

Sophia Course Rigor FAQ

■ How does Sophia design courses?

Sophia's course design process is closely aligned with ACE's guidelines and best practices. We use the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model, a variation of the Wiggins and McTighe Backward Design process, and Bloom's taxonomy to develop each course. This process includes the following:



1. **Benchmark:** Identify equivalent courses from higher education institutions and other providers to establish common curriculum expectations to ensure courses are transferable to a wide range of institutions.



2. **Assessment:** Design a combination of expert-graded written assessments and automatically graded assessments appropriate to the course curriculum.



3. **Instruction:** Create course materials and formative assessment designed to prepare students for success on summative assessments.



4. **Production:** Complete quality assurance and technical course build.



5. **Review:** Submit to ACE for credit recommendation review, revising until the credit recommendations are approved.

Who develops Sophia courses and how are they reviewed?

Most Sophia subject matter experts are doctoral degree holders. They create the course in collaboration with instructional designers. Course reviewers hold either a doctoral degree or master's degree with teaching experience.

Review process:

- **Step 1:**
Sophia subject matter experts review each other's contributions as part of the development process.
- **Step 2:**
American Council on Education faculty reviewers independently review Sophia courses and determine if they will be recommended for credit, the number of credits, and the subject area.
- **Step 3:**
DEAC faculty reviewers evaluate Sophia courses as part of Approved Quality Curriculum program.
- **Step 4:**
Faculty members of partner institutions and prospective partner institutions review Sophia courses to determine whether they will be mapped for credit at their institution and for what courses they are equivalent.

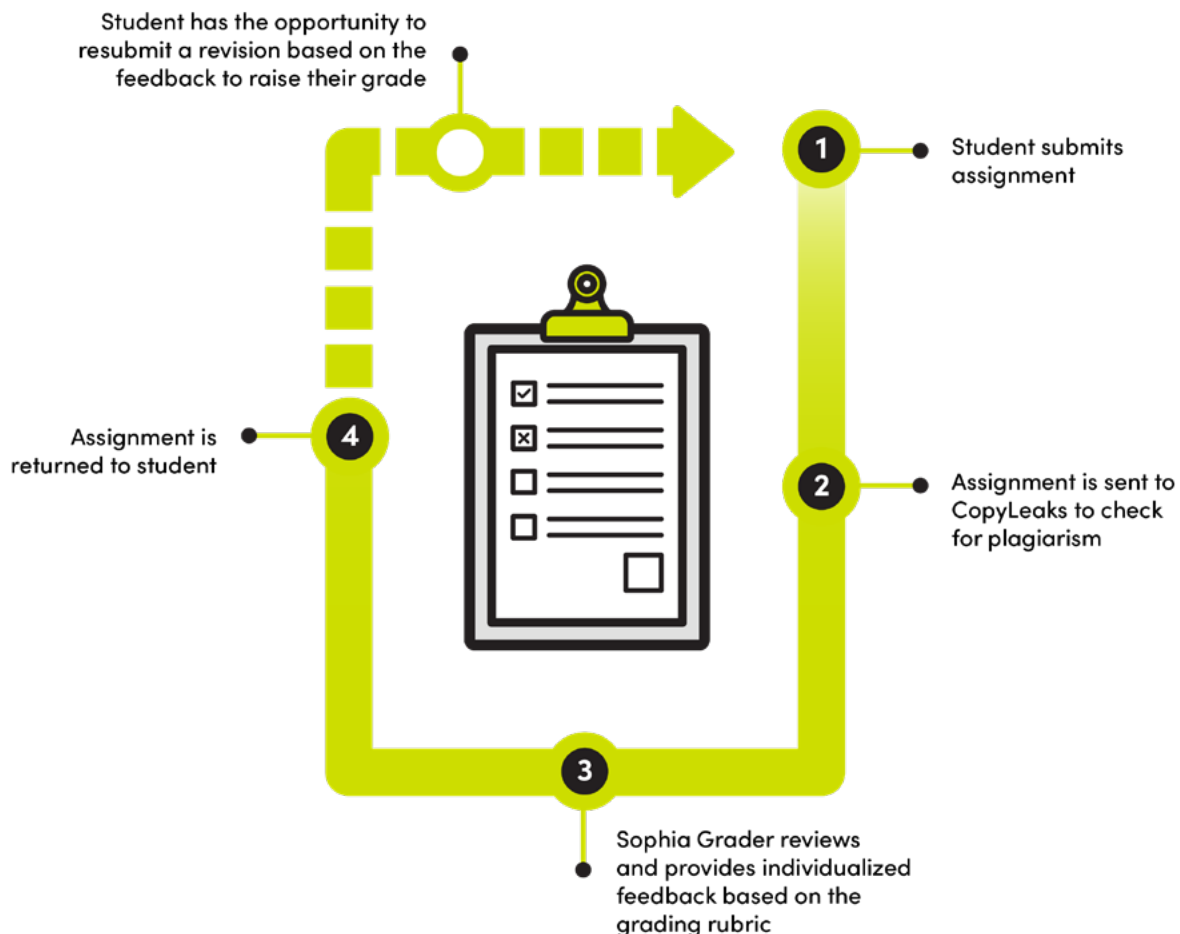


How is learning assessed? How are assignments graded?

Sophia offers 60+ courses with a similar user interface. Many courses are designed using a problem-based learning model that incorporates theoretical and practical scenarios with the following assessments:

- **Challenges:**
Formative assessments with five to 10 multiple-choice questions focused on the real-world application of concepts.
- **Milestones:**
Summative assessments with 20 to 30 questions to test mastery of the course concepts.
- **Touchstones:**
Project-based or written assessments that help students apply the mastery of concepts to a real-world problem.

