Course Descriptions for AUA Catalog
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Purpose and Scope

This policy establishes comprehensive guidelines for creating effective, consistent, and informative course descriptions in the AUA Catalog. Course descriptions serve as critical information for students, faculty, prospective employers, accreditors, and transfer articulation officers at other institutions.

Required Elements of Course Descriptions

1. **Course Identification (Required)**

a. Course code and number (e.g., PH201)
b. Complete course title
c. Number of credit hours/units
d. Course type (e.g., classroom-based, lab, seminar, hybrid, online, field-experience, etc.)
e. Frequency of offering (e.g. fall, spring, summer, fall even-numbered years, variable)
f. Prerequisites and co-requisites (if any)

2. **Course Content Description (Required, 50-80 words)**

The course description must:

a. Identify key knowledge, skills, competencies, or perspectives students will develop through the course.
b. Use clear, accessible language appropriate for current and prospective students and understandable to non-specialists.
c. Begin with an active verb where appropriate (e.g., “Examines,” “Analyzes,” “Develops,” “Explores”).
d. Avoid starting with phrases such as “This course,” “Students will,” or “Introduction to.”
e. Include essential expected knowledge or requirements that are relevant to successful participation in the course but do not constitute formal prerequisites.
f. Omit unnecessary, redundant, or obvious words and statements.
g. Use concise, complete sentences rather than sentence fragments.
h. Use clear, accessible language appropriate for broad audience.

3. **Additional Information (When Applicable)**

a. Cross-listed courses (indicated as "CROSSLISTED as [Course Code]")
b. Repeatability information (if course can be taken multiple times for credit)
c. Special grading methods (if not standard letter grade)
d. Language of instruction (if other than institutional standard)
e. Service learning components (any required prior knowledge that is not an official prerequisite (e.g., prior knowledge in [subject] is required).

Content Guidelines

What to Include

a. Clear, concise statements about course content
b. Key skills, competencies, or knowledge students will develop
c. Essential teaching methodologies when distinctive to the course
d. Relevance to the discipline or field of study

What to Avoid

a. Institutional acronyms
b. Personal pronouns (I, we, you, he/she/they)
c. Content targeting specific groups of students
d. Information about frequency of offering
e. Information that belongs in the syllabus rather than the catalog
f. Redundant language (e.g., "very unique," "focuses on," "this course")

Format Requirements

a. Total length: 50-80 words
b. Begin statements with active verbs
c. Use present tense throughout
d. Write in concise, clear language accessible to non-specialists
e. Use consistent terminology across related courses
f. Maintain consistent style and format across all course descriptions

Approval Process

a. Course descriptions must be reviewed and approved by:
   - Course instructor/developer
   - Program Chair and the Dean

- Curriculum Committee

b. All course descriptions must be reviewed at least every three years
c. Changes to course descriptions must follow the standard curriculum proposal process

Common Active Verbs for Course Descriptions

To assist faculty in creating effective descriptions, the following active verbs are recommended:

For Knowledge/Understanding: Analyzes, Examines, Explores, Investigates, Reviews, Surveys

For Application/Skills: Applies, Develops, Implements, Practices, Produces, Uses

For Critical Thinking: Compares, Contrasts, Criticizes, Evaluates, Interprets, Synthesizes

For Creation/Integration: Creates, Designs, Formulates, Generates, Integrates, Produces