Welcome to the Centre for Teaching and Learning’s Concepts and Course Design Series. In this short presentation, we will go over basic components of a course outline in keeping with teaching and learning policy at the University of Alberta.

As the academic plan states, an outstanding student experience is at the heart of an outstanding university. An important part of our mission is to offer exceptional learning opportunities for our students, and it starts with building a course outline that defines the learning experience our students can expect.

Let’s start by overviewing the purpose of a course outline. Essentially, it is a tool to communicate clearly to students what we expect them to learn in a course. The outline helps articulating pedagogically-sound decisions that reinforce alignment between content, instructional strategies, and assessments, as will be discussed in detail in the video tutorials. The outline should also clearly lay out both instructor and student responsibilities.

As such, it is a contract between instructor and students that serves institutional purposes: for example, it states university-wide policy, informs students about requirements for the course, provides details about required textbooks, assessment methods and grading scheme, and provide deadlines for major assignments.

The term *syllabus* has slightly different meaning; it is a document that provides information about your course above and beyond the university mandated sections. It may include a course schedule, additional reference materials, department-specific sections, and teaching methods and strategies, and the description and requirements for major assignments.

In practice, the outline and syllabus are often one and the same, meaning that the sections required by university policy as well as the additional details one wishes to provide about a course can be included in the same document, referred to as the course outline.

Here is a view of section 23.4 of the university calendar specifying which elements must be included in a course outline. Always consult the most recent version of the calendar as this section is updated for time to time.

The items that are required for 2014-2015 are listed in this slide. The outline must list required textbooks, course fees, if applicable, instructor availability, or office hours, specific information about how and when students will be assessed, and how they can gain access to past OR representative evaluation material.

The course outline must also contain the statements included here. These quotes are available in a Word document under the video screen for easier copying and pasting.

There are other considerations to think about when building a course outline. Importantly, a course outline cannot override the Calendar regulations. For example, an instructor cannot require a sick note to excuse absences even if it is stipulated in his or her course outline because this goes against university policy. If you want to know how to address
absences and other common situations according to university policy, please consult the document entitled *Common misconceptions* provided under the video screen.

In addition to the required note on academic integrity and honesty, an instructor is also expected to talk about expectations pertaining to academic integrity and outline both permitted and prohibited behaviour.

Because assessment drives how students go about learning, it is essential to clearly link each assessment to course objectives and learning outcomes and provide clear criteria for judging student performance early on in the term.

Please consult the resource provided below the video screen and the links to policy as well as units that can help with the specifics of a course: the bookstore, Student Union Printing services for course packs, community service-learning, or the research ethics office. We have also included a number of course outline templates and examples from various disciplines.

Don’t hesitate to contact CTL if you have questions or need assistance. We are ready to help!