

Writing a Course Proposal

All educational institutions require course proposals for courses to be considered as part of that institution's curriculum. Course proposals serve three purposes:

- 1) They require the tutor to think about their course in concrete and practical terms.
- 2) They allow the institution to evaluate the usefulness and potential success of the course.
- 3) They require tutor thinking to balance between the teacher-centric: "what will I do?" and the student-centric: "what will students know and be able to do?"

Course proposals are an essential step in setting the curriculum for a term and with hundreds of submitted proposals, all must be read and evaluated. It is very helpful, therefore, if all proposals adhere to a standard format and are completed to a standard that reflects the educational nature of the WEA.

Guidelines for Writing a Proposal

General

- Write in grammatical sentences and not phrases. Third person address is preferred.
- Remove redundancies like "This course" or "this eight week course" – students know they are courses and the length is listed separately.
- Do not use exclamation marks except in special cases.

The Title

Titles need to be informative so that students do not have to second-guess what the course is about only to find they are not interested. Titles should also not be too short. For example, "Women with Attitude" does sound intriguing but to what does it refer to? Is it a political course examining the success and impact of female prime ministers? Or, is it an examination of female protagonists in literature who have been the hero and not the damsel in distress?

Titles should not be too long either as: 1) they take up too much space and 2) they may alienate students. Consider the following: "Women with Attitude: A Review of the Eternal Feminist Quest for Recognition of Equality in a Postmodern Paternalistic World". This is unnecessarily wordy, so include a SUBJECT and a QUALIFIER when creating your title (e.g. subject is women and the qualifiers are feminism and equality).

Example: Women with Attitude: The Feminist Quest for Equality

Tutor Biography & Qualifications

- This should be brief, 100 words maximum.
- It is a professional summary, not a life story. Therefore, list relevant qualifications and experiences. Avoid personal details such as general hobbies and interests unless pertinent to area of expertise. Recent/current details are preferred.

Brochure Description

Many students still like to have either a hard copy or a downloaded copy of the brochure so be mindful that this needs to be a formal piece of writing for our public domain. Like the title, this section needs to be succinct yet informative. A one hour course needs a brief overview, an eight week course needs more detail. Thirty words is a general guideline.

- Think of the description as a summary rather than an introduction. For instance, an eight week course on Women with Attitude that failed to name a single woman would not be very intriguing or helpful.
- Avoid the following: one word descriptors of self-praise like: "Fantastic!"; advertising ploys like "Don't miss out"; contractions like "haven't" and "don't"; conversational or informal language because we are promoting learning opportunities by professional tutors.
- Second person address is generally not preferred but occasionally it suits the tone and style of the course and thus you might want to foster a sense of inclusivity by its use.

Example: The quest for equality has seen women such as Emmeline Pankhurst, Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem use their voices and positions to challenge society to address inequality of the sexes.

Course Schedule

- If you say you are flexible and any day/time suits then please mean it as changing your mind later causes difficulties as we have hundreds of tutors and courses to schedule. If in doubt, specify.
- Offer at least two, preferably three, options for days/times to provide more latitude. We have a finite number of rooms with finite seating capacities so latitude enables us greater facility for accommodating all requests.

Delivery

Flexibility is the preferred model, while many students do still prefer F2F delivery, there are many others who prefer the option of online or hybrid (teaching both at the same time) to avoid travel, avoid infection and if they live outside of Sydney. Increasing numbers of students have chosen, or have been forced, into learning to use technology as part of their study paradigm so tutors who can accommodate for modern learning needs have become a valuable part of 21st century educational delivery.

Website Description

- This is a slightly longer version of the Brochure Description to be placed on the website at approximately 100 words.
- Longer courses of several sessions or term-length require a more detailed description than short courses of just one hour.
- Provide a meaningful summary or overview that indicates what will be covered in the course.

Example: The feminist quest for equality properly began in the 19th Century with the Suffragettes and Emmeline Pankhurst. It took women with attitude to use their voices and positions to break through the glass ceiling thanks to women like Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem and the immortal voice of Carly Simon. Discover how women with attitude have changed the world for women in the 20th century and we unpack the impact of women with attitude in the 21st century including Julia Gillard, Malala Yousafzai and Oprah Winfrey.

Reading List/ Textbook List

Before formulating a reading list, please check that the materials are readily available for students to locate and any nominated reading material needs to have a detailed reference so that students can readily locate the text. If you have either required or suggested reading lists or a text book, please use the following format to allow for consistency and for the convenience of students:

Articles: Surname, first initial (s), year of publication, title of article, title of journal in italics, journal details (if known) and doi.

Example: Johnson, C. (2015). Women, Gender and Feminism. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, Vol 50, Issue 4. Doi:10.1080/10361146.2015.114558

Books: Surname, first initial(s), year of publication, title in italics, publisher, ISBN (if known)

Example: Reckitt, H., Gosling, L., Robinson, H., & Tobin, A. (2018). *Art of Feminism*, Chronicle Books, ISBN 1452169926

Textbooks: Title of textbook in italics, publisher, year of publication, ISBN

Example: *Athenaze, An Introduction to Ancient Greek, Book I* (2016), Oxford University Press, ISBN 9780190607661

Websites: Title of site and address

Example: Stanford Womens Center <https://wcc.stanford.edu/resources/feminist-websites-blogs-and-resources>

Course Outline

The course outline provides students with an added level of detail which helps them to determine if they want to do the course or not. Therefore, outline points should be informative not generalised and written in bullet points.

- Ensure that what you are outlining here as teaching topics are aligned with student Learning Outcomes.
- If the course runs for only one session you should aim for between one and three bullet points depending on density and duration of the topic. For example a one hour talk on the impact of the Suffragettes may only need one broad outline; whereas a three hour talk on the Suffragettes will need more detail.
- If the course runs across a number of sessions write a bullet point for each session, for example: Week 1 introduces the concept of feminism and the feminist voice prior to the 19th century ranging from the Tamal saint Andal to Mary Wollstonecraft.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are an essential component in designing an effective course of learning for students. They ensure that course design focuses on the value of the course for students in terms of what students will know and will be able to do, and ensure there is alignment between the description/outline and what will actually be taught during the course.

- A course of, or under three hours does not require learning outcomes. Longer courses need to articulate between one and four outcomes.
- Avoid vague, judgmental terms such as "appreciate". Avoid qualifying terms like "slowly" for example, students will slowly develop an understanding of feminist issues.
- Outcomes are expressed as future tense verbs following on from the sentence stem of: "By the end of this course students will be able to:"

Example: Identify the women who impacted the feminist debate in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.