

**Course Outline**

**COURSE:** JLE 270                      **DIVISION:** 50                      **ALSO LISTED AS:**

**TERM EFFECTIVE:** Fall 2021                      **CURRICULUM APPROVAL DATE:** 12/8/2020

**SHORT TITLE:** REPORT WRITING UPDATE

**LONG TITLE:** Law Enforcement Report Writing Update

<u>Units</u>	<u>Number of Weeks</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Contact Hours/Week</u>	<u>Total Contact Hours</u>
.5	18	Lecture:	.22	3.96
		Lab:	.67	12.06
		Other:	0	0
		Total:	.89	16.02

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will update attendees in current procedures for created solid police reports and the vital role in the day-to-day functioning of an agency or institution. The facts and actions in reports will include attest to your profession, provide data for statistical studies, help justify an arrest or disciplinary action, testify that you are following legal guidelines and provide vital clues in cases. **PREREQUISITE:** JLE 100; Basic Police Academy

**PREREQUISITES:**

JLE 100

**COREQUISITES:**

**CREDIT STATUS:** D - Credit - Degree Applicable

**GRADING MODES**

P - Pass/No Pass

**REPEATABILITY:** N - Course may not be repeated

**SCHEDULE TYPES:**

- 02 - Lecture and/or discussion
- 03 - Lecture/Laboratory
- 04 - Laboratory/Studio/Activity

## **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

By the end of this course, a student should:

1. Students will identify properly written police reports making sure they have been written with accuracy, objectivity and include a step-by-step account of the events that occurred, and details about the people and places involved.

## **CONTENT, STUDENT PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES, OUT-OF-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

CURRICULUM APPROVAL DATE: 12/8/2020

Lecture Content:

- I. ORIENTATION AND REGISTRATION 1 HOUR
  - A. Pre-test to help identify the requirements for a criminal justice report.
  - B. Warm-up activity (Ungraded in-class writing)
    1. Class will be partnered up for interview and introduction of one another.
    2. Free write and identify challenges officers may face while putting together a report (this will be turned in to instructor).
- II. WHY IS REPORT WRITING IMPORTANT - (Chapter 1) 1 HOUR
  - A. Police reports play a vital role in the day-to-day functioning of an agency or institution. The facts and actions in reports will:
    1. Attest to your profession
    2. Provide data for statistical studies
    3. Help justify an arrest or disciplinary action
    4. Testify that you are following legal guidelines
    5. Provide vital clues
  - B. General Definition - -a document on a departmental form and kept as a record. - All reports must be:
    1. Clear
    2. Accurate
    3. Concise
    4. Factual
    5. Complete
    6. Objective - no personal opinions unless that opinion is professional and called upon for the furtherance of the investigation.
  - C. Uses and Purposes:

Learning Activity: Open discussion regarding the use and purpose of the following types of reports and how they adhere to the above definition. The discussion should minimally cover:

    1. Criminal Investigations - for ultimately filing criminal complaints or not.
    2. Statistical Data - for crime analysis, trends, locations, and M.O.
    3. Documentation
    4. Reference
    5. Media
    6. Discuss who uses the reports & the audience
- D. Potential readers of a report:
  1. Supervisors
  2. Reporters
  3. Judges
  4. District Attorneys
  5. Defense Attorneys
  6. Family members

- 7. Community leaders
- 8. Researchers
- 9. Government officials

III. COMMON MISTAKES IN POLICE REPORTS 1 HOUR

Learning Activity: After a review of the 10 common mistakes made while preparing police reports, students will be given in-class quizzes to assess their use and understanding of the following:

- A. Use of periods and commas
- B. Jargon
- C. Passive voice
- D. Misusing capital letters
- E. Misspelling common words
- F. Omitting results of an investigation
- G. When to use a period instead of a comma
- H. Unnecessary words
- I. Use of vague generalizations versus facts
- J. Making assumptions
- K. Fragmented sentences (Chapter 14)
- L. Run on sentences (Chapter 15)

IV. OVERVIEW OF REPORT WRITING (Chapter 2) 1 HOUR

Learning Activity: Using what they have learned from this chapter, students will evaluate a paragraph from a police report

- A. All reports share common features, and all require these same qualities:
  - 1. Accuracy, Brevity, and completeness
  - 2. Objectivity
  - 3. A step-by-step account of the events that occurred
  - 4. Details about the people and places involved
- B. A closer look at two sample reports
  - 1. Report for a Police Department
  - 2. Report for a Correctional Institution
- C. The stages of Report Writing
  - 1. Preparation
  - 2. Drafting
  - 3. Revising
- D. Underestimated challenges officers face when preparing a police report:
  - 1. Blending two sets of stories
  - 2. Accurately recalling and recording what parties tell you
  - 3. Sifting through conflicting accounts
  - 4. Select the information needed for follow-up investigation
  - 5. Eliminate bias and emotion from your account
  - 6. Justify your actions
  - 7. Build a strong case for prosecution and conviction

LAB CONTENT:

V. TYPES OF REPORTS (Chapter 6) 1 HOUR

Learning Activity: Groups will name the various types of reports they are familiar with which will be added to a master list at the front of the room.

