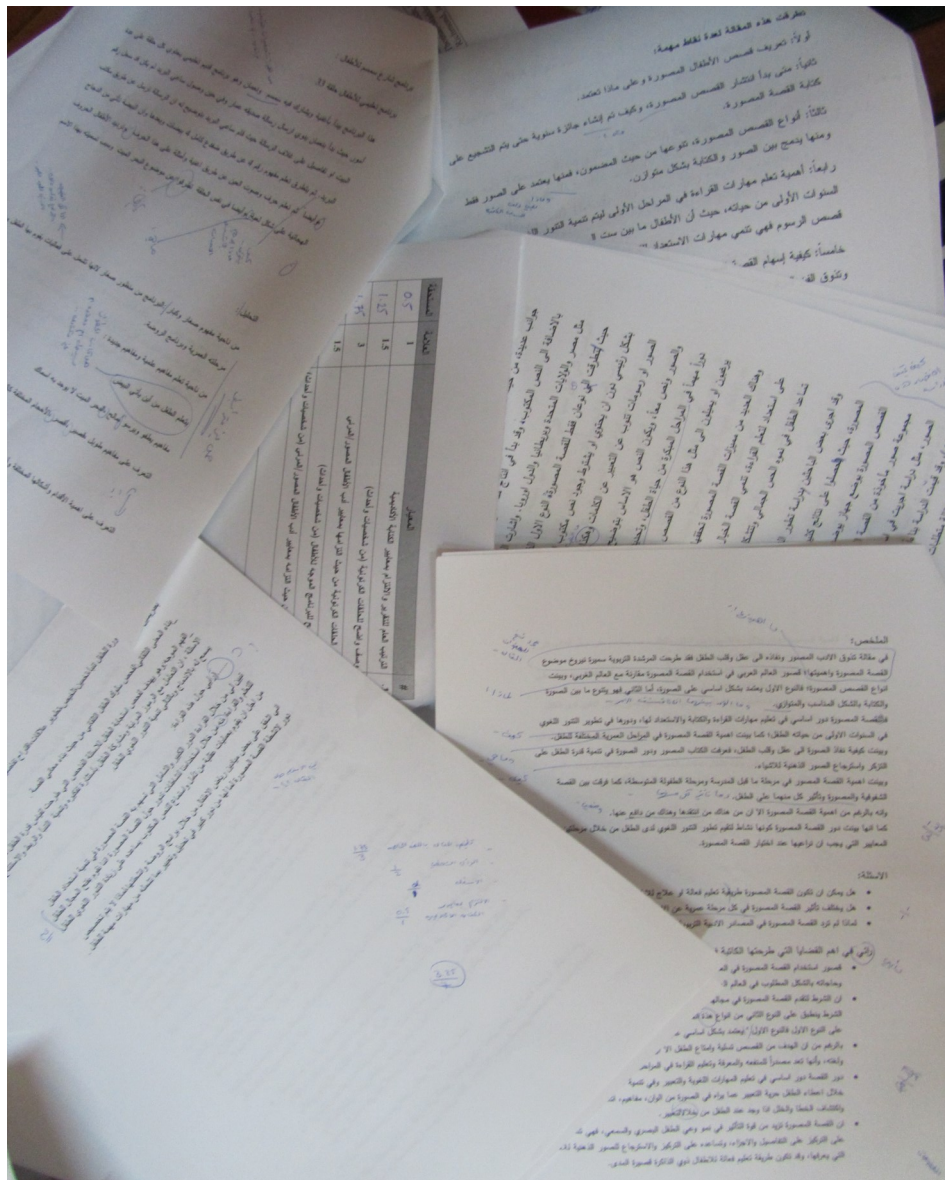


Guide to Creating a Course Portfolio



Team

Authors: Hanadi Soudah - Younan
Jeanne/ Mary Kattan
Mai Al - Qassasfeh

Pedagogical review: Rabab Tamish (Ph.D.)

Design and layout: Judy Hanania

Translation into Arabic: Issa Bshara

Proofreading: Catherine Malek

Revised by: Hala Nassar (Ph.D.) - August 2017

Contact us

Email: cetl@bethlehem.edu

Phone: + (972) 2- 2741241 (2431)

Fax: + (972) 2- 2744440

www.bethlehem.edu/institutes/CETL

To download this resource please visit our website

Forward

Bethlehem University (BU) places student learning at the core of its mission. As we continue our progress towards a comprehensive quality assurance system, assessment of student learning at program level is crucial and program specifications and the accompanying course portfolios are valuable tools in this process. They give us concrete ways to determine whether we have achieved the objectives of our programs, thus allowing for continuous improvement and development. In this regard, we believe that program specifications and the accompanying course portfolios should be seen as a way to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning, which allows us to reflect upon our teaching and promote ourselves as a learning community.

