

# An Assessment-Oriented Syllabus Model for Business Courses

**BOBBY CUNNINGHAM**  
**OLU OMOLAYOLE**  
Grambling State University  
Ruston, Louisiana

Very often, sample syllabi are available from fellow instructors if help is needed in creating a course syllabus. In addition, there are a few reference books (Belfiore & Burnaby, 1995; Scarino, Vale, McKay, & Clark, 1988) and publications (Cyrino, 1995; Ellis, 1993; Hammons & Shock, 1994; Hyland & Hyland, 1992; Markee, 1994; Matejka & Kurke, 1994; Newell, 1994; Schwendau, 1995; Sheen, 1994; Smith, 1992; Smith & Razzouk, 1993; Swenson & Souter, 1995; Thor, 1994) for creating a syllabus that is unique to the content of a course. Some syllabi are tailored to certain instructional areas such as (a) English as a second language (Belfiore & Burnaby, 1995; Bay, 1994; Jourdenais, 1994), (b) multicultural instructions (Resnick, 1993), (c) business Japanese (Shibata & Masuyama, 1995), (d) speech communications (Shaver & Shaver, 1995), (e) proficiency in languages (Benucci & Cini, 1991; Cusworth, 1994; Davis, 1995; Denbow, 1994; Wiley, 1995), (f) political communications (Smith, 1992), and (g) internships (Watson, 1992), just to mention a few. Some associations such as Worker's Education Association (Daines, 1994) have their own syllabus model.

It was rather humorous to come across a few unconventional syllabus

**ABSTRACT.** The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), a major accrediting body for business programs in many U.S. colleges and universities, is demanding measurable business program outcome from its client business schools. The AACSB is interested, among other things, in seeing evidence of continuing improvement in the program offered, through program assessment. The foundation of program assessment lies in the development of an assessment-oriented syllabus model for the courses offered in the program. This article presents a syllabus model for an effective business program assessment, with a brief version of a sample syllabus included in the Appendix.

designs during the literature review. It seemed that the syllabi were created to affirm the educational philosophy and belief of the instructors, or that they were created simply to make an academic freedom statement. A few of those were (a) a syllabus as a tool for classroom socialization (Danielson, 1995), (b) a student-determined empowerment course content syllabus (Borus, 1994; Dahlin, 1994; Dorwick, 1995; Luechauer & Shulman, 1993), (c) a free-expression and contemporary-social-issue-oriented syllabus (Barbour, 1995; Proctor, 1994), and (d) a gender-oriented syllabus (Guttman, 1994). In a few cases, syllabi were created based on

models recommended by program accreditation bodies (Ecker, 1994; Weech, 1994) or state and school districts (Robertson, 1995). In those cases, syllabi were used as instruments for monitoring educational programs.

The trend in the colleges and schools of business, especially those doing self-studies with AACSB, is to follow the new guidelines in the AACSB accreditation manual (AACSB, 1994-1995) when designing a program assessment. There is enough flexibility in the guidelines for an institution to create its own model based on its mission, goals, and student population. The main goal is to create a model that could be used on a continuous basis for monitoring quality program improvement (Cornesky & Lazarus, 1995). The foundation of an effective program assessment lies in a general assessment-oriented syllabus model for courses taught in the program. However, the model should be flexible enough so that each instructor could tailor it to his or her courses.

The design considerations for an assessment-oriented syllabus model for the College of Business courses at Grambling State University, Grambling, Louisiana, are presented in the following sections. A brief sample course syllabus created from the model is included in Appendix A.

APPENDIX. Course Syllabus Model, College of Business, Grambling State University

GRAMBLING STATE UNIVERSITY, GRAMBLING  
College of Business  
Department of Computer Information Systems & Office Administration

A Brief Version

CIS 105 - Survey of Computer Usage, 3 Credit Hours  
Semester: Year:

I. INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Class:  
Instructor:  
Conference hours:  
Telephone:  
E-mail address:

II. RESOURCES

*Textbook* Fuller, F., & W. Manning. (1994). *Computers and information processing*, Boyd & Fraser Publishing Company, Danvers, MA 01923.  
*Reference* Parsons, J. J., & D. Oja. (1995). *New perspectives on computer concepts*. Course Technology, Inc. Cambridge, MA 02142.

