

# LAFAYETTE COLLEGE

## Frequently Asked Questions about Course Proposals

Revised September 2018

In order for the Committee on Educational Policy to efficiently consider proposals for courses or course changes, we require specific information on the form and accompanying syllabus. Proposals are often returned to the department if information is missing or unclear. In order to minimize this extra labor for both the committee and the composers, we offer this list of frequently asked questions and ask that you read this document before submitting your proposal.

When submitting a request for changes any available information in the catalog will prepopulate and only changes need to be edited.

### **Why is the course description 75 words?**

Although the on-line catalog does not preclude longer descriptions, we also consider the print version of the College Catalog and efficiency of in the records. Many instructors and departments compose more detailed descriptions to be circulated to students on departmental web pages or handouts compiled for student registration.

### **What is REQUIRED on a syllabus for a course?**

All syllabi must include:

- course objectives
- learning outcomes
- grading policy
- academic honesty statement
- course bibliography/reading list
- in the case of CCS requirements, evidence that the course meets the outcomes required (see below)
- in the case of a writing requirement, evidence that the course meets the College requirements (see below)
- federal credit hour compliance statement

### **Why are learning outcomes required on all proposals and syllabi?**

The college requires **learning outcomes** as a result of the 2009 Middle States accreditation review. Faculty who require assistance in composing learning outcomes should consult the chair of the Subcommittee on Assessment Committee through the Office of the Provost. The definition and examples of learning outcomes can be found at <http://registrar.lafayette.edu/files/2010/02/Learning-Outcomes.pdf>.

### **I am requesting that my course be used to meet Common Course of Study requirements, what information should I include?**

The syllabus should include an explanation of how the course meets the requested CCS outcomes, including the relationship between the courses learning outcomes and the CCS outcomes. CCS outcomes can be found at <http://registrar.lafayette.edu/additional-resources/cep-course-proposal/>

### **Why are policies regarding grading and academic integrity required?**

Specific information about **grading policy and academic honesty** protect the individual instructor. Students and their parents should not be able to plead ignorance of course policies regarding grading or expectations of academic honesty. In addition to the College policy on academic honesty, faculty are certainly free to include additional expectations that are specific to the course – for example, expectations regarding group work, labs, peer review, homework, etc. Many courses require group work on problems or projects, and students are often confused about

where the line between academic honesty and collaboration falls. In such cases, clarification is helpful to both the students and the Dean's office in situations where collaboration is too close. In addition, some departments have formulated their own policies on academic honesty and plagiarism, and these are often included with the syllabi.

### **Why should I use the College wording on Academic Integrity from the Student Handbook?**

Students and their parents often challenge sanctions that result from confirmed academic dishonesty. It is important that students are given a consistent message across all courses regarding the College policy. Here is the language from the Student Code of Conduct (Student Handbook, p. 7):

To maintain the scholarly standards of the College and, equally important, the personal ethical standards of our students, it is essential that written assignments be a student's own work, just as is expected in examinations and class participation. A student who commits academic dishonesty is subject to a range of penalties, including suspension or expulsion. Finally, the underlying principle is one of intellectual honesty. If a person is to have self-respect and the respect of others, all work must be his/her own.

We urge faculty to follow official college policy when dealing with cases of suspected plagiarism. Instructors who choose to adjudicate privately cases of suspected academic dishonesty may forfeit the ability to appeal for help from the Dean of Advising and Co-Curricular Programs or College Counsel in the event of further student or parent appeals/legal claims.

### **Why are bibliographies/readings lists required?**

Course bibliographies and reading lists assist CEP in understanding the nature and level of the course.