In each of your departments or faculties, you have worked together for some time now to prepare your program specifications to your own satisfaction. Through this exercise, the department/faculty has collaborated in planning and developing a comprehensive and common understanding of what your vision for your programs is, and what kind of graduates you want to produce. You have also worked together to align these learning outcomes with your programs' courses by producing the program-course alignment matrix. You have also dug deep into your experience and wisdom to identify the most effective teaching and assessment methods that enrich the quality of students' learning environment that will assist them in achieving the program learning outcomes.

Ultimately, the implementation of your plans will unfold in the courses you teach. Hence, departments need to form an in-depth understanding of the significance of each course in the curriculum and how it contributes to achieving the overall program learning outcomes. The course portfolio serves this by providing evidence about achievement of learning outcomes. Consequently, programs will be reviewed based on the evidence collected, thus enhancing their quality.

As we have been all engaged in this process, I have no doubt that our efforts will make a difference in the quality of teaching and learning at Bethlehem University. I know that completing the course portfolio is not an end in itself, rather it might raise other issues that should be considered. However, our ability to work together will make this process a valuable contribution and will definitely enhance the quality of teaching and learning in our university.



Dr. Irene Hazou,
Vice President of Academic Affairs

Acknowledgments

We are pleased to make available to the Bethlehem University faculty the “Course Portfolio” guide with the aim to enhance the quality of teaching and learning at Bethlehem University. The course portfolio documents the best practices and the most effective teaching methods for achieving specific course learning outcomes and eventually the overall program learning outcomes for each department at Bethlehem University.

This resource could not have been completed without the contribution of three distinguished faculty members who co-authored the main parts of this document resource. Special thanks to:

Ms. Hanadi Soudah - Younan

Dr. Jeanne/ Mary Kattan

Miss. Mai Al - Qassasfeh

This guide includes a practical guidance on how to organize a course portfolio to enhance the quality of students’ learning and our academic programs. We hope it proves to be a useful resource for teachers and departments at Bethlehem University. We also hope that this guide will inspire interested faculty members to develop new resources that will be championed by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning to help enrich the culture of sharing and knowledge and practices at Bethlehem University.



Dr. Rabab Tamish

Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning , Director

Table of Contents

<i>I. Introduction to the course portfolio</i>	6
1. What is a course portfolio?	
2. Why do we need a course portfolio?	
3. What are the benefits of developing a course portfolio?	
4. What are the contents of the course portfolio?	7
4.1 The course outline and content 4.1.1 <i>The course learning outcomes</i> 4.1.2 <i>Textbook and reading materials</i> 4.1.3 <i>Units or weekly schedule</i>	8
4.2 Teaching methods and activities	10
4.3 Assessment tools, grading and rubrics	
4.4 Samples of the teachers' and the students' work	
4.5 Reflections on the success of a course	
<i>II. Frequently asked questions</i>	13
5. How should a portfolio be organized?	
6. What about multi-section courses?	
7. Why is it worth spending time on a course portfolio?	
8. Do we need to include everything listed here in a course portfolio?	
9. Where should portfolios be kept and who can access them?	14
10. How to reflect on the achievement of the course learning outcomes?	
A Bibliography of Print and Website Resources	
<i>III. Appendices</i>	
Appendix 1 Front page	15
Appendix 2 Checklist	16
Appendix 3 Reflection form	17
Appendix 4 Course outlines	20

I. Introduction to the course portfolio

1. What is a course portfolio?

A course portfolio is a collection of all the materials used in a course, such as outlines, teaching methods, assignments, assessment strategies and rubrics, exemplary samples of students' work, as well as the teacher's own reflections, recommendations on the progress of the course and plans for possible updates in the future.

In higher education and academia, three kinds of portfolios stand out. One is the **student portfolio** in which students collect their best projects in a folder to document the way they have progressed throughout their education. The second is the **teacher's portfolio**, which is a resource that helps teachers to document their teaching processes in order to develop a reflective practice, which can be used to develop their own techniques. Some universities require the submission of teacher's portfolios for consideration when a teacher applies for a promotion. The third kind is the **course portfolio**, which aims at documenting the process of achieving the learning outcomes of a specific course. This type of portfolio is the one that this resource will focus on in response to a requirement of the Bethlehem University policies on assessment and teaching and learning.