*Supplementary note*

Omolayole, J. O. (1996). *A computer literacy workbook for CIS 105* (2nd ed.)

*Laboratory (Lab)—CB 335*

1. Microcomputer laboratory (lab), equipped with IBM/compatible PCs and printers.
2. Campus mainframe (VAX 9000: vax000) terminal lab.

*Software*

MS-DOS, MS-Windows, PC keyboarding software, WordPerfect and Lotus 123.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

*Introduction*

The "Survey of Computer Usage" is the first course in computer information system (SCIS). The course is designed primarily to introduce students to computer operations. ETC.

*Why the course is offered*

The course is offered to satisfy the University General Education's computer literacy requirement.

*Prerequisite*

Ability to think and work independently, and cooperate in groups to learn nontrivial computer operations.

*Course objective*

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to use computers for simple applications, have basic knowledge of IS and its social implications, think logically when solving problems, and have self-confidence and self-reliance when working with computers.

*The business program learning-outcomes covered in the course*

1. Literacy in using computers
2. Critical thinking
3. Qualitative reasoning/logic reasoning
4. Sense of computer ethic, security and privacy
5. Problem solving

*Context of business issues discussed in the course*

Ethical, social, legal, regulatory, environmental, technological and diversity

IV. STUDENT ASSESSMENT

*Course competency*

The detailed course objectives will be measured through student assessment. The content of the course is divided into six separate areas. The instructional approach is designed to assist students in developing competency in knowledge and skill in the areas. In order to pass this course (i.e., grade D or better), each student is expected to demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and the needed skills in all the six areas at level 1 or better. Level 1 is the minimum competency level for the course. Failure to demonstrate knowledge and skill at the minimum competency level would result in a grade F for the course. The course competency breakdown in knowledge and skill by area is next, followed by other assessment issues.

*Course Competency Breakdown*

Upon completion of the following topics, students would have, on the average, attained the course's knowledge and skills competency at level 1 or higher.

A. Information systems concept

Topics: Conceptual model of a computer system, information systems (IS), computer-based information systems (CBIS)

Level 1. Name the components of computer-based information systems (CBIS).

Define data, knowledge, information, computer system, information systems (IS).

Level 2. Describe, in your words, a conceptual model of a computer system.

Describe, in your words, the components of CBIS.

Level 3. Sketch and label the conceptual model of a computer system.

Level 4. Analyze the competitive advantages of CBIS for a business organization.

ETC.

*Required course activities and performance's measure*

The level of a student's performance (competency) will be based on accumulated course activity points and it will determine his/her semester grade. The following are the percentage contributions of the activities.

Activity	Contribution to course grade
1. In-class/lab pop quizzes	20%
2. Lab projects	20%
3. Examinations #1, #2, & #3, each 15%	45%
4. Examination #4 (Comprehensive Final)	15%

(appendix continues)



**APPENDIX (Continued)**

The following is the expected scale for the semester grade:

90% _____	A	Level 4 competency
80% _____	B	Level 3 competency
70% _____	C	Level 2 competency
60% _____	D	Level 1 competency
	F	Below level 1 competency

However, the instructor may use a normal curve to adjust the scale of the semester grade, if necessary.

**V. SEMESTER SCHEDULE**

A schedule of the major events on campus during the semester is presented to remind students of important dates. Lecture topics, pop quizzes, exams, and projects are tentatively scheduled to structure the semester coverage of the course.

WEEK	MONDAY DATE	TOPIC/ASSIGNED CHAPTER READINGS FROM TEXTBOOK
1	Date:	Course overview
2	Date:	Conceptual model of a computer system, information systems (IS), computer hardware, microcomputer, major components of a microcomputer/personal computer (PC), computer terminals, input, process, storage and output devices, including peripherals. Textbook chapters 1; 3; 4, pages 102–123; 5, pages 125–141; 6.

(Comment: The rest of the semester schedule is completed like weeks 1 and 2.)

