PROGRAM(S)**: the name(s) of the program(s) that include(s) this course in their program of study. If it is a course that is not assigned to specific programs of study (i.e., some General Education courses), leave this space blank.
- **COURSE HOURS** (normative): the number of hours usually required to achieve course learning requirements. This number represents the relative value of a course in a program of study when calculating grade point averages.
- **CONTRIBUTION TO PROGRAM**: A course can be *Vocational*, *Essential Employability Skills*, or *General Education* (See **3. Relationship to Program Learning Outcomes** for more information); and either *Core* or *Elective*. A course is considered "core" if it is required to complete a program of study, while an "elective" is part of a program of study but may be selected from an approved list of courses.
- **ACADEMIC ACTIVITY LEVEL**: the program level, indicating the term in which students in a given program normally enroll in the course. (i.e., 01 to 06)
- **PREREQUISITE(S)**: the course number(s) of any course(s) that students must complete prior to registration in this course.
- **COREQUISITE(S)**: the course number(s) of any course(s) that students must take at the same time as this course.
- **NAME OF PERSON PREPARING THE OUTLINE**: the faculty member responsible for developing, revising, or reviewing the current version of the course outline.
- **APPROVAL DATE**: the month and year that the course outline is approved for distribution.
- **NAME OF ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATOR APPROVING THE OUTLINE**: the academic administrator responsible for the course indicates approval of the outline for use.
- **APPROVED FOR ACADEMIC YEAR**: the academic year for which outline has been approved.

#### 2. Course Description

The one-paragraph course description is downloaded from Genesis, and it orients the audience to the course. The course description outlines the general purpose, rationale, or aim(s) of the course, and provides an overview of the topics to be addressed, the knowledge and skills to be learned, and the major learning strategies and activities.

#### 3. Relationship to Program Learning Outcomes

For programs leading to an Ontario College Credential, this area identifies program learning outcomes that are supported by the course. Courses can contribute to a program as a Vocational course, an Essential Employability Skills course, or a General Education course. More often than not, the Essential Employability Skills will be integrated with one of the other two types of courses, rather than standing alone.

For a Vocational course, the relationship is with the Vocational Learning Outcomes, and, where applicable, to

EES Outcomes. The contribution of the course to these outcomes is further specified as being taught (T) and/or assessed (A) and/or providing the opportunity for a culminating performance (CP).

**T, A, and CP**  
**TEACH (T):** Listed in the CLRs with significant time devoted to practice and development of the outcome.  
**ASSESS (A):** An evaluation component allows students to perform the outcome, or parts of it.  
**CULMINATING PERFORMANCE (CP):** A reliable, as authentic as possible, demonstration of one or outcomes at the level expected of a graduate. Often occur near the end of a program.

For an Essential Employability Skills course, the relationship is exclusively with the Essential Employability Skill(s) Outcomes. The contribution of the course to these outcomes is further specified as being taught (T) and/or assessed (A) and/or providing the opportunity for a culminating performance (CP).

For a General Education course, the relationship is with the General Education theme area, and, may be with the Essential Employability Skills Outcomes. If Essential Employability Skills are included, then the contribution will have to be included, as before.

**4. Course Learning Requirements/Embedded Knowledge and Skills**

The **Course Learning Requirements** provide clear statements of the required learning that is to be achieved to successfully


complete the course. They describe what students must be able to demonstrate at the end of the course to receive credit. Course Learning Requirements describe learning that is:

- verifiable through student performance and qualitative and/or quantitative assessment;
- durable, meaningful, transferable, and significant;
- contributing to the achievement of one or more program learning outcomes; and
- free of cultural or gender bias.

Each statement in this section is prefaced by the phrase, “When you have earned credit for this course, you will have demonstrated the ability to ...”

The **Embedded Knowledge and Skills** describe the key concepts and skills which will be addressed in the course to help students achieve the course learning requirements. Several of these aspects normally contribute to each course learning requirement. The embedded knowledge and skills are the building blocks that help the student to acquire significant, transferable learning.

For further information on writing Course Learning Requirements, see Lifesaver #2.



Algonquin College  
Of Applied Arts and Technology

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Animal Husbandry I A

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Animal Studies B

<b>Course Number:</b> <span style="color: red;">C</span> ZOO2000	<b>Contribution to Program:</b> <span style="color: red;">F</span> Vocational course Core	<b>Educator(s):</b> <span style="color: red;">J</span> Zoo Management Faculty
<b>Applicable Program(s):</b> <span style="color: red;">D</span> Zoo Management	<b>AAL:</b> <span style="color: red;">G</span> 02	<b>Approval Date:</b> <span style="color: red;">K</span> May 2007
<b>Course Hours:</b> <span style="color: red;">E</span> Delivered: 60 Normative: 60	<b>Prerequisites:</b> <span style="color: red;">H</span> ZOO1300 ZOO1200	<b>Approved By:</b> <span style="color: red;">L</span>
<b>Corequisites:</b> <span style="color: red;">I</span> None	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Approved for Academic Year:</b> <span style="color: red;">M</span> 2007-2008

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Animals held in captivity depend on care givers to meet basic needs and remain healthy. In this theory course students learn important principles and concepts that are essential for ensuring the proper care and maintenance of animals being held in captivity. Case studies, in-class discussions and learning activities focus on the needs of zoo-based animals. Special attention is paid to the nutritional requirements of ruminants and the social interactions of herd and pack animals.

RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course contributes to your program by helping you achieve the following vocational program learning outcomes: #2 -develop a daily animal care plan; #3 -promote zoo activities	This course contributes to your program by helping you achieve the following provincial EES program learning outcomes: #6 -use a variety of thinking skills; #6 -locate information; #7 -analyze information <small>CP denotes opportunity to demonstrate a culminating performance.</small>
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ZOO2000

**1. Course Information**

A. Course Title  
 B. Course Owner  
 C. Course Number  
 D. Applicable Program(s)  
 E. Course Hours  
 F. Contribution to Program  
 G. Academic Activity Level  
 H. Prerequisite(s)  
 I. Corequisite(s)  
 J. Name of Person Preparing the Outline  
 K. Approval Date  
 L. Name of Academic Administrator approving the Outline  
 M. Approved for Academic Year

**2. Course Description**

**3. Relationship to Program Learning Outcomes**

Figure 1: Example of the first page of a course outline.

## 5. Learning Resources

This area specifies any resources that are required for all course sections. This area may also list learning resources that are recommended or useful, including printed materials, software and hardware, and media (DVDs, CDs).

## 6. Learning Activities

This area describes significant learning activities which accomplish the following goals:

- help students acquire, practice, and achieve the course learning requirements;
- provide a context for assessing student performance;
- provide an opportunity for students to receive ongoing, constructive feedback to promote improvement and progress.

Such activities might include modes of instruction, such as seminars, lectures, computer-assisted learning, self-directed learning, fieldwork, labs, or field trips.

### QUESTIONS??

For more information, you can contact Learning and Teaching Services at extension 5465 to arrange coaching or training.

## 7. Evaluation and Earning Credit

This area includes Evidence of Learning Achievement, Validation of Course Learning Requirements and/or Essential Employability Skills, College Grading Numerical Equivalent Table, and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition.

The **Evidence of Learning Achievement** area documents the key parts of the evaluation plan for the course. It describes how learners will provide evidence that they have achieved the learning expected in the course. Information in this area ensures a level of consistency in the evaluation of learning. Whether the course is delivered in only one section or in multiple sections, details about the evaluation components, such as a name, a description, and, where relevant, a weighting, used to evaluate student performance (i.e., projects, assignments or presentations) are required. For courses with multiple sections, the information may be more general because it will be common across all sections. The **Validation of Course Learning Requirements and/or Essential Employability Skills** connects course learning requirements and/or Essential Employability Skills with each evaluation component to ensure that the evaluation and expected learning are aligned with the Relationship to the Program Learning Outcomes, as indicated earlier in the outline.

The **College Grading Numerical Equivalent Table**, which gives percent grades, letter grades, and numeric

grades, summarized for the purpose of averaging, should be reproduced if applicable.

**Grading System  
Percentage Conversion**

	Letter Grade	% Grade	Numeric Grade
<b>Course learning outcomes are met in a consistently outstanding manner</b>	A+	90 – 100%	4.0
	A	85 – 89%	3.8
	A-	80 – 84%	3.6
<b>Course learning outcomes are met in a consistently thorough manner</b>	B+	77 – 79%	3.3
	B	73 – 76%	3.0
	B-	70 – 72%	2.7
<b>Course learning outcomes are met satisfactorily</b>	C+	67 – 69%	2.3
	C	63 – 66%	2.0
	C-	60 – 62%	1.7
<b>Course learning outcomes are met at a minimal level of achievement</b>	D+	57 – 59%	1.4
	D	53 – 56%	1.2
	D-	50 – 52%	1.0
<b>Course requirements not met</b>	F		0
	FSP		0

SOURCE: Academic Directive E11: Grading System

The **Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition** area describes the process for earning credit through PLAR.

## 8. Related Information

There are three categories of Related Information:

- College-wide,
- department-specific, and
- course-specific.

The **College-wide** information includes general information relevant to all courses, such as email account usage, use of electronic devices, access to CSD, and maintaining copies of the course outline.

The **department-specific** related information may contain statements regarding policies that apply to all courses within a department.

The **course-specific** related information may contain statements related to the course that apply across all sections. For example, guidelines related to attendance, conduct, or lab processes and completion of assignments are often included here.

### **Preparing Your Course Outline for COMMS**

For courses that are part of a program leading to an Ontario College Credential, there are a few items to keep in mind as you prepare your course outline. For instance, the Course Outline Mapping and Management System (COMMS) generates program maps based on the information provided related to the program learning outcomes and the EES Outcomes that are supported by the course.