2. Why do we need a course portfolio?

Bethlehem University aims to enhance the quality of its teaching by identifying effective teaching methods and assessment approaches that help students learn better and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for their preparation for their professional lives. BU believes that scientific documentation of the teaching process is essential in order to better understand the quality of teaching and learning and the challenges that departments/faculties face in the process of achieving their program learning outcomes. The course portfolio will be an important tool in this process because it provides evidence of the "golden thread" relationship between the objectives of a program and its implementation.

3. What are the benefits of developing a course portfolio

First of all, a course portfolios serve as a memory aid. This means that many teaching methods and creative strategies are forgotten or lose their uniqueness due to the busy life of academics. As a result the contribution these methods make is not evaluated and cannot be developed. Also departments cannot capture them and make them essential components of the course that can be used by other faculty members.

Secondly, a course portfolio helps to systematically track student learning. This means that when teachers write their reflections on the process of teaching the course, they raise critical questions about their students' learning such as: Are they learning what I am teaching? How do I know? and what should be done to improve learning further?

Thirdly, a course portfolio helps new teachers to learn from colleagues' effective practices, methods and assessment strategies. In this regard, creative teachers will have the opportunity to share their most successful practices and have them adopted by their colleagues. In other words, a course portfolio has the potential to enrich the culture of teaching and learning in a specific program.

Fourthly, whether a course is being taught for the first time or the tenth time, the course portfolio is periodically updated and amended to make sure it continues to meet the program goals and the students' needs. By engaging in this process, teachers' pedagogical-subject knowledge is also enriched through sharing creative and effective practices and materials that help students learn better.

Finally, a course portfolio is a powerful resource for quality assurance. This is because faculty members systematically review the portfolio, document the relevance of each course within the paradigm and identify elements of the course and its pedagogy that contribute most effectively to the achievement of the program learning outcomes. The portfolios also help identify what is working best and revisit challenges.

4. What are the contents of the course portfolio?

The literature reveals numerous examples and designs for course portfolios. Within these, there are a number of elements that are common to all, such as the course outline, successful teaching methods assessment strategies, and the teacher's own reflections and suggestions for the future. The following is a description of each section of a course portfolio and ways to create it.

4.1 The course outline and content

The course outline is by far the most important document that you need to include in the course portfolio. It sets out the learning outcomes, the specific content of the course in terms of readings and other course materials that will be made available to the students, the timeline or schedule that will be followed throughout the assessment tools and grading methods. All the components of the course outline need to be closely connected and relevant to the specified learning outcomes that are set. The nature of the course and its requirements normally determine the division of its contents across the fifteen-week period semester fifteen weeks of the course. For further clarification and assistance, please refer to the CETL's resource, "Design Your Course Outlines" (See Appendix 1 for the format).

There are some important issues that you need to consider in terms of designing course outline, namely:

4.1.1 The Course learning outcomes

The Course Learning Outcomes are the statements that specify what the students should be able to know, perform, and demonstrate throughout a course (e.g., knowledge, skills, and attitudes). They need to be closely related to the learning outcomes of the program, and connected to the overall department and university goals and the characteristics of the graduates. Each course in the program aims to achieve a number of specific Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). They help the teacher to select the content, determine the teaching methods and activities, and assess achievement. They also help the students to understand what is required of them to successfully complete the course.

Through the course alignment matrix you have identified how each course contributes to achieving the PLOs. While each PLO describes in general terms what the student has to achieve upon graduation, at the course level these learning outcomes have to be more specific and describe what level of the learning outcomes the student needs to achieve at the end of the course. More than one course can contribute to achieving a program-learning outcome. The department has to then identify and clarify the different levels of achievement of the learning outcomes. In other words, there should be agreement about how the courses help students to systematically progress towards the learning outcomes and to ensure that by the end of the program there are no gaps or weaknesses in the students' experience.

The literature provides a variety of ways to identify levels of progression. Depending on the type of learning outcome (subject knowledge, skill, or attitude), there are different ways of describing the level of how a certain course addresses a specific learning outcome, such as basic, intermediate, or advanced. Whatever scale is being used, the department has to agree on criteria for each identified level and indicators for assessment. The course portfolio elaborates and gives details about the particular level of progression of the learning outcome for each course.

In order to write effective learning outcomes, you need to ask the following questions (which can also serve as an assessment checklist).