3	Date:	Last day to register or add courses:
4	Date:	
5	Date:	Examination #1 (weeks 1 through 4 activities, excluding laboratory exercises).
6	Date:	
7	Date:	
8	Date:	
9	Date:	Midsemester grades due:
10	Date:	
11	Date:	
12	Date:	
13	Date:	
14	Date:	
15	Date:	
16	Date:	
17	Date:	Comprehensive final examination for graduating seniors: Grades for the graduating seniors are due in the Registrar's Office: Review

18 Date: Comprehensive final examination week for nongraduating seniors (see schedule below).

COMMENCEMENT is:

19 Date: All grades are due:

Final Examination Schedule (1 hour 45 minutes).

Date: Time: Room:

\*\*\*\*\*  
The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus based on course needs. When such changes are made, you will be informed in class.  
\*\*\*\*\*

**VI. APPENDIX**

*Course Management Policies*

*Teaching method*

(Complete the section.)

*Plagiarism*

(Complete this section.)

*Examinations*

(Complete this section.)

*Tracking students' performance*

It is not enough for a student to just attend classes/lab and take part in quizzes, projects, and exams. Formal consultation meetings between students and instructor will be scheduled during the instructor's conference hours or at any other convenient time. Students' progress will be evaluated. Situations that may prevent students from performing at their desired level of competency will be remedied. Each student must maintain a portfolio of all work completed. Portfolios will be kept in the instructor's office to prevent loss. Each portfolio would include all assignments, quizzes, exams, completed projects, and instructor's evaluation of each student's progress after every examination. The portfolio will provide the evidence of a student's performance.

*Class attendance and learning expectation*

Some courses require skill development, which is true of computer-related courses such as CIS 105. About one half of the content of CIS 105 is hands-on computer operations and problem solving using logic. Therefore, it is essential for students to be present in class always when those skills are taught/explained. *If any student missed one third of the class/lab meetings, with/without valid excuses, he/she would not have learned enough to graduate from the course. Such a student would be advised by the instructor to repeat the course, unless the student was performing at level 2 competency (B average) or better.*

*Grade negotiation*

A semester grade is a reflection of a student's academic performance in a course. A request by a student for extra credit work or extra points to make a higher grade is considered grade negotiation. Grade negotiation is detrimental to your academic health and therefore forbidden.

**Planning a Program Assessment**

The first step in planning a program assessment is to obtain a list of the learning outcomes of the degree pro-

gram, defined as the knowledge and skills that students should have acquired by the time they graduate (Rice & Pope, 1990; Swenson & Souter, 1995); these should consist of the university-wide

general education requirements, the education requirements that are specific to the college, and those specific to the major and concentration of the degrees offered (Rice & Pope, 1990).



The list of the university-wide general education requirements is usually available at the office of the vice-president for academic affairs; those specific to the college are derived from the college's mission and goals. For example, because of the demography of our students, "Affording educational opportunities for the students that have been affected by educational, economical, and social deprivations" (GSU-COB, 1994, p. 3) is paramount to the mission of our college of business mission. The educational goals of the college include "Providing knowledge and leadership skills and preparing students for domestic and global employment" (p. 3). One could recognize from the mission and goals that the community and the society at large have a role to play in our degree program outcome. Hence, the expected learning outcomes for graduates, based on Rice & Pope (1990) as a reference, should include (a) effective and responsible interaction in society, (b) ethical and moral principles, (c) value judgments, and (d) awareness of diverse cultures. Similarly, the list of the learning outcomes for the majors or concentrations in the college is derived from the educational goals of the departments that offer the majors and concentrations.

In Table 1, we provide a partial list of the learning outcomes of the degree program of our college. The next task would be to map the degree program courses into the learning outcomes, referred to as a course-outcome matrix.

*Course-Outcome Matrix*

A course-outcome matrix is defined in this article as a row-by-column tabulation of courses and learning outcomes (see Table 2 for an example). A course-outcome matrix of a college program would help determine how much of the knowledge and skills in a learning outcome is taught in each course, as well as the sequence in which the courses should be taken. Because of space limitations, we have selected a few courses from our computer information system (CIS) major to demonstrate how a course-outcome matrix analysis could be used.

