Faculty Self-Evaluation Guidelines
for Curriculum Review

Higher Education Purpose and Faculty Expertise

Beyond providing foundational content knowledge, higher education plays a central role in cultivating students' creativity and thinking skills and their ability to acquire, analyze, apply, and generate knowledge through exposure to diverse perspectives, evidence-based inquiry, real-world challenges, and intellectually engaging material. Faculty, collectively and individually, play important roles guiding students through their research and creative activities, teaching, and service. Through coursework, research experiences, collaborative learning, and innovative pedagogical approaches, students are nurtured while developing a range of abilities that enable them to analyze information comprehensively, solve complex problems, apply knowledge to contemporary issues, think creatively, evaluate arguments with nuance, reflect on and refine their own thinking, and communicate effectively. Together, these skills foster independent, adaptable, and responsible individuals who are well prepared for professional life, lifelong learning, and meaningful contributions to society.

University of Houston (UH) faculty bring deep expertise in content, methodology, practice, and action, enriching the educational experience of our students and the broader community. It is expected that UH faculty design their courses deliberately to promote student growth and excellence in both content knowledge and durable/transferable skills. Further, it is expected that their teaching is grounded in a rich understanding of their disciplines—an understanding shaped by their own scholarly formation and ongoing contributions to their fields. Students, and the society they go on to serve, benefit from this depth of knowledge and the opportunities for intellectual engagement it provides. UH faculty must be equally committed to establishing classroom environments that are informed, inquisitive, and supportive, and that promote meaningful learning. In these spaces, students are likewise encouraged to develop their critical thinking, along with other essential skills, explore complex ideas, and imagine the world as it is, as it was, and as it could become.

Best Practices for Curriculum Review

Regular review of the curriculum is essential to maintaining academic quality, relevance, and coherence. Effective curriculum review is grounded in disciplinary expertise, evidence of student learning and awareness of evolving professional, societal and workforce needs. Through systematic reflection on learning outcomes, course sequencing, pedagogy, and assessment, faculty ensure that the curriculum remains rigorous, current, and aligned with institutional goals and the mission of higher education. Best practices emphasize individual and collaborative review processes, use of data to inform decisions, and intentional revisions that promote student success and intellectual growth (see Texas Statement on Academic Integrity for a broad discussion of academic freedom and its responsibilities).

While UH faculty have long engaged in curriculum review and updates through established shared-governance processes, these practices have been further formalized by legislation introduced through Texas SB 37. Under SB 37, general education curricula now require periodic, board-level review and formal approval, with attention to whether required courses are foundational and essential, support preparation for civic life and the workforce, and remain consistent with

accreditation standards (Tex. Educ. Code § 51.315). Board-level review introduces an additional periodic institutional accountability layer, but it does not replace the need for faculty disciplinary expertise.

Faculty Self-Evaluation Guidelines for Curriculum Review

In a review that relies primarily on documented course materials (e.g., course descriptions and syllabi), self-assessment provides a practical way for faculty to examine how their course design decisions may be read and understood by others who rely on documentation alone. A process for supporting this examination is the use of clear self-assessment guidelines, which invite faculty to be their own reviewer of syllabi, course descriptions, and related materials. By adopting the role of a reviewer, faculty attention shifts to how instructional purpose, learning goals, and disciplinary intent are conveyed to readers outside the classroom, while maintaining rigor and high academic standards.

Self-assessment guidelines should include the following elements:

- Review Course Purpose and Learning Outcomes/Objectives
  Review the course syllabus to confirm that learning objectives are clearly stated, discipline-appropriate, and aligned with the academic goals of the program and institution. Ensure that the course catalog is up to date.

- Assess Required Course Materials
  Examine readings, assignments, activities, and assessments to ensure they support the stated learning outcomes and do not require students to adopt, affirm, or comply with specific political, ideological, or belief-based viewpoints. The readings selected and the assignments required should encourage the development of thinking skills—acquiring, analyzing, applying, and generating knowledge. Consider adding lessons, readings, activities or assignments that offer a critique of the theory, method, approach, or product.

- Evaluate Criteria to Evaluate Student Performance
  Confirm that grading and participation criteria evaluate students on academic performance, critical thinking skills, and mastery of course content, rather than on agreement with particular perspectives.

- Distinguish Between Academic Inquiry and Advocacy
  Courses may examine, analyze, critique, and apply a wide range of ideas and frameworks within the discipline. Review the content to ensure that the examination is presented as scholarly inquiry aimed at enhancing students' thinking skills, such as making critical, evidence-based decisions. Review sources of information provided in the course.

- Confirm Opportunities to Engage in Constructively Critical Dialogue
  If courses include discussions, reflections, or experiential learning related to sensitive or contested topics, ensure that student participation allows for intellectual multiplicity and does not compel the disclosure of personal beliefs unnecessarily.