Learning Outcome	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the learning outcome help to fulfill the specific learning outcomes of the program as specified by the department? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the learning outcome reflect the expected knowledge, skills, or attitudes that the department has set for the students' level? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the learning outcome detail what the students need to know, perform or demonstrate? 		

Learning Outcome	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the learning outcome easily translated into a measurable activity and/or assignment? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the learning outcome supported by success criteria helps the students to demonstrate successful achievement practically? 		

4.1.2 Textbooks and reading materials

Once the learning outcomes are set and prioritized, the selection of the content and its format becomes an easy task. Whether it is a textbook, collected material, or some other form of learning resource, it needs to help students to advance their knowledge at the level they are at; to sharpen the skills necessary to graduate from the program; and help them to think and develop become active and effective individuals in their respective departments and in the society at large.

The course portfolio should include a list of suitable readings and materials and how to access them. In the reflection part of the portfolio, you should briefly discuss the quality of the readings and explain how they help students to achieve the learning outcomes.

4.1.3 Units or weekly schedule

Courses at Bethlehem University are generally designed to fit a fifteen-week semester, except in the summer term when the semester is seven weeks. Yet within either fifteen or seven weeks, the courses must fulfill the requirements of the credit hours assigned for each course. Accordingly, designing the course has to spread out over the allocated time and it helps to determine the amount of time needed to achieve each of the learning outcomes, such as readings, assignments or activities. The following information in the table helps to determine the weekly schedule.

Reflective Questions	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the readings, assignments, and all other work expected for the course relevant to the subject matter and do they help students to achieve learning outcomes? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the readings, assignments, and all other work expected for the course sufficient to cover the fifteen-week (or seven-week) period? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the students be able to complete the readings within the period assigned? 		

Reflective Questions	Yes	No
• Are the readings spread out evenly over the course of the semester in terms of length and complexity?		
• Will the students be able to submit the assignments within the specified period of completion?		
• Is the time for assessments (practical simulations, tests, exams, or quizzes) taken into consideration?		

If the answer is yes to any of the above questions, you should provide evidence to support answers. The evidence could be a sample of a reading that challenges students so that one can make further interventions in order to help them improve: for example, reading comprehension skills for better understanding.

4.2 Teaching methods and activities

The decision on what teaching methods to use for the course is dependent upon the nature of the course and its learning outcomes. In preparing for the course, you need to consider the best methods to apply in order to achieve the required learning outcome. The following table may help to align each learning outcome with the teaching methods that you believe would be best. You may choose more than one method for each learning outcome. The course portfolio should include such a table and some reflection on the effectiveness of the teaching methods and learning activities that you use.

	Lecture	Group Work	Lab	Discussion	Role play	Presentations
Learning outcome 1						
Learning outcome 2						
Learning outcome 3						
Learning outcome 4						

4.3 Assessment tools, grading, and rubrics

Based upon BU's Policy on Assessment, there is a difference between assessment and grading.

Assessment tools are the activities that students need to complete to provide evidence of mastering the content of the course and to demonstrate learning outcomes. These could be homework, in-class assignments, quizzes and tests, projects, experiments, simulations, or other forms of activity that allows students to demonstrate skills, knowledge, or attitudes in order to get a passing grade for the course.

Grading is the increment in points that is assigned to each activity that students perform. Its final calculation determines the overall grade of the course. Please refer to the Policy on Assessment in the University Catalogue for further clarification on the distribution of the percentages, especially for the final exam.

The following table is an example of the recommended assessment methods that a teacher may choose from or add to for each course.

	Quizzes	Lab report	Group project	Essay	Exams	Simulation
Learning outcome 1						
Learning outcome 2						
Learning outcome 3						
Learning outcome 4						

The course portfolio should include a description of these activities and the rubrics that have been developed to assess students' academic progress. The university encourages the use of "formative assessment" in which students receive feedback on the progress of their work (see the Toolkit on Assessment for Learning-CETL) and what they need to do in order to improve further. It is important to include some evidence of how students have been provided with the formative feedback and, if possible, evidence of its contribution to the overall learning process.

4.4 Samples of the teachers' and the students' work

The course portfolio should include copies of all assignments, in-class or homework; research or project prompts and instructions; final exams; and any other work assigned to complete the course successfully. The samples must also include the rubrics that you used to assess each of the assignments or work given to the students. Additional materials that help individual students in the course could also be added as examples of formative assessment. The detailing of the process used to help individual students and/or groups of students may highlight effective practices that contributed to the enhancement of students' learning. You should show adaptability to the students' needs, improvement of teaching techniques, and development of assessment tools.

