

UF Course Description ~~Style Guide~~Best Practice

A course description is a short summary of what the course is about, designed to attract interest from students. At UF, course descriptions are publicly displayed to students, faculty, staff, and outside entities via published catalogs, are linked to courses in the schedule of classes, and are stored locally in the student information system. They are also maintained in the State Common Numbering System (SCNS) database.

Based upon course level, course descriptions are updated via course change requests to the University Curriculum Committee, Graduate Curriculum Committee, or the Professional Curriculum Committee. The following [best practicesguidelines](#) have been created to: (1) provide a unified experience across the curriculum; and (2) deliver accurate information in an accessible format for print, varying screen sizes, and assistive technologies.

Guiding Principles

- **Focus on Course Content:** State the purpose of the course, give relevant background, and an overview of key content covered rather than a summary of learning outcomes. Would a reader understand what the course is about?
- **Be Brief:** Keep course descriptions to a maximum of two to three sentences, with a maximum of 50 words.
- **Be Clear and Concise:** Use direct, simple language to convey essential course information.
 1. **Use active voice:** Engage students with dynamic, present-tense descriptions.
 2. **Avoid unnecessary words:** examples include "course," "student," "UF," and "University of Florida."
 3. **Prioritize action verbs:** Begin descriptions with active verbs like "Explores," "Develops," "Emphasizes," or "Investigates."
- **Use the Oxford Comma (aka serial comma):** A comma should be used after each item in a list of three or more items before 'and' or 'or' (e.g. "an Italian painter, sculptor, and architect"). This is to assist students with vision issues who use screen readers to better understand the content by inserting an audible pause after each item in a list.

Avoid:

- **Course attributes:** Exclude General Education and Writing Requirements designations, prerequisites, grading methods, repeatability, frequency of course offering.
- **Curriculum information:** Omit mention of how the course fits into curriculum.

- **References to other courses:** Avoid referring to other courses by course title. If necessary, only use course prefixes and numbers.
- **Do not begin with** “This course...” but begin with an action verb.
- **Avoid Jargon:** While some jargon is inescapable, use accessible language for student audiences whenever possible.

Examples

Investigates the principles of financial accounting. Emphasizes wealth and income measurement and the preparation and interpretation of conventional financial statements.

Applies quantitative and managerial techniques for planning of agricultural technical resources. Emphasizes the applications of queuing theory, project scheduling, optimization, and expert decision systems.

Develops Italian oral and comprehension skills through exposure to and discussion of topics relating to contemporary Italian society. Discussion and assignments address different registers of speech from the colloquial to the formal. Active in-class participation is essential.

Addresses how to meet the world's energy needs, based on available resources, technology, environmental concerns, economics, personal choices, and nation and international policy. Develops quantitative reasoning skills necessary to make informed decisions. Compares energy use, resources, and policy in different countries.

Presents the scientific method's many formulations from historical, philosophical, and sociological perspectives. Explores generation and presentation of data, formulation of hypotheses, and theories and dissemination of results. Also examines the ethical implication of biological research.