- A. List should include:
  - 1. Arrest
  - 2. Crime

3. Evidence
4. Incident
5. Activity
6. Memorandum
7. Supplemental
8. Specific (narcotics intoxication, traffic accident)

B. Despite their variety, reports can generally be classified into four types. When students familiarize themselves with these types of reports with the help of a rubric, they'll have a mental outline from which to use when writing reports. A closer look at the Four Types of police reports:

1. Officer records information, no action taken.
2. Officers records information and takes action.
3. Officer becomes involved in an incident
4. Officer self-initiates the activity

#### VI. PREPARING TO WRITE A POLICE REPORT (Chapter 3) 1 HOUR

Learning Activity: After review of this chapter, students will take a brief in-class quiz (exercise 3) to assess their understanding of report preparation.

- A. Important guidelines to follow as you prepare to write:
1. Be prepared to take notes
  2. Think about categories
  3. Think about the type of report you'll be writing
  4. Train yourself to observe
  5. Record your information promptly, accurately, and thoroughly
- B. Things to consider when documenting interviews of witnesses, suspects and victims.
1. Emotions
  2. Privacy
  3. Hearsay
  4. Use of quotations marks
  5. Downfall of relying on your memory
  6. Asking for explanation and clarification

#### VII. ORGANIZING A REPORT (Chapter 4)

Students will gain an understanding that police reports, can be challenging to organize. A good report is actually a combination of many groups of information to include the following.

- A. Simplifying the organizational process by training yourself to think in 6 broad categories:
1. Officer (you)
  2. Victims
  3. Witnesses
  4. Suspects
  5. Evidence
  6. Disposition
- B. Answering the 5 W's of a police report;
1. When or how did you get involved? (dispatched/observed or citizen reporter)
  2. Where were you ? does it matter?
  3. What did you observe first?
  4. Who was where?
  5. Why is generally not an issue unless it is important to motives or M.O.
- C. What steps were taken and in what order?
1. Chronological Order - most used
  2. Walk yourself back through it
  3. Other methodologies -

D. What Needs to be Done?

1. If you have recounted the event and your actions, then this is all that's left to address.
2. Examples of a disposition (a.k.a. closing the report)

(Detectives, forward to D.A. documentation only etc.)

VIII. NOTE TAKING

3 HOURS

A. Brief Notations

1. Legible
2. Understandable
3. Consistent with the report
4. Might become a -permanent - note/record.

B. List the types of information that might be included in a note - easel exercise for open discussion.

1. Brief outline form
2. Sketch
3. Taping (remember to pre-title, date/time, names on the recording)

C. Learning Activity: Students will watch a scene (video or role play) and take notes as practice.

IX. INTERVIEWING

Learning Activity: Students pair-up and interview one another for a report. (each student tells a story to the other - from waking up in the morning to classroom arrival).

A. This report needs to include:

1. Name
2. Address
3. General physical description within police policy
4. The story

B. The Normal F.I.

C. Boxes in the Report - where to put the information

1. Making sure there are no -blanks or misses -
2. The use of -N/A -

D. Discussion of how you interviewed (method of evaluation)

1. Ask and listen
2. Q and A
3. Recheck the information - as you go or afterward
4. Verbal and non-verbal responses. (Interviewing Cont.) Non-verbal gestures/facial expression/body language - (sweats, jumpy, etc.) can be important. Differs with the method of the interview - example the telephone interview, written response then Q & A, etc.)

E. Learning Activity: video scenario and writing exercise - After watching a short video scene, half of the class will interview the other as a -witness - to the action. Students will reverse role for interviewer and witness, and view a different scene (repeat the exercise).

The outcomes should include:

1. Accurate description of the action
2. Accurate description of the perpetrator
3. Scene description (buildings/cars/fields etc.)
4. May be handwritten (in black ink) or prepared using computer.

F. Method of Evaluation: Students will turn in their written work and instructor will provide feedback on the morning of day 2.

DAY 2

X. REVIEW OF LESSONS FROM DAY 1

1 HOUR

Instructor will go over lessons from day 1 and return papers with constructive feedback and tips on how to improve note taking and interviews. Students will incorporate this feedback in their final report at the end of day 2.