In addition, the course portfolio should include exemplar copies of students' completed work. When compiling these copies, you need to include one sample each of the best, the average, and the worst works. The copies need to show the student's work with your comments and rubrics for grading. Students should be made aware that copies of their work are being kept. **Most importantly, they need to be assured that their names will be kept confidential and that the compilation of their work is done for the sole purpose of developing the course during the semester and in the future.** These can be used by the department for moderating grade judgments.

4.5 Reflections on the success of a course

After the completion of the course and after the distribution of the grades, you should spend some time revising the portfolio and writing a reflection on it by filling in the reflection form (Appendix 2). However, it is worth pointing out that “reflection” has different meanings in literature. It can be descriptive or critical. At BU we recommend having both levels of reflection, in which we describe specific events/activities/issues and then reflect critically on them by discussing their strengths and weaknesses and how they impacted student learning, and actions the teacher took.

Let’s take, for example, the question about the most successful teaching activity that you developed for the course. You need first to describe the activity or include it in an appendix. Then your reflection should focus on the students’ learning, how you know that this activity was successful, and how it helped achieve a specific learning outcome.

Remember that reflection does not mean that you should provide only negative feedback or criticism. Reflection is a thinking process that requires you to judge the strengths and weaknesses of a specific practice and provide evidence for that judgment. The purpose here is not to judge your assessment and values, rather it is to see how they can be achieved practically. Having variety of actions and methods used to achieve specific learning outcomes and evaluating effectiveness has been recognized in the world of academia as one of the best means to enrich subject and pedagogical knowledge. This is because when we reflect on the effectiveness of specific teaching activities and assignments, and provide evidence or a justification for that (if possible), we help other colleagues to learn about the different ways the learning outcomes could be achieved in practice. Colleagues might contribute to the same objective from a different perspective. Thus, subject and pedagogical knowledge is enriched instead of staying static.

II. Frequently asked questions

5. How should a portfolio be organized?

Departments must agree on the most creative and practical way to organize a portfolio. However, the portfolio should include the following items and documents:

- A front page (Appendix 1)
- A checklist form (Appendix 2)
- Reflection form (Appendix 3)
- Course outlines and samples of readings (Appendix 4)
- Copies of assignments (exams, report, quizzes)
- Samples of student work that includes the teachers' grading procedures and assessment strategies (criteria/rubrics)

6. What about multi-section courses?

Multi-section courses usually have unified descriptions, learning outcomes, and outlines, content and assessment tools that are either identical or at least at the same level for all the sections as agreed upon by the teachers themselves or following the directions and/or approval of the coordinator of the course or the chair of the department. The differences are going to be in the samples of students' work, the successful methodologies used by the different teachers in the different sections, and finally in the reflections of each teacher. Therefore, in compiling a portfolio for a multi-section course, each teacher will have to complete all the sections that are required of an individual one-section course.

At the end of the semester, the chair or the coordinator or one of the teachers collects all the materials and files them in the portfolio. The final format of either keeping the sections separate or compiling the content in one portfolio will be up to the department to decide. This depends on the nature of the course.

7. Why is it worth spending time on a course portfolio?

In general, putting things on paper is never an easy task, especially for those who tend to depend on memory to teach courses. Preparing a course portfolio requires time, but after that you may never have to start things from scratch again. Remember that you will also have portfolios developed by other colleagues for courses that you will teach in the future, so you will have a rich resource to draw from. This opportunity will decrease the pressure on you to look for new resources. *Remember that a course portfolio is not about your teaching, rather about the course itself and how it can help teachers achieve its learning outcomes.*

8. Do we need to include everything listed here in a course portfolio?

As outlined above, you will need to find your own creative way to develop the course portfolio that meets the need of your department and students. However, for consistency, across BU it is beneficial to follow the provided toolkit lists. Again, remember that this is not about your teaching, rather it is about creating the best course possible.

9. Where should portfolios be kept and who can access them?

Each department will decide on a location to keep portfolios where they can easily be accessed for departmental use. Only teachers who will teach the course can have access to them, as well as the quality assurance community in each department. Course portfolios are not available to students or to teachers who do not teach that specific course. In addition, when you develop additional materials for existing portfolios, you should not delete any document that appears in the original portfolio, rather you should add your documents and forms separately on the same document. Using colored dividers and papers helps organize the course portfolios.

