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## ILLINOIS ARTICULATION INITIATIVE

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*To Facilitate Interinstitutional Transfer*



**Illinois Board  
of Higher Education**

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### Memo

To: IAI GECC and Major Panel Members

From: Malinda Aiello, State Director, Illinois Articulation Initiative,  
Justin Bradley, Illinois Board of Higher Education  
Brian Messner and Patrick Moore, Illinois Community College Board

CC: IAI Steering Panel  
Krista Jackson, Illinois Articulation Initiative

Date: September 30, 2025

Re: Guidance re. IAI Course Review & Weekly Topical Outlines

In recent panel review seasons, a growing trend of inconsistency and disagreement has emerged regarding the level of detail required in weekly topical outlines. As a result, an increasing number of courses have been returned solely for additional information in this section. This issue has become a significant source of frustration for institutional course submitters, campus faculty, IAI panel members, and IAI leadership alike. To address this concern, the IAI Leadership Team is issuing this guidance memo and is also developing training materials to support both new panel member onboarding and ongoing training for current members involved in the course review process.

The IAI Leadership Team understands and supports each panel wanting consistency in course decisions on submitted courses. Accordingly, forthcoming training materials will restate what constitutes approval with a note vs. conditional approval decisions, as well as not enough information and return decisions. Leadership may also work with panels to determine a common understanding of how many issues are

found within a submitted syllabus qualify for each of the course decision options. The primary goals of this work are to provide clarity to panel members reviewing courses and reduce the impression of panel overreach by institutional faculty and academic officers.

Going forward across all panels, the detailed weekly topical outline must continue to go beyond chapter numbers and titles but shall also include subtopics being taught each week. This may be done using a few bullet points or a couple of sentences. **The requirement to embed assignments and readings within the weekly outline is no longer mandatory, provided that this information is clearly presented elsewhere in the syllabus.** Exceptions to this policy may be requested by any panel by providing clear rationale to the IAI Steering Panel for consideration at their next regularly scheduled meeting.

### **Guiding Principles**

While there are nuances to the course review process, please keep in mind the following reminders (in no particular order):

- Panels are tasked with reviewing courses for IAI code approval based on their transferability and comparability to the IAI descriptor—not for identical content.
- Panels review courses for content and alignment with the IAI descriptor.
- Panels shall avoid being too prescriptive or restrictive for faculty teaching IAI-approved courses. IAI also cannot dictate how an institution's syllabus must be structured.
- Institutions are required to submit a representative instructor syllabus. While they may also submit a master syllabus in some cases, this practice is not encouraged as discrepancies between the representative instructor syllabus and the master syllabus may indicate content drift or a failure to update the master syllabus appropriately.
- The submitted syllabus serves as a representation of the instruction to be delivered at the institution; therefore, panels must place trust in the institution's integrity.
- The IAI course review process should take a holistic approach, considering the entire syllabus along with any additional documentation submitted by the institution. While certain components are required and must be clearly stated in the submitted syllabus, other elements may be used to provide clarity regarding the content covered.
- The purpose of the weekly outline is to demonstrate the context in which the required topics from the IAI course descriptor are being taught. It is not intended to serve as a comprehensive list of all content or activities included in the course. In the spirit of the course review process, panel members should ask themselves: "Does the outline address all required topics listed in the descriptor?" Inclusion of every possible subtopic is not necessary unless specifically required by the descriptor.
- In keeping with the spirit of the IAI course review process, the items listed in a panel's course approval criteria are intended to serve as guidance for members and to allow for appropriate flexibility during the course review and decision-making process.

IAI is successful and nationally recognized because it is a faculty-driven process. The IAI Leadership Team greatly appreciates the time and attention that all panel members invest in the course review process, both in pre-meeting voting and within the panel meetings.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these important matters!