The purpose of the course description is to provide readers with a concise explanation of the content of a course. The following guidelines have been developed in consultation with the Registrar’s Office to help facilitate the development of effective course descriptions and to establish principles to ensure uniformity in the USF catalog:

1. Use **300 characters or less**; when course descriptions are migrated from Banner to the General Catalog, only the first 300 characters appear on the course description page. Although viewers are able to see the entire course description after clicking on the course title; the full course description will display in the catalog (without clicking) only if it less than 300 characters in length.

2. In general, proceed from the general to the specific in a course description. First describe the broader concepts and move into specific topics at the conclusion of the description.

3. Keep the description focused on the content of the course only. Include only what the course will cover; do not indicate what the course may cover. As such, avoid using sentences that begin with “Topics may include..."

4. Do not include pre/co-requisites and/or other restrictions in the course description. These are listed elsewhere in the catalog and often change, leaving inconsistencies between what is listed in Banner and what is listed in the course description.

5. Avoid rhetorical questions and discipline-specific wording that may be confusing to prospective students.
6. Do not include information that may change over time such as textbooks, software packages, references to specific social media sites, etc. For instance, ten years ago, references to social media may have included Myspace. Today, this would be outdated and in ten years, Facebook may no longer be relevant.

7. Do not include information that would be included in advising such as “This course is great for students who are considering a career in magical potions.”

8. Write in the present tense (i.e., Students learn to cast spells...).

9. Double check that the description is grammatically correct and does not contain spelling errors. An easy way to do this is to cut and paste the course description into Microsoft Word (or another word processing program) and select “Tools” then “Spelling and Grammar”.

Example of an effective course description:
HIST 100: Harry Potter and Magic
In this introductory course, students learn about the history of magic in Great Britain through the 18th century. Political, social, and religious history are covered. Special emphasis will be placed on Voldemort’s rise to power during the Black Magic Decade.