Let the elements T, C, and U of the course-outcome matrix represent the

**TABLE 1. The List of the Learning-Outcomes for the College Program**

- University-wide general education requirements*
1. Literacy in
    - i. reading
    - ii. writing
    - iii. speaking
    - iv. using computers
  2. Critical thinking
  3. Active learning
  4. Quantitative and qualitative reasoning
  5. Independent acquisition of knowledge/research
  6. Intuitive and imaginative processes
- Educational requirements that are specific to the College of Business*
7. Effective and responsible interaction in society
  8. Ethical and moral principles
  9. Value judgments
  10. Awareness of diverse cultures
- Educational requirements that are specific to college majors/concentrations*  
(Not included due to lack of space)

**TABLE 2. A Course-Outcome Matrix Example for a Few CIS Courses for a Degree Program in the College of Business**

Courses	Learning outcomes					
	i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi
CIS 105 Survey of Computer Usage	T	T	T	T	T	-
CIS 201 Microcomputer Applications for Business	C	C	-	C	-	-
CIS 302 Problem Solving	U	U	C	U	C	-
CIS 303 Business Programming Using Cobol	U	U	U	U	U	T

Learning-outcomes notation: i = Literacy in using computers; ii = Critical thinking; iii = Qualitative reasoning/Logic reasoning; iv = Sense for computer ethics, security, and privacy; v = Problem solving; vi = Computer programs development using COBOL language. Course function notations: T = The course teaches the foundation of the knowledge/skills required for the learning-outcome. C = The course completes the teaching of the knowledge/skills required for the learning outcome. U = The course uses the knowledge/skills of the learning outcome that students already acquired in course(s) taken previously. - = No notation.

characteristics of a learning outcome (Swenson & Souter, 1995). T means that the course teaches the required knowledge and skills of the learning outcome. C means that the course completes the teaching of the required knowledge and skills of the learning outcome, and U means that the required knowledge and skills of the learning outcome, which students already acquired in courses taken previously, are used. Hence, in sequencing the courses, the Ts are taken before the Cs, and the Cs are taken before the Us. In Table 2 we show how the learning outcomes are covered in each of the listed courses. "Covered" is used here to mean "the knowledge and skills of learning outcome(s) are taught." Through heuris-

tics, it is obvious that CIS 105 should be taken first, because the knowledge and skills needed to complete (or used in) learning outcomes i through v in CIS 201, CIS 302, and CIS 303 are first taught in CIS 105. CIS 105 is followed by CIS 201, because the knowledge and skills of learning outcomes i, ii, and iv are completed in CIS 201. The learning outcomes i, ii, and iv that are completed in CIS 201 are used in CIS 302, and the learning outcomes iii and v, first taught in CIS 105, are completed in CIS 302. This implies that CIS 105 and CIS 201 should be taken before CIS 302. Therefore, CIS 302 should be taken after CIS 201. The learning outcomes iii and v that are completed in CIS 302 are used in CIS 303. Therefore, CIS 303 should





be taken after CIS 302. In summary, the information in Table 2 shows that the listed courses should be taken in the following sequence: CIS 105, CIS 201, CIS 302, and CIS 303, as indicated by the numbering system of the courses.

### Course-Business Context Matrix

The AACSB guidelines (AACSB, 1994) require that a business college program should provide ethical, global, political, social, legal, regulatory, environmental, technological, and diversity issues that form the context of business in the courses offered in the program. The course-business context matrix, as illustrated in Table 3, shows the courses in which the issues are discussed.

For simplicity, the courses in Table 2 are used in Table 3. One can observe from Table 3 that all the context-of-business issues are discussed in the listed courses except for global and political issues. However, the global and political issues are discussed in the rest of the CIS courses that are not listed in Table 3. It is very important to include a statement in a course syllabus about the context-of-business issues discussed in the course. See the CIS 105 syllabus example in Appendix A.

The next task is to develop course competencies for the learning outcomes of each of the courses in the course-outcome matrix.

### Developing Course Competencies

Competencies are detailed learning objectives of the learning outcomes.

Purdey (1992) developed a competency model that included *beginning*, *developing*, and *exit* competencies, referring to knowledge and skills that students should have acquired before the *beginning* of the course, that students would *develop* during the course, and that students should have acquired by the end (*exit*) of the course. Though it would suffice to use the exit competencies only in the course syllabus, to adequately measure the students' competencies, it is advisable to include expected levels of performance for each competency statement.

Based on Bloom's classification of cognitive skills (Bloom, 1956), the following knowledge and skill levels of competency for the detailed objectives of a learning outcome are recommended:

Level 1. Recall knowledge (rote memory).

