UCSB Course Review Template

The template is intended to help instructors identify and reflect on specific elements of their course, as it is experienced by students in GauchoSpace and/or the course syllabus. It can be used solely for self-reflection or as part of peer review of teaching.

Steps for Course Review

1. Complete the Course Context section.
2. Complete the Teaching Practices Focus Areas section to identify elements of your course and teaching that you want to hone in on for this course review. For those areas, add notes and specific questions.
3. As you (or a peer) review the course in GauchoSpace, from the students' perspective, note observations, questions, strengths and opportunities for further development in the Teaching Practices Inventory table.
4. Discuss your observations and ideas.

Course Context (Instructor completes)

Name	
Department	
Course (Number & Name)	
Description (from syllabi, general catalog, or custom)	
Relevant contextual info (e.g. is it required for the major, does it satisfy a GE requirement, characteristics of students who take	

Adapted from UC Santa Cruz Canvas Course Review, with permission from Dr. Jody Greene 12/1/21.

the course)	
How has this course evolved over time? (What have you learned from teaching the course, and what changes have you made as a result?)	
Course learning outcomes	
Link to GauchoSpace Site	
Link to course syllabus	

Teaching Practices Focus Areas (Instructor completes)

The following table lists characteristics associated with effective teaching from the UC Teaching Practices Framework. In this section, you will focus on 3 or 4 of these areas and describe *how you believe that you have incorporated these areas into your syllabus/GauchoSpace page*, and/or *questions you have about incorporating these areas.*

Highlight three Focus Areas for your course review from the table below.
Add notes and specific questions to guide the course review.

Focus Area - Choose 3 focus areas; highlight relevant examples of teaching practices and where to look for them. Add comments or questions for the reviewer to consider.
1. Inclusive and Equitable*: Creating inclusive and equitable courses is crucial for engagement and motivation.* The syllabus/GS site uses welcoming, supportive, and encouraging language that validates students' knowledge. The course presents multiple ways for students to engage and participate. Course materials represent diverse perspectives and experiences. Examples: ● A "welcome message" is present in the syllabus or elsewhere in the course ● The language used is welcoming to students, and the tone conveys confidence that all students can succeed ● Students are given opportunities to express their thoughts (e.g. in course surveys) and communicate with one another ● After reviewing the course, students understand the instructor's teaching philosophy and approach ● The language conveys confidence that all students can succeed ● Course materials (reading, assignments, assessments) reflect attention to diverse peoples, cultures, and ethnicities ● Multiple ways to participate (e.g., course discussions, discussion forums, writing-peer review) are clearly stated. Models of successful participation are provided. ● Course days/activities are structured with clear expectations Look in:

- Syllabus
- Assignment instructions
- Discussion prompts
- Announcements
- Lectures (recorded or synchronous)

Comments/questions for reviewer:

2. Structure and Organization*: Organizational clarity minimizes frustration and reduces cognitive load, leaving room for focus.*

The course is clearly organized using a consistent weekly pattern. Students can clearly identify what to do each course day.

Examples:

- The course is organized in modules by week, unit, or topic
- Modules proceed in a well defined and predictable manner, such that students know what to expect and can plan ahead.
- Items in the modules are labeled clearly and consistently.
- Module requirements are clear and consistent.
- Roughly how much time students should expect to spend on readings, assignments, and activities is clearly stated

Look in:

- Modules
- Syllabus
- Course navigation

Comments/questions for reviewer:

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3. Rationale, Relevance, and Alignment*: Students need to know why they're doing what they're doing. How should they approach the materials (e.g., readings, activities)?*

The "how, what, and why" of the course is clear for students. Instructor makes clear how to approach the materials, how course materials and activities are connected to course outcomes, how students will apply what they learn in the course and how they relate to broader contexts (education, future career, life, and/or community).

Examples:

- Knowledge and skills students will develop *overall* in the course are clearly stated
- Connections between overall learning goals and course activities are evident
- Information about how to work with course materials (e.g., how to approach reading, lectures, etc.) is provided
- The path to success in the course is clear
- Assessments are aligned with what has been covered in the course
- Assignments and assessments are focused on skill and knowledge development
- The course is presented in the broader context of a major, a field, or society

Look in:

- Syllabus
- Assignment instructions
- Discussions prompts
- Lectures (recorded or synchronous)

Comments/questions for reviewer:

4. Assessment Criteria*: Students need to know what is expected of them, how they'll be graded, and what success looks like.*

Assessments are clearly linked to course goals, materials and activities. Assessments present opportunities to apply what's been learned. Expectations for how to succeed on assessments are shared with students.

Examples:

- Links between assessments and course goals/materials/activities are clear.
- Clear and comprehensive guidelines for completing assignments are provided
- Rubrics or grading keys are used for assignments, discussions, and/or quizzes and are shared with students

- Models or step-by-step examples of how to complete tasks or solve problems are given
- Review sessions or other support are offered

Look in:

- Syllabus
- Assignment instructions
- Discussion prompts
- Quizzes
- Lectures (recorded or synchronous)

Comments/questions for reviewer:

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5. Knowledge-Building with Feedback and Assessments*: Students need opportunities to practice and receive feedback that helps them improve and refine their skills, and they need to spend time on their learning.*

Low-stakes assessments give students an opportunity to practice, and to receive feedback on their learning without fear of failure, serving as building blocks for any higher-stakes assessment.