Each Touchstone has a project-based deliverable that is evaluated by expert graders. All other grading is automated. Additionally, Sophia offers science lab courses that include Activities in the Labster learning environment. Sophia's science lab courses are designed to be used with the accompanying lecture course, creating a robust investigation and journey into the natural sciences.



What are the backgrounds and credentials of Sophia graders?

Nearly all Sophia Graders hold a master's or doctoral degree in a relevant field, and most have a teaching background in higher education.

Does Sophia offer pretests so students can bypass content previously mastered?

We don't do a diagnostic assessment at the start of the course or unit, but students with prior knowledge or a natural aptitude for the content will be able to move through the course quickly. Because the courses are competency based, students with prior knowledge on the subject can save time on the course concepts they're comfortable with.

Approximately half of our classes have rubric based assessments and half are exam-based. All our courses contain formative assessments to help students understand their readiness. The mix of assessment types is based on the norm for the specific course in U.S. higher education and is designed in collaboration with American Council on Education reviewers and practices.

Is there a minimum timeframe for students to register and complete the course?

Sophia courses are self-paced with no minimum timeframe for students to register and complete them. As long as their membership is active, students can work through the course for as long as they want.



Do you allow students to withdraw from a course? Do you issue Ws?

Students can drop and re-enroll in Sophia courses at will. Upon re-enrollment, they must begin the course again. Students can retake Sophia courses once and can drop/re-enroll as many times as they wish until the first Milestone is completed. After that, they can only retake the course one time.

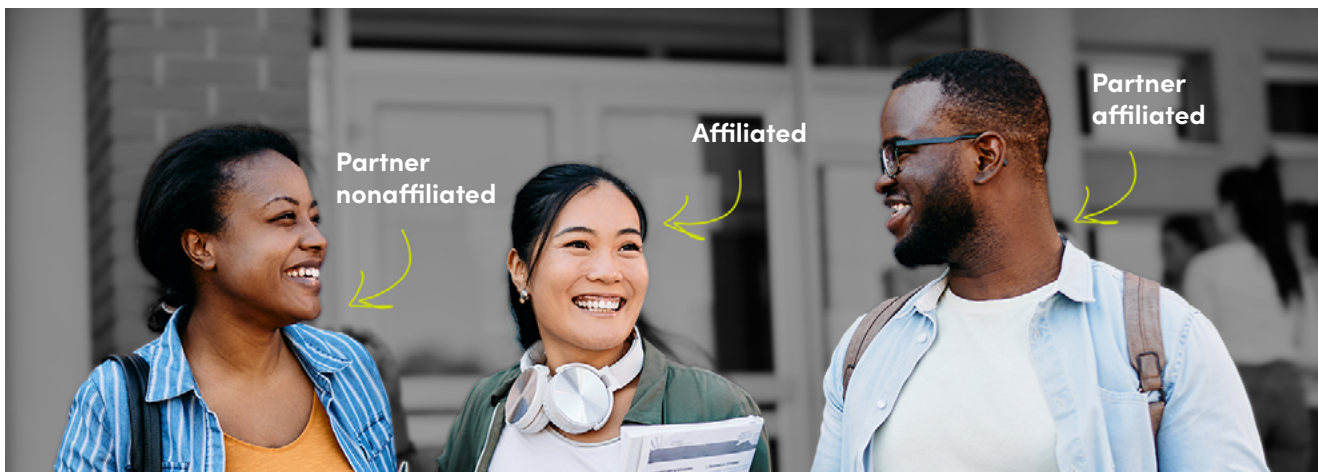
Only completed courses appear on the student's transcript. If a student drops a course, they will need to reach out to a Learning Coach to discuss their options for reactivating a course at the point where they left off.

Do you have a metric for how long a student usually takes to complete a course?

Students take about a month on average to complete a course, but this varies by subject. We do track the data for course completion percentage and the days to completion, as well as other metrics to evaluate student progress.

What is Sophia's typical student demographic?

Our students fall into one of three demographics based on their paths to higher education.



- **Partner nonaffiliated:** Students who sign up for Sophia before enrolling in a university.
- **Affiliated:** Students who are already enrolled in a university that isn't partnered with Sophia.
- **Partner affiliated:** Students who are enrolled at a Sophia partner university.

In some cases, Sophia students start courses and choose to enroll in one of our partner school's programs. We have some adult students who view Sophia as a "life changer" that offers opportunities to pursue a degree that addresses the barriers they have to education, such as family obligations or financial struggles.

Many of our students are already enrolled in a degree program and use Sophia as a "career amplifier and career builder." Whether at a partner school or not, these students are looking for flexibility to complete their coursework and fast-track their graduation.

For some, the self-paced courses with Sophia help them address challenges with difficult topics or complete core courses on their off time, during the summer session, or while balancing other obligations to work or family.

In Sophia's competency-based model, are there ways that students can improve their course grade?

Students may retake a Milestone assessment, resubmit a Touchstone once, or retake the course once. Subsequent attempts may be given to students who consult with a Learning Coach.

For all Touchstones, students have the option to resubmit the assignment based on the feedback received to get a higher score.

Would they have to re-enroll in the course if they fail?

Students who fail a course can reset and re-enroll in the course, which provides them one remaining attempt to pass the course again from the beginning. Subsequent retakes are not permitted if the learner fails the course again.

What is your traditional successful completion rate? Does it vary?

Our course completion rate is 67% for Sophia students in 2023, but it does vary by course.