### **What must be included if the proposed course fulfills the writing requirement?**

Faculty proposing writing course should consult with CWP to insure the course will meet the college's requirements. If course is to fulfill the writing requirement, the syllabus must include evidence that:

1. Students will complete *at least* 20 double-spaced pages (or about 5,000 words) of "finished" writing (writing that has been revised in response to feedback from readers). Instructors may assign more than 20 pages/5,000 words (many do). Writing above the minimum amount may, but is not required, to be revised and could serve other course and/or writing goals (e.g., informal writing about the reading, writing to generate class discussion, reflective writing about a student's revision process, etc).
2. The 20 double-spaced pages/5,000 words will be assigned at regular intervals across the semester rather than all at the end.
3. Students will have regular opportunities to revise their writing. While instructors normally review (but don't necessarily comment on) much of their students' writing, peer review by fellow students and/or Writing Associates is strongly encouraged.
4. Instructors will provide in-class or in-conference attention to the special conventions of writing (disciplinary, formal, generic, etc.) required by their assignments.

### **What must be included to insure compliance with the Department of Education guidelines concerning Federal Credit Hour Compliance?**

Please add the following statement to insure compliance:

The student work in this course is in full compliance with the federal definition of a four [*two or one as appropriate for half and quarter unit courses*] credit hour course. Please see the Registrar's Office web site (<https://registrar.lafayette.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/193/2013/04/Federal-Credit-Hour-Policy-Web-Statement.doc>) for the full policy and practice statement.

### **What else does the CEP require?**

If the proposed course overlaps in any way with a course from another department, the form must clearly indicate that the appropriate departments and/or programs have discussed the courses.

Please make sure that the instructor and the department head consult with any department that may be affected by this course (frequently through changes or additions in extra-departmental pre-requirements) or may offer a similar course. In recent years, this process has been frequently neglected, which often results in a department challenging a course, requesting clarification, requesting cross listing, or simply sending the proposal back to the department for further development. Please note that CEP requires that **a memo of consultation by the appropriate department head(s) and program chair(s) be forwarded with the course proposal**. Cross listing is by the agreement of the departments and/or programs concerned, who must have legitimate pedagogical reasons for such a request; in some cases (as, for example in advanced courses with pre-requisites or courses with caps) cross listing may be inappropriate.

**What does CEP RECOMMEND for a syllabus after the course has completed the developmental stage?**

Although we realize that not all syllabi are fully articulated, we **recommend** the following information if at all possible. We realize that many courses are under development, but urge faculty to offer as complete a picture of the course schedule as possible. Many of these elements are often requested by students.

1. Attendance policy: We strongly recommend that faculty include an **attendance policy** on syllabi. In addition to protecting the faculty, a stated attendance policy also provides the Dean of Advising and Co-Curricular Programs and the Academic Progress Committee with official standards that can be defended against potential complaint.
2. Exam schedule policy: Students should be given advanced notice of any exams scheduled outside class hours. Faculty object to colleagues requiring unscheduled exams (particularly in the evening) or constructing exams that require or allow students to continue into the next class hour, forcing students to choose between competing requirements in conflicting courses. Field trips (which should, if at all possible, be scheduled for weekends or other times that do not conflict with other courses) and required lectures should also be included on final syllabi. Please note that the College does NOT permit faculty to require students to take exams or attend additional events that conflict with students' other regularly scheduled courses.
4. List of required materials – books, articles, etc. with ISBN numbers (which are now listed on line by the bookstore). The 2009 Higher Education Act requires us to be more pro-active in supporting economic alternatives for books.
5. Meeting time and place.
6. Instructor contact information.
7. Privacy Statement (required for courses using Moodle; also posted on the Moodle homepage).

Moodle contains student information that is protected by the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA). Disclosure to unauthorized parties violates federal privacy laws. Courses using Moodle will make student information visible to other students in this class. Please remember that this information is protected by these federal privacy laws and must not be shared with anyone outside the class. Questions can be referred to the Registrar's Office.

8. Weekly Schedule/Course timetable with assignment, exam and paper due dates.
9. If appropriate, an electronic equipment policy; some professors prohibit the use of computers, cell phones, calculators, etc.
10. Disability statement:  
Please use the following language, which has been vetted by the Academic Resource Hub and accepted by the Dean of Advising and Co-Curricular Programs:

In compliance with Lafayette College policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate

academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Requests for academic accommodations need to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students must register with the Office of the Dean of Advising and Co-Curricular Programs for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations.