

Using this document

This is the SPS Course Review Rubric that is used to evaluate new courses and courses that have undergone major revisions. We have created annotations for the standards and criteria of this rubric corresponding to DEIA educational practices. Within this document there are thumbnail links to the annotations, color coded to correspond to each of the three DEIA lenses.

- Diversity (purple thumbnail images)
- Inclusion and Accessibility (green thumbnail images)
- Student Voice and Choice (blue thumbnail images)

To view the annotations, click on a thumbnail image. This will allow you to open the annotations in a new browser tab. We suggest keeping this rubric and the annotations open in two side-by-side browser windows for ease of navigation, so you can easily see how annotations are mapped to specific rubric standards or criteria.

Course Review Rubric

Introduction to the DEIA lens for annotations

To see the annotations, click on a thumbnail and open the annotations in a new browser tab.

Representation

"When you see someone who looks like you succeed, you believe you can too."
—Professional tennis player Leylah Fernandez

Where and how will students see themselves in our courses? How can we help them envision themselves as future professionals or scholars in our fields? Student engagement and success can dramatically increase if students see themselves and their many identities represented and valued in course images, materials, activities, and the scholars selected for our syllabi.

Open Educational Resources (OER) can help. Openly licensed images, like the ones on this slide, can be incorporated into Blackboard, presentations, case studies, or texts to reflect our students' varied identities and experiences. OER texts can be edited to include reflective names, situations, perspectives, and voices.

Open Pedagogy can help too, as students can curate, edit, or author materials to reflect themselves.



Inclusion and Accessibility

"I'd have to be thankful about an accessible bathroom, when an I never gonna be equal in the community!"
—Quoting rights activist Judith Thurman

Once we've helped students see themselves in our courses, we can invite them to participate (inclusion) and remove any barriers to participation (accessibility). The course-review rubric already includes many strategies, such as introductory videos and accessible design tips, so we're focusing on next-level steps.

Because OER are free, they remove the barrier of cost. Because OER can be edited or created by instructors, we can ensure that they are accessible, tweaking language, providing images to accompany text, or offering them in multiple formats. Because OER can be edited or created by students, they invite direct participation in creating knowledge, which is an essential component of Open Pedagogy.

Consider how the attributes of Open Pedagogy, such as learner-generated work, use of participatory technology, and connection to the community can foster inclusion and allow students to define the modes of demonstrating their learning that are most accessible to them.

Student Voice and Choice

"All else being equal, emotional adjustment is better over time for people who experience a sense of self-determination."
—Educator author Rita Kohn

Once students have seen themselves in our courses and have been included in and had access to the full course experience, we can give them greater agency to use their voices and exercise choice—key components in engagement and empowerment that ultimately lead to independence that lasts beyond the term.

An act of Open Pedagogy, asking students to remix or create OER lets them apply new skills and their unique perspectives while doing real work that can serve others. Open Pedagogy's valuation of learner-generated approaches puts student voice and choice at the forefront. For example, students at Oregon State created *Romeo and Juliet: A Textbook Edition of Shakespeare's Play Created By Students*. For Students, complete with embedded definitions of vocabulary, clear and brief footnotes, and teacher resources including lesson plans on how to approach the sexism, ableism, racism and other social issues built into the 16th-century text.

1. Course Overview and Introduction

To see the annotations, click on a thumbnail and open the annotations in a new browser tab.

Representation: Course Overview and Introduction

- **Review or build your course introductory video for diverse representation so that students can see themselves and others in the discipline.** Be sure to avoid tokenism, making sure that underrepresented populations are presented authentically, positively, and in positions of agency and power.
- **Promote self-representation in the LMS.** We can model and invite students to represent themselves by showing them how to upload an avatar that represents them literally or figuratively. We can mention the option to change language, calendar, and day-of-the-week settings in the LMS.
- **Encourage and model self-representation in your introductory activity.** Soliciting preferred names and pronouns and asking about personal and professional interests can help students feel seen from the beginning. Sharing discipline-related skills learned from life can promote representation as well. For example, the question, "What skills do you already have in this discipline and how did you learn them in life?" may allow students who are parents or older siblings in a nursing program to share that they have already learned to caretake.
- **Conduct an optional, anonymous introductory survey to promote representation throughout the course.** You can invite students to share individual needs (preferred office hours, workloads, language support, disabilities), experiences to inform cultural relevance (army service, work experience, parenting, immigration), and aspects of identity (race, gender, sexual orientation, religion) that can help you make responsive, reflective choices in every area all semester. Make it clear that every question is optional and explain how the information students choose to share will be used to improve their experience in the course. Note that being responsive to the information students share is key to the effectiveness of this practice.