Level 2. Comprehension (ability to grasp conceptual ideas).

Level 3. Application (problem solving or situational assessment).

Level 4. Analysis (contrast and compare ideas/factual information).

Level 5. Synthesis (bringing different ideas together).

Level 6. Evaluation (judgment).

Levels 1 through 4 and 1 through 6 are recommended for undergraduate and graduate courses, respectively.

Regarding Table 2, the following is an example of how to write competency level statements for "Literacy in com-

puters." Let us consider "computer-based information systems" (CBIS). CBIS is one of the detailed objectives of CIS 105's learning outcome, "Literacy in computers." The following are sample statements of competency levels:

Upon completion of the following topic, students would have attained the topic's knowledge and skills competency at level 1 or higher.

Topic: Computer-based Information Systems (CBIS).

Level 1. Name the components of the CBIS.

Level 2. Explain, in your words, the role of CBIS in a business organization.

Level 3. Sketch a business organizational model showing the levels of management, and indicate the type of CBIS used at which level.

Level 4. Analyze the competitive advantages of CBIS for a business organization.

When assessing students' performance, one could easily correlate levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 to course grades D, C, B, and A. This implies that a student would receive a grade F if his or her performance is lower than level 1 competency. However, it should be emphasized that the students' competency assessment should be at the discretion of the instructor teaching the course.

### Course Assessment Instrument

A course assessment instrument could be qualitative (student survey, student interview, student portfolio, or any non-test-based assessment instrument) or quantitative (test-based assessment instrument). The pros and cons relating to qualitative and quantitative course assessment instruments and other assessment issues are thoroughly discussed in Goetz & LeCompte (1989), Hollandsworth (1992), and Strong (1995). We recommend using both instruments. It is easier to give letter grades to students through a quantitative assessment instrument than a qualitative one. A quantitative instrument allows a student to see his or her areas of weakness in a course (Wolfgang & Plake, 1994). A qualitative instrument would provide the instructor or a stakeholder

APPENDIX (Continued)	
The following is the expected scale for the semester grade:	
90%	A Level 4 competency
80%	B Level 3 competency
70%	C Level 2 competency
60%	D Level 1 competency
	F Below level 1 competency
However, the instructor may use a normal curve to adjust the scale of the semester grade, if necessary.	
V. SEMESTER SCHEDULE	
A schedule of the major events on campus during the semester is presented to remind students of important dates. Lecture topics, pop quizzes, exams, and projects are tentatively scheduled to structure the semester coverage of the course.	
WEEK	MONDAY DATE TOPIC/ASSIGNED CHAPTER READINGS FROM TEXTBOOK
1	Date: Course overview
2	Date: Conceptual model of a computer system, information systems (IS), computer hardware, microcomputer, major components of a microcomputer/personal computer (PC), computer terminals, input, process, storage and output devices, including peripherals. Textbook chapters 1; 3; 4, pages 102-123; 5, pages 125-141; 6.
(Comment: The rest of the semester schedule is completed like weeks 1 and 2.)	
3	Date: Last day to register or add courses:
4	Date:
5	Date: Examination #1 (weeks 1 through 4 activities, excluding laboratory exercises).
6	Date:
7	Date:
8	Date: Midsemester grades due:
9	Date:
10	Date:
11	Date:
12	Date:
13	Date:
14	Date:
15	Date:
16	Date:
17	Date: Comprehensive final examination for graduating seniors. Grades for the graduating seniors are due in the Registrar's Office. Review.
18	Date: Comprehensive final examination week for nongraduating seniors (see schedule below).
COMMENCEMENT IS:	
19	Date: All grades are due:
Final Examination Schedule (1 hour 45 minutes).	
Date:	Time: Room:
*****	
The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus based on course needs. When such changes are made, you will be informed in class.	
*****	
VI. APPENDIX	
Course Management Policies	
Teaching method (Complete the section.)	
Plagiarism (Complete this section.)	
Examinations (Complete this section.)	
Tracking students' performance It is not enough for a student to just attend classes/lab and take part in quizzes, projects, and exams. Formal consultation meetings between students and instructor will be scheduled during the instructor's conference hours or at any other convenient time. Students' progress will be evaluated. Situations that may prevent students from performing at their desired level of competency will be remedied. Each student must maintain a portfolio of all work completed. Portfolios will be kept in the instructor's office to prevent loss. Each portfolio would include all assignments, quizzes, exams, completed projects, and instructor's evaluation of each student's progress after every examination. The portfolio will provide the evidence of a student's performance.	
Class attendance and learning expectation Some courses require skill development, which is true of computer-related courses such as CIS 105. About one half of the content of CIS 105 is hands-on computer operations and problem solving using logic. Therefore, it is essential for students to be present in class always when those skills are taught/explained. <i>If any student missed one third of the class/lab meetings, with/without valid excuses, he/she would not have learned enough to graduate from the course. Such a student would be advised by the instructor to repeat the course, unless the student was performing at level 2 competency (B average) or better.</i>	
Grade negotiation A semester grade is a reflection of a student's academic performance in a course. A request by a student for extra credit work or extra points to make a higher grade is considered grade negotiation. Grade negotiation is detrimental to your academic health and therefore forbidden.	