10. How to reflect on course learning outcomes?

The reflection form includes questions about the progress of the course. In addition to what was explained in section 4.5, you need to pay attention to the achievement of the course learning outcomes. As you are aware, the course learning outcomes, especially those that refer to skills and attitudes, cannot be achieved in one course, rather they are achieved through the program as a whole or through a series of courses. In this case, a course might achieve a specific level or stage of the learning outcome as described earlier. Let's take for example the following program learning outcome: "at the end of this program, students will be able to conduct research projects." If you were trying to achieve this outcome you would need to decide on the level or stages of this learning outcome and how specific courses will achieve it. In other words, you need to identify the basic, intermediate and advanced level of this learning outcome. For example, one course might provide first-year students with the opportunity to learn about the structure of research projects and conduct basic research, while courses offered to the fourth-year students will engage them in higher levels or stages. When filling in Appendix 2, it is worth highlighting the status of each learning outcome according to this view.

A Bibliography of Print and Website Resources

Cambridge, Darren. *E Portfolio for Lifelong Learning and Assessment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. Print.

"Designing Course Outline" Bethlehem University: Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 2012. Print.

Knapper, Christian and Susan Wilcox. "Preparing a Teaching Dossier". Queens University: Center for Teaching and Learning, 2007. Web.

Seldin, Peter, J. Elizabeth and Miller Clement A. Seldin. *The Teaching Portfolio*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. Print.

Zubizarreta, John. *The Learning Portfolio*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009. Print.

Websites

<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/philosophy/background/index.html> (20/10/2012)

<http://academics.utep.edu/LinkClick.aspx?link=webpage+texts%2FFaculty+Focus+philosophy+article.pdf&tabid=58396&mid=129801> (20/10/2012)

Appendix 1
A front page

Bethlehem University

Faculty of

Department of.....

Course Portfolio

Course title and code

Name of teacher(s)

Semester

Appendix 2

Checklist

Course Code:

Course Name:

Semester taught:

Faculty/department:

Name of teacher:

Date:

Click on the documents that appear in the portfolio

- Reflection form
- Course outline and samples of effective readings
- Copies of assignments and rubrics
- Samples of student work
- Other documents, please specify _____

Appendix 3
Reflection form

Course Code:

Course Name:

Semester taught:

Faculty/department:

Name of teacher:

Date:

Program learning outcomes that the course contributes to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Course learning outcomes:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The teaching methods that were used for each learning outcome						
	Lecture	Group work	Lab	Discussion	Role play	Others
Learning outcome 1						
Reflection						
Learning outcome 2						
Reflection						
Learning outcome 3						
Reflection						

Assessment tasks that were used for each learning outcome						
	Quiz	Lab report	Group project	Essay	Exam	others
Learning outcome 1						
Reflection						
Learning outcome 2						
Reflection						
Learning outcome 3						
Reflection						

Readings					
	Reading 1	Reading 2	Reading 3	Reading 4	Others
Learning outcome 1					
Learning outcome 2					
Learning outcome 3					
Reflection					

Overall, what course learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and attitudes) do you believe the majority of students were able to demonstrate after taking the course? How do you know that? Please provide evidence

What is the best assessment strategy that you used to students learn better? How do you know that?

Which assignment should be modified or replaced? Why?

How did this course contribute to the advancement of the students' academic literacy skills (writing, reading and communication), if applicable?

What recommendations for improvement would you make for a) this course, b) the program learning outcomes that this course contributes to?

Please attach rubrics, assignments and samples of students work. Please comment.

Appendix 4 Course outlines

Please review your course outline and discuss to what extent it includes the following items

Bethlehem University

Faculty/Department

Course Title-----(section)

Name of Lecturer: _____

Office: _____

Office Hours: _____

Phone Ext. _____ Personal Phone: (optional)

Email Address: _____

Course Time: _____

Classroom Number: _____

Course Description:

This course aims to introduce the students to/ this course focuses on... (the text can be copied from the Academic Catalogue).

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students are expected to: 1)... 2)...

Units or Modules of the Course:

Unit/Module One: _____

Basic topics covered: _____

Learning Outcome for the unit/module (optional): _____

Reference materials and readings: _____

Assignments and tasks: _____

Number of weeks or meetings: _____

List of References/ Readings:

Instructions and Advice to Students:

Assessment and Grading:

Please list all assessment tasks that students should perform during the course with the percentage points allocated to each assignment, such as participation, quizzes, first exam (if applicable), final exam (not to exceed 35% of the total grade according to the assessment policy of the university), projects, reports, and research (if applicable).