Inclusion and Accessibility: Course Overview and Introduction

- **Scan your syllabus and course policies for structure and language that excludes or burdens students inequitably.**
- **Introductions survey.** Offer students an optional and anonymous course survey to share their individual needs (e.g., disabilities, preferred office hours, religious holidays), experiences to inform cultural relevance (e.g., army service, parenting, work experience, immigration, race, or interests). Make it clear how the information they choose to share will be used to improve their experience in the course.
- **Introduction activity.** Edit your introduction activity to model and invite students to represent their identities in your LMS. Show students how to upload an avatar that represents them and encourage students to include preferred pronouns and preferred name when they introduce themselves. Mention the option for changing their name in CUNYfirst.

Student Voice and Choice: Course Overview and Introduction

- **Set office hours (or "student hours") for the first week only, noting that they will be determined by results of the student survey.** This will help avoid the extra burden of asking students who need help but can't attend to email you for special treatment. See tips for details.
- **Consider what other syllabus items could use student weigh-in.** Instead of mandating a late-work policy or attendance policy, you might ask students to suggest policies that have worked for them or alternatives they might propose.

1.1 There are clear instructions for getting started and how the course will work.

1.1.1 A welcome announcement introduces the course and directs students how to get started.

1.1.2 A specific link or folder contains the work students must do first.

1.2 Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.

1.2.1 A syllabus that includes items such as course name & number; prerequisites; official course description; program learning outcomes; course learning outcomes; textbook information; course schedule; grading scheme; course policies; instructor contact information.

1.2.2 Introductory video (introduction to the course, not instructor-focused).

1.3 Course policies are stated.

1.3.1 Course policies, rubrics and grading policies (including placeholder for lateness policy if applicable) are in the syllabus and may be expanded upon separately.

1.4 Institutional policies and academic and support services are stated or linked to.

1.4.1 Either separately or in syllabus, course policy statements include: Accessibility and Accommodations, Online Etiquette and Anti-Harassment, and Academic Integrity.

1.5 Technical support for course-specific tools and how to obtain it is described or linked to.

- 1.5.1 Technical support details for course-specific edtech tools such as publisher platforms, online simulations, VoiceThread, GitHub, etc. should be listed.

1.6 Technology and access requirements are clearly stated, and information is provided on how to obtain technology or materials needed.

- 1.6.1 Access to course materials is clearly explained and links are provided.
- 1.6.2 Access to technology (plugins, applications) is clearly explained with links provided. Tools like Digication, VoiceThread, publisher content, etc. or other resources are well integrated, their purpose is explained, and support information is provided.
- 1.6.3 Course clearly indicates any prerequisite abilities required of the learner, such as computer or software skills, if applicable.

1.7 Communication expectations are explained.

- 1.7.1 Instructor contact card includes contact information, office hours, availability, short professional biography and photo.
- 1.7.2 Email response policy is stated.
- 1.7.3 A separate Q&A discussion forum (can be called, Ask Professor, Q&A, etc.) is established for questions from students. Setting is enabled to allow students to subscribe to it.
- 1.7.4 All required channels of communication in which students must participate are explained.

1.8 Learners are asked to introduce themselves to the class.

- 1.8.1 A "Getting to Know You" activity is provided at the beginning of the semester in which students can introduce themselves to one another and to the instructor; instructors add their own introductions.

2 Course Design/Structure

To see the annotations, click on a thumbnail and open the annotations in a new browser tab.

Representation: Course Design and Structure

- ★ **Reflect student identities in the course calendar and office hours (or “student hours”).** If your introduction survey reveals that you have Muslim students, for example, you might adjust due dates to avoid Eids or adjust office hours during Ramadan to include post-daylight hours. If you ask students what holidays they observe be sure to note that it is so that you can adjust due dates and hours.
- ★ **Include images in your course site and materials that reflect many identities:** race, ethnicity, age, family configuration, religion, gender, disabilities, class, and sexual orientation. As always, be sure to avoid tokenism, making sure that underrepresented populations are presented authentically, positively, and in positions of agency and power. See “Openly Licensed Photography” in the OER section of the Blackboard workshop site for diverse image repositories.

