

FAQ: Course information on the web

Q: What needs to be included? Does information already on our site need to be reproduced?

A: For each undergraduate classroom course offered for credit, each public institution (other than medical or dental units) must provide a syllabus, a c.v. for the instructor of record, and a departmental operating budget. If any of this information is already available elsewhere on the institution's website, links can be provided instead of new documents.

Q: How much detail must be provided?

A: The course syllabus is required to state each major course requirement, including each major assignment and examination; the learning objectives for the course; a general description of the subject matter of each lecture or discussion; and lists of any required or recommended readings. A "major assignment" would be anything that would typically count for at least ten percent of a final course grade. The required readings need only be the major readings that occupy more than one class period: the title of a textbook is sufficient, not the individual readings that are assigned. Single articles or short excerpts from longer works are not necessary to list.

There has been some concern over the requirement to give a description of every lecture or discussion. We are aware that individual class content cannot always be predicted in advance, especially if the course depends upon unfolding current events or adjusts to the interests/abilities of the students. Faculty are free to update their course information as time and technology permits, but information should be refreshed at least once per semester. The amount of information in the descriptions should be guided by what is most useful to students and what is accurate enough to predict in advance. For some courses, detailed assignments may be available with little chance of change; for other courses all that may be accurate to post would be something like "Discussion of current events related to the national economy."

For the curriculum vitae, here is what must be included:

- All institutions of higher education attended, with the degree(s) earned.
 - All previous higher education teaching positions, including the names of the institutions, the position, and the beginning and ending dates.
 - A list of significant professional publications relevant to the academic positions held, including full citation data for each entry. A complete list of publications is not required.
 - The curriculum vitae may include the instructor's professional contact information, such as office telephone number, work address, and institutional email address. Vitae are not required to include personal information about the instructor, such as the home address or personal telephone number.
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Q: What if my institution has multiple sections of the same course? Does separate information need to be posted for every section?

A: A c.v. needs to be posted for every instructor teaching any of the sections. If the sections have identical syllabi, reading lists, major assignments, and class subjects, then separate information does not need to be posted. If there are differences, however, then each section needs its own information so students can be best informed about their class selections.

Q: How much of this information needs to be searchable online?

A: The CB rules state that there are three types of documents (syllabi, vitae, and departmental budgets) that must be retrievable via a search engine. There is nothing that requires institutions to make the content within the documents themselves searchable, although there is certainly nothing preventing institutions from doing so to make the information as helpful as possible.

For example, a search for "Shakespeare" may come up with the titles of courses, but it won't necessarily have produce links to every publication title in every reading list or vitae bibliography with the word "Shakespeare." So long as students are directed to the most relevant courses for their keywords, they can drill down on their own from there to find out what they need to know.

Q: What is the timetable?

A: Information about a class is to be posted not later than the seventh day after the first day of class. Information is to remain available on the site for at least two years from the date the information was first posted. The c.v. for faculty must be updated at least once a year for the entire time the information is available.

By January 1 of each odd-numbered year, a written report regarding the institution's compliance with this section to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the presiding officer of each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over higher education.

Q: Do we have to post course evaluations on the web?

A: Not yet. Institutions are required to conduct end-of-course faculty evaluations for each course, and each institution needs to develop a plan to make evaluations publicly available on the website. This plan can address any issue you see fit and can be as short or as long as you feel necessary. You may wish to consider what form the evaluations should take, what questions should be asked, what supplementary information your faculty may wish to provide in addition to student evaluations, costs, and any other strengths or weaknesses of the issue as you see it. There is no stated deadline, but the Coordinating Board's advice is to have the plan ready by the beginning of the start of the legislative session in January 2011.

Q: What kind of information is required to cover work-study opportunities? What exactly is a "work-study opportunity"?

A: Information about work-study opportunities needs to be sorted by department as appropriate. There are no specifications for often the information must be updated, but in the interest of students the institution to keep the information as current and relevant as possible.

"Work study" includes all of the programs and opportunities in the Federal College Work-Study Program, the State of Texas Work-Study Program, and any similar financial aid employment programs sponsored by the institution. Work-study applies only to resident undergraduate students, and does not include teaching assistantships or similar positions for graduate students.

A link to the work-study information should be available on the institution's main financial aid website.