- Document Professional Judgment
  Faculty should confirm, be prepared to explain, and, when needed, document how course content, materials, and pedagogical choices reflect disciplinary standards, faculty expertise, the modern

knowledge landscape, and established academic practices. If programs are accredited, consider referencing the relevant accreditation standards.

Consult as Needed
If questions emerge during the self-assessment process, faculty are encouraged to consult with colleagues, others teaching the course, and/or departmental leadership.

The following checklist is intended to support curriculum review across undergraduate, graduate and professional courses by translating the guidelines above into a self-assessment tool.

Curriculum Review Self-Assessment Checklist
For each item, rate yourself: **Yes / Partially / No / Not Applicable**, and add notes where helpful.

1. Review Course Purpose and Learning Outcomes/Objectives
[ ] There are clearly stated learning objectives.
Notes:
[ ] Learning objectives are discipline appropriate.
Notes:
[ ] When relevant, associated accreditation requirements are clearly included.
Notes:
[ ] Course outcomes align with program-level and institutional goals.
Notes:
[ ] Course content reflects current course catalog.
Notes:
[ ] Readings and/or open access or multimedia resources (e.g., podcasts, videos, journalism) serve a specific learning objective.
Notes:

2. Assess Required Course Materials
[ ] The readings, activities, assignments, and assessments directly support the learning outcomes.
Notes:
[ ] Materials do not require students to adopt or affirm political, ideological, or belief-based viewpoints.
Notes:
[ ] Assignments encourage development of critical thinking skills rather than viewpoint agreement.
Notes:
[ ] Sources have been reviewed to ensure they are scholarly or evidence-based (opinion sources used only when appropriate).
Notes:
[ ] Podcasts, TED Talks, YouTube, journalism, or websites, are intentionally paired with contrasting or varied perspectives where appropriate.
Notes:
[ ] When multiple ideological, theoretical, or methodological frames are included, each should serve the course's learning objectives and reflect disciplinary standards.
Notes:
[ ] Particular outlets, platforms, or creators are used to support the course's learning goals.
Notes:
[ ] Each non-scholarly source was selected because they provide intellectual framing of the topic.
Notes:

3. Evaluate Criteria to Evaluate Student Performance

[] Grading criteria assess students' academic performance and mastery of course content, not their alignment with any particular viewpoint.
Notes:
[] Participation expectations do not penalize students for differing perspectives.
Notes:
[] Grading rubrics are explicitly tied to satisfactory comprehension and application of the course content covered through the date of each assignment.
Notes:
[] Assignments have been reviewed to ensure alignment with curricular expectations.
Notes:
[] Rubrics, expert panels, or similar tools or methods support fairness and consistency in evaluation.
Notes:

4. Distinguish Between Academic Inquiry and Advocacy

[] Frameworks and ideas are used as part of scholarly inquiry, not personal or institutional advocacy.
Notes:
[] Content reflects disciplinary norms for comprehensive analysis.
Notes:
[] Multiple perspectives are considered.
Notes:
[] Where feasible, credible counter-frames or dissenting views are included.
Notes:

5. Confirm Open Opportunities to Engage in Constructively Critical Dialogue

[] When in alignment with the learning objectives, participation in activities involving sensitive or contested topics are voluntary.
Notes:
[] Requiring students to disclose personal beliefs is avoided.
Notes:
[] The instructional approach supports intellectual multiplicity and respectful dialogue.
Notes:
[] Students are encouraged to critique assumptions, omissions, and ideological frames in course materials.
Notes:

6. Document Professional Judgment

[] The rationale for content selection and pedagogical choices should be clearly articulated and justified.
Notes:
[] Decisions reflect disciplinary standards and professional expertise.
Notes:
[] The range of scholarly perspectives represented in my course materials have been considered and a rationale for the selections made can be articulated.
Notes:
[] Including or excluding alternative or dissenting views reflects professional judgment and fits the scope of the course.
Notes:

7. Consult as Needed

[] When questions arise about compliance or academic freedom, advice is sought.
Notes:
[] Feedback is sought when unsure whether curated materials reflect a sufficient range of viewpoints.
Notes:

Post-Evaluation Reflection

After completing this self-evaluation, faculty should use their professional judgment to determine whether their course documentation accurately reflects both their instructional intentions and the way the course is actually conducted. Responses marked "No" or "Partially" should be reviewed to determine whether intent, rationale, or documentation would benefit from further clarification or external feedback. In such instances, it may include revising documentation, refining course descriptions or learning objectives, or consulting with colleagues or departmental and college leadership. This self-evaluation is envisioned to support intentional course review, reduce the risk of misalignment between documentation and instructional practice, and promote alignment with the high academic standards that characterize UH's culture and reputation.