Examples:

- Assignments with low or zero point values are a regular part of the course
- Smaller assessments and activities prepare students for exams or projects
- Students have opportunities for self-assessment
- Clear guidelines are provided for peer review

Look in:

- Syllabus
- Assignments
- Discussions
- Quizzes

Comments/questions for reviewer:

6. Reflection & Depth of Learning*: Reflection is essential for making meaning and connections, for revision and refinement, for processing, and setting goals.*

The course provides opportunities for students to reflect and develop their own metacognitive strategies.

Examples:

- Major assignments include reflective prompts
- Students are given the opportunity to evaluate their own performance
- Discussion activities encourage reflection on self and others
- Exams are accompanied by exam wrappers

Look in:

- Assignments
- Discussions
- Student portfolios
- Lectures (recorded or synchronous)

Comments/questions for reviewer:

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Additional Questions/Comments from Instructor:

Teaching Practices Feedback (Reviewer directions)

Reviewer:

- If you are a peer reviewer, email the instructor to request that they add you to their GauchoSpace site (present or past) as a Test Student.

1. Review the instructor's focus areas (from part 1), examples and questions.
2. Review the sample feedback, below.

3. Prepare Feedback: Note observations about focus areas; what you feel are current strengths and opportunities to enhance the student experience.
4. If possible, discuss written feedback: ask probing questions, listen to what's been tried before, reinforce effective practices and offer suggestions.
5. Consider using these sentence frames:

Your focus areas are ___, and ___.

In <area 1>, I notice <observation> in <specific materials>.

The materials for <area 1> could address <other bulleted points> even more effectively if _____.

(Repeat for each focus area)

Sample feedback #1:

Course Info:
Linda Adler-Kassner, INT 89AR: Learning and Place (First Year Linked Discovery Seminar.
Lower division, elective, seminar

This course was intended for students to dive into two ideas that seemed especially salient during COVID: learning and place. The seminar provided frameworks for students to think about and practice with connections between learning and place and identify what they value(d) about learning in specific places.

Focus areas: "Inclusion & Equity" and "Rationale, Relevance and Alignment"

Feedback:

- The video narrations of the syllabus and GS site gave the course a *personal feel*. I'm copycatting this!
- The narrated syllabus had a "*people first*" feel (take care of yourself, we're in this together) feel that could help to humanize the course.
- As a viewer, I wished I was able to speed up/slow down the videos (this is possible in the GauchoCast videos, but not those made in Screen-Cast-Omatic)

- I wonder if the length of the syllabus dissuades students? If it's difficult to shorten, you could use bold/highlighting to draw attention to key parts (hopefully there are 1-2 on each page)?

- For "Participation," you focused on the positive: we are looking forward to being together, to see each other and chat. I noticed you didn't get into whether cameras on is expected/required (or the in-person equivalent, "no cell phones during class!"), and I wondered if students did turn cameras on (or if you cared). If they didn't (and you care) you might think about making that explicit (and explaining how it helps them learn. Here, you could also highlight that you've created multiple ways to participate (forums, jam boards, etc), since this is an inclusive practice.

- In GS, the intro text on week 1 has specific goals for the unit (Welcome! This week we're going to: 1… 2) likely helps students "get their bearings" each week and shape their expectations.
? What do you think about adding short learning goals for other weeks?

? How can you encourage students to read each others' incredibly rich posts to promote class community and connections)? If you set the forum up as a "single simple discussion" students will be able to see all of the posts on one page; I think this would make it easier (and more fun) to browse the posts.

-Overall, it appears that the course provides students with scaffolding to set them up for success in on their final project. The project itself provides structure while allowing creative freedom for those who want it. Did you provide any examples of final projects to help them visualize the scope/depth of the final project? If not, they

might appreciate that.

- I wasn't totally clear to me what the overall course goals were; could it be useful to articulate these on the syllabus or GS site and then refer back to them periodically (e.g. in framing the final project)?

- The course looks really fun and engaging!

Sample feedback #2:

Course Info:
Lisa Berry, Grad 210: College and University Teaching: from Theory to Practice
Graduate course, Flipped Class structure

Grad course that meets one of the requirements for the Certificate in College and University Teaching. Students who are interested in teaching take it, from a wide range of departments. There is also a wide-range of teaching experience among participants, so I've designed in a lot of flexibility. I'm curious about how I can keep the flexibility, but make the structure more apparent/accessible to these diverse students.

Focus area: Welcoming and Inclusive

In "Welcoming and Inclusive," I notice:
Beautiful picture on the "welcome/overview page that draws me into the site
Tabs that make it clear what each week will be about
Four areas that seem important: Key Resources, Getting to Know Each Other, Elective Workshops and Assignments, and Teaching Related Resources
I also notice a Background survey and a forum that asks me to introduce myself and "how ya doin?"

On other pages, I notice lots of ways to participate:
Forums, completing electives, drop boxes for different things that students can communicate with each other and receive feedback
Different kinds of pathways through the course, e.g., elective assignments (and the variable unit option?)
Different readings: required and optional
Clear structure for course/days
Syllabus that includes a very clear description and course goals
Invitation to phone, text, or email instructors
Describes course as a "playground to discuss, apply, and troubleshoot together"

"Welcoming and Inclusive" could address a few other bullets even more effectively if:
Put syllabus in something other than a PDF - which can be difficult to access (but is more OCR friendly, sooooo….)
Course description were a bit more invitational, i.e., refers to students as "you" and not students; mentioned students' expertise and what they bring to the playground
I wonder if:
you can incorporate additional materials by scholars of color or scholars who speak directly to the learning experiences of underserved learners?
You might add more about asset-based approaches?