Inclusion and Accessibility:

Course Design and Structure

- ★ **Unpack your course design with custom overviews.** Provide contextualizing overviews for each module to help students make meaning of your purposeful course design. Recreating the overviews each term will allow you to reflect your current students reference any relevant current events. Offering these narratives as informal (but captioned) videos can increase inclusion and engagement.
- ★ **Unpack your course design with a narrative.** Help students see the purposeful design of your course by telling a story about the concepts they’ll learn. Share the background, main “characters,” and the “plot” of course, and refer to them in unit introductions.

Student Voice and Choice:

Course Design and Structure

- ★ **Invite students to have a say in the curriculum.** Keep an open week late in your syllabus for a student-selected topic, student-curated materials, or a student-led unit. For a student-selected topic, students can suggest topics or perspectives at the modern they would like you to cover or dive deeper into that week. For student-curation, students can find and offer to the class materials around the topic of their choice or yours. For student-led units, students to take charge of presenting materials or posing discussion questions on topics or materials you or they choose.

2.1 Course navigation facilitates ease of use.

2.1.1 Menu link names conform to the program course template or standard guidelines

2.1.2 Menu links are appropriate in number and organized

2.2 Course design is consistent and facilitates student understanding.

2.2.1 All materials for each week or unit are organized within content folders or learning modules.

2.2.2 Each content folder or learning module includes title and beginning/end dates in the title.

2.2.3 Organization and content of units/modules is consistent across course and matches up with what is on syllabus and schedule.

2.2.4 Reading material and multimedia content is presented in manageable segments. (For example, best practice is short videos under 6 minutes, no excessive scrolling, etc.).

2.3 Design is readable, accessible and mobile-friendly.

2.3.1 In general, no more than two layers of folders for content.

2.3.2 Course site is free of typographical, grammatical, and other errors.

2.3.3 Consistent use of font type, font size and color. Don't use appearance of the text (highlighting, font colors, bold, italics, or underlining) as the only way to convey meaning or emphasize importance. No use of red or green text color (not distinguishable to color-blind users).

2.3.4 Important content should not be added to the following text fields (or should be repeated elsewhere) because they are not visible on the Blackboard mobile app:

- description text on folders, learning modules, and lesson plans
- text added to any tool or course link (such as to the discussion board or forum, blogs, wikis, etc)
- description text added to assignment or exam links

3 Outcomes and Assessments

To see the annotations, click on a thumbnail and open the annotations in a new browser tab.

Representation: Outcomes and Assessment

- **Provide context for learning outcomes.** Help students see the real-world circumstances in which the outcome might be needed. If possible, demonstrate how the outcome is transferable to other disciplines, professions, or circumstances.
- ★ **Use authentic assessments** that are based on real and relevant experiences, such as those that simulate (or actually do) the work of the discipline and that tap into students' cultural experiences
- **Acknowledge the cultural framework of academia.** For example, writing rubrics might assess the use of "unit terminology" and "conventions of academic writing" rather than "sophisticated vocabulary" and "proper grammar" which imply cultural supremacy.

Inclusion and Accessibility: Outcomes and Assessment

- **Use renewable assignments**—ones that have purpose beyond just the scope of the class—to provide assessments that matter in the real world.
- ★ **Include students by having them self-assess or peer review.** Self- and peer-review are powerful tools that often box students out. Having students co-create or edit a rubric in advance invites them to include their unique perspectives. Practicing peer-review as a whole class on a sample paper makes the process more accessible as well.
- **Unpack self-assessment or peer review.** Many students feel unqualified to do either, especially when an instructor will be doing the final grading. So, make the purposes explicit. Are they providing feedback for improvement before the final assessment by you? Are they providing feedback as a potential target audience? Are they developing the skill of evaluation?
- **Acknowledge the cultural framework of academia.** For example, writing rubrics might assess the use of "unit terminology" and "conventions of academic writing" rather than "sophisticated vocabulary" and "proper grammar" which imply cultural supremacy.

Student Voice and Choice: Outcomes and Assessment

- **Provide a choice of medium.** Since assessment is about measuring student achievement of the learning outcome, consider whether students can demonstrate that achievement in the medium of their choice.
- **Where possible, leverage prior knowledge and experience in assessment.** Can students demonstrate understanding of course concepts in ways that tap into their choice of personal experiences and/or identities?
- ★ **Give students a voice in the criteria of their assessment.** Asking students to co-create or edit a rubric in advance invites them to include their unique perspectives while increasing buy-in. For easy collaboration editing a rubric, try simple annotations on Google Doc.

3.1 Each module/unit has learning objectives, with outcomes that are measurable and consistent with course-level objectives.

3.1.1 Each module/unit states learning outcomes (as distinct from tasks)

3.1.2 Each module/unit includes a brief introduction/overview and states important assignments.

3.1.3 Learning objectives are appropriate for the level of the course.

3.2 Assessment activities address achievement of learning outcomes.

3.2.1 Assessments measure achievement of the learning objectives.

3.2.2 Assignments emphasize development of writing, quantitative, and reasoning skills (as appropriate) in addition to content mastery.

3.2.3 Grading rubrics or clearly listed grading criteria are available to students for all major assessments; performance expectations are clearly explained and examples or relevant resources are provided when needed.

3.2.4 Assignments' contribution to the final grade is explicit. For assessments that have multiple parts, the contribution of those parts to the total assignment grade is clear.

3.2.5 All of the major graded components are set up in Grade Center and align with the course syllabus; there is a column that calculates total points or weights for final grade and it is set up correctly. My Grades provides students a view of graded assignments, due dates and rubrics.

3.3 Assessments are sequenced, varied, and suited to the level of the course.

3.3.1 Assessment activities are varied in format.

3.3.2 Assessment activities begin in the first week of the semester and include regular opportunities for “low-stakes” assessment throughout the semester (e.g., reflection exercises, self-assessment, progress reports, and questions about concepts).

3.3.3 Learning is assessed frequently throughout the course, and assignments are designed to encourage/require instructor feedback and interaction throughout the semester.

3.3.4 Both the pacing of assessments throughout the semester and the amount of time allotted for each step of an assessment are realistic and appropriate.

3.3.5 When applicable, opportunities are provided for students to provide each other feedback on their work and clear guidelines for this feedback are provided.

3.4 Assessments are secure.

3.4.1 All essay/paper submissions use SafeAssign or Turnitin. All high-stakes Blackboard exams (any single exam worth 20+%) require a password and use, as appropriate, security measures like pools, randomization, etc.

4 Course Content

To see the annotations, click on a thumbnail and open the annotations in a new browser tab.

Representation: Course Content

- **Text and images of materials.** Scan your materials to make sure students will see themselves reflected positively in the course content itself—in examples, scenarios, articles, narratives, videos, photos, case studies, and problems.
- ★ **Use OER and invite students to revise and remix** for missing perspectives and identities.
- **Authoritative voice.** Review your syllabus for a diversity of scholars ensuring that students can see themselves represented as authoritative voices—as authors of articles or presenters in videos. See speaker notes for examples.
- **Distribution.** Double-check that historically marginalized voices and authors are not relegated to optional material, only choice activities, or afterthoughts.



Inclusion and Accessibility: Course Content

- **Strive for Zero-Textbook Costs** by using OER or library materials.
- **Engage students in a discussion about Blackboard's Ally** tools allowing them to explore how the choice of formats benefits a range of learners.
- **Provide a variety of media** for students to consume rather than relying solely on text or solely on video.



Student Voice and Choice: Course Content

- **Provide choice of content.** Perhaps students read one shared text and then explore one of those other options.
- **Provide choice of media.** Perhaps students are given the opportunity to investigate, say, immigrant populations in the late 1800s by either reading an article, listening to a podcast, watching a video, or exploring a data visualization.
- **Ask students to curate content.** Investigating Frida Kahlo? Ask students to post their favorites to offer for peer analysis. Investigating stereotypes? Ask students to share what they find on Netflix or print ads for group analysis.
- ★ **Ask students to create content for the class and/or for others.** Students can create test bank questions, case studies, study guides, videos, and podcasts for their peers or and to share with the world.

4.1 The instructional materials represent up-to-date theory and practice in the discipline.

4.1.1 Course content is current.

4.2 A variety of instructional materials is used in the course.

4.2.1 Content is presented using a variety of media (e.g., text, visual, audio) and supplementary resources are made available where appropriate.

4.3 Instructional material is appropriate for the level of the course.

4.3.1 Readability, degree of complexity, and amount of material per week are appropriate for the course.

4.4 The course provides accessible text and images in files, documents, LMS pages, and web pages to meet the needs of diverse learners.

4.4.1 Meaningful images include text tags (alt-text), videos include captions or transcripts, and documents are screen reader accessible. All external tools used are accessible. If something cannot be made fully accessible, an alternate and equivalent option is offered.

5 Activities

To see the annotations, click on a thumbnail and open the annotations in a new browser tab.

Representation: Activities

- **As with all areas of our courses, we can reflect student identities and experiences in activity instructions or materials.**
- **Consider collaborative work.** Well structured collaborative work offers a host of opportunities for representation (AND inclusion). Highlight the strengths that first-generation college students, veterans, parents, and siblings in large households bring to collaborative work, valuing their experience. Note explicitly that teams are stronger when they are comprised of members with different life experiences.
- **Build representation (and student voice and choice) into peer review** by allowing students to create or collaboratively edit the peer-review rubric or criteria, allowing them to propose their own values and to find commonality.

Inclusion and Accessibility: Activities

- **Build community and demonstrate the power of diversity by engaging students in collaborative annotations** using platforms such as MarginNote, Hypothesis, or Google Docs. Densify the hidden curriculum by providing details on what annotations are.
- **Consider collaborative work.** Well structured collaborative work offers a host of opportunities for inclusion and accessibility (AND representation). Before assigning groups, have students draft and post self-ids, experiences, and areas they'd like to grow. You can use these posts to help form the groups, and the group members can use them to assign roles, ensuring that each team member is responsible for something in their self-ids and also gets a chance to try or shadow a group member who will be using skill they want to learn.
- **Keep an active course glossary** that students can add to throughout the course. Glossaries can be divided categories such as "academic language" and unit topics.

Student Voice and Choice: Activities

- **Include renewable assignments** that have meaning outside of the scope of the class and current term, such as editing or building OER, creating test-bank questions or case studies for use in other sections or terms, ePortfolios, public-facing blogs, or social media campaigns.
- **Provide choice of activities and/or media.** Choice not only provides variety and reaches a wider array of learners, but it can also empower students in discussions who understand that their insights can educate peers who didn't choose the same material or approach that they did.

5.1 Learning activities promote the achievement of the learning objectives.

5.1.1 Activities are appropriately complex and engaging and ask students to add, integrate, and/or synthesize knowledge.

5.1.2 Activities promote learner engagement and active learning.

5.2 A variety of different activities are used.

5.2.1 Learners have the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities that draw from authentic experiences where appropriate.

5.2.2 Discussion questions and group projects are appropriately complex, may require critical thinking and problem-solving, and offer the possibility of many different answers and/or approaches.

5.2.3 If real-time activities are scheduled that were not stated at time of registration, alternatives are provided (transcripts, asynchronous discussion, etc.).

5.3 Activities include frequent opportunities/requirements for interaction (and collaboration) between students.

5.3.1 Course activities include assignments to be completed by individual students and through peer interaction and collaboration, such as through blogs, wikis, threaded discussions, group work, peer review, and other tools (Collaborate Ultra, VoiceThread).

6 Continuous Improvement

To see the annotations, click on a thumbnail and open the annotations in a new browser tab.

Representation: Continuous Improvement

- Ask students in midterm surveys if they see themselves and their communities represented in the course. Include an option for offering suggestions or identifying missing groups or experiences, and act on their feedback.

Inclusion and Accessibility: Continuous Improvement

- Get feedback midway through the term. Ask students in midterm surveys where they've experienced barriers to course content, activities, assessments, and engagement with you and their peers.

Student Voice and Choice: Continuous Improvement

- Ask students for feedback on whether they feel they have voice and choice your midterm survey. If you are willing to make adjustments, add a question to your midterm survey to ask specifically about whether students feel that they have voice and choice.

6.1 Feedback is solicited.

- 6.1.1 Students are given opportunities to provide feedback to the instructor about the course within the course itself (e.g., midterm survey, discussion board for feedback, etc).

SPS Course Review Rubric Updated August 2021