XI. WRITING A REPORT (Chapter 5)

2 HOURS

Learning Activity: Using information learned from the previous lessons, students will take part in a writing exercise after watching a brief video scenario. Consideration will be given for how to include the following in a report:

- A. How and when to properly use a person's name
- B. Starting the narrative
- C. Benefits of using separate paragraphs
- D. When to use bullets in a narrative

## XII. WHAT TO OMIT FROM A REPORT (Chapter 8)

Learning Activity: Following this lesson, the group will be asked to use the guidelines from this chapter and rewrite 6 excerpts from police reports. Students will also learn the difference between a passive and active voice and why an active voice is more appropriate in a report. The following will also be excluded from a report:

- A. Opinions
- B. Conclusions
- C. Generalizations
- D. Hunches
- E. Insensitivity
- F. Jargon (cop talk)
- G. Unnecessary Repetition

## XIII. QUOTING EXACT WORDS (Chapter 9)

Students will learn to define the three principles for quoting a witness or suspect and how and when to properly use quotation marks.

## XIV. BULLET STYLE (Chapter 11)

Students will learn that bullets are an efficient and readable way to organize groups of facts. Lists in bullet form are especially useful in criminal justice reports. Students will compare a traditional paragraph in conventional sentence style to one presented in bullet style

## XV. REPORT NARRATIVE

1 HOUR

- A. Narrative should be or have:
  - 1. Factual Information
  - 2. Concise (length of report and style)
  - 3. Accurate to the -story -

## XVI. SPECIAL AREAS OF THE POLICE REPORT

- A. Evidence Reports
  - 1. Must be incorporated in report narrative
  - 2. Clarity and consistency are crucial.
    - a. When located?
    - b. Who located?
    - c. What it is? (description)
    - d. How Recovered?
    - e. How Packaged?
    - f. Where stored?
    - g. How Marked?
  - 3. Counting of US currency requires two people for accountability (Follow your department policy)
  - 4. Chain of Custody issues
  - 5. Photographs (How many? Of what? By who?)

## XVII. FINAL REPORT

2 HOURS

Learning Activity: Deliver one video incident to half the class and have them prepare a report.

- A. Dismiss half of the students. Remaining students take notes and complete a report. Viewing students present their written report to the students not viewing the video. Non-viewing students read the report and watch the video. Those students critique the written report documenting missing information and inaccuracies. Students talk about what they envisioned from reading the report and what the video actually showed. Note - Both groups view different videos and write their reports at the same time.
- B. Students writing the same report work in small groups to discuss their note taking styles. Facilitate a discussion of different note taking styles.
- C. Methods of Evaluation-final discussions and narratives to be evaluated by POST approved instructor using POST standards.

XVIII. CLASS WRAP UP AND EVALUATION

1 HOUR

- A. Delivery of Post-test to compare with Pre-test results.
- B. Ask for one-thing learned from the two-day course
- C. Verbal critique of class
- D. Instructor critique to be handed out

**METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:**

Lecture / Lab

**OUT OF CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:**

Required Outside Hours: 8

Assignment Description:

Reading assignments from textbook.

**METHODS OF EVALUATION:**

Writing assignments

Percent of total grade: 80.00 %

Students will complete written reports and final discussions and narratives to be evaluated by POST approved instructor using POST standards.

Problem-solving assignments

Percent of total grade: 20.00 %

Class exercises on interview techniques to be evaluated by instructor.

**REPRESENTATIVE TEXTBOOKS:**

Criminal Justice Report Writing lab manual . Instructor handout,2020.

Reading Level of Text, Grade: 12

Dr. Jean Reynolds. Criminal Justice Report Writing. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform,2019.

ISBN: 978-1470164454

Reading Level of Text, Grade: 12

**ARTICULATION and CERTIFICATE INFORMATION**

Associate Degree:

CSU GE:

IGETC:

CSU TRANSFER:

Transferable CSU, effective 202170

UC TRANSFER:

Not Transferable

**SUPPLEMENTAL DATA:**

Basic Skills: N

Classification: Y

Noncredit Category: Y

Cooperative Education: N

Program Status: 1 Program Applicable

Special Class Status: N

CAN:

CAN Sequence:

CSU Crosswalk Course Department:

CSU Crosswalk Course Number:

Prior to College Level: Y

Non Credit Enhanced Funding: N

Funding Agency Code: Y

In-Service: N

Occupational Course: C

Maximum Hours:

Minimum Hours:

Course Control Number: CCC000621295

Sports/Physical Education Course: N

Taxonomy of Program: 210500