with an assessment of the quality of the course instruction (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strong, 1995). Hence, the two types of course assessment instrument complement each other, if the goal of the course assessment is to have a thorough analysis of the value that the course brings to the program.

### The Syllabus Model Design

An assessment-oriented syllabus for a business course should include the sections presented in Appendix A. The header includes such information as the name of the institution, department, school term, course name, and so forth (see Appendix A). Following the instructor's information, the resource section, besides listing the required textbooks and the reference materials, is the appropriate place to list the laboratory resources, computer hardware and software, diskettes, manuals, and the location of the laboratory, where applicable. The audio/visual aids that would be used for instructions are also listed.

The results of the course assessment planning for the particular course are included in the instructional design section. It should include the appropriate learning outcomes in the course-outcome matrix that the course will provide and the context-of-business issues discussed in the course. This section is mainly for administrative purposes.

The headings A, B, C, and so forth, in

the student assessment section, may be used to number the course content areas. The technique that would be used in evaluating the competency levels should be stated here (see Table 4 for further guidelines for detailing objectives of the learning outcomes). Also, the course assessment instruments that would be used to assess the course by the end of the school term should be explained.

The semester schedule reminds students of important dates and events. Lecture topics, pop quizzes, exams, and projects are tentatively scheduled to structure the semester coverage of the course. This section is usually useful to students when they plan their studies for the whole school term.

The Appendix usually consists of the instructor's classroom management philosophy and policies, such as class attendance, plagiarism statements, and so forth. However, it is optional.

### Conclusion and Future Research

The idea of an assessment-oriented syllabus model for business courses was a result of our preparation for the AACSB accreditation at Grambling State University. It was the desire of the business college at the university to create a syllabus model that could be used by an instructor to develop a syllabus for any course offered by the college. Each course syllabus was to include learning outcomes from which the

degree program assessment tools could easily be developed.

In the process of developing the model, we found out that the course-outcome matrix was particularly helpful in eliminating unnecessary duplication of knowledge and skills taught at the foundation level in many of the courses offered. The course-business context matrix was instrumental in sequencing the courses for the degree program in such a way that students' learning is more progressive than before.

The next step in our research would be to collect data from students and instructors to test the instructional effectiveness of the syllabus model.

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**TABLE 4. Student Assessment Section of Syllabus Model**

#### *Course Competency Breakdown*

Upon completion of the following topics, students would have, on the average, attained the course's knowledge and skills competency at level 1 or higher.

#### A. Course content area.

Area topics: {These are the detailed objectives of the learning-outcomes.}

Level 1. {A few action verbs for making a competency statement for the level are: define, list, recall, record, and relate.}

Level 2. {A few action verbs for making a competency statement for the level are: describe in your words, discuss, identify, explain, report, and review.}

Level 3. {A few action verbs for making a competency statement for the level are: show, apply, interpret, sketch, illustrate, translate, and demonstrate.}

Level 4. {A few action verbs for making a competency statement for the level are: relate, debate, compare, contrast, analyze, examine, criticize, differentiate, distinguish, and calculate.}

*Required course activities and performance's measure*

- ing English in the Two-Year College, 21(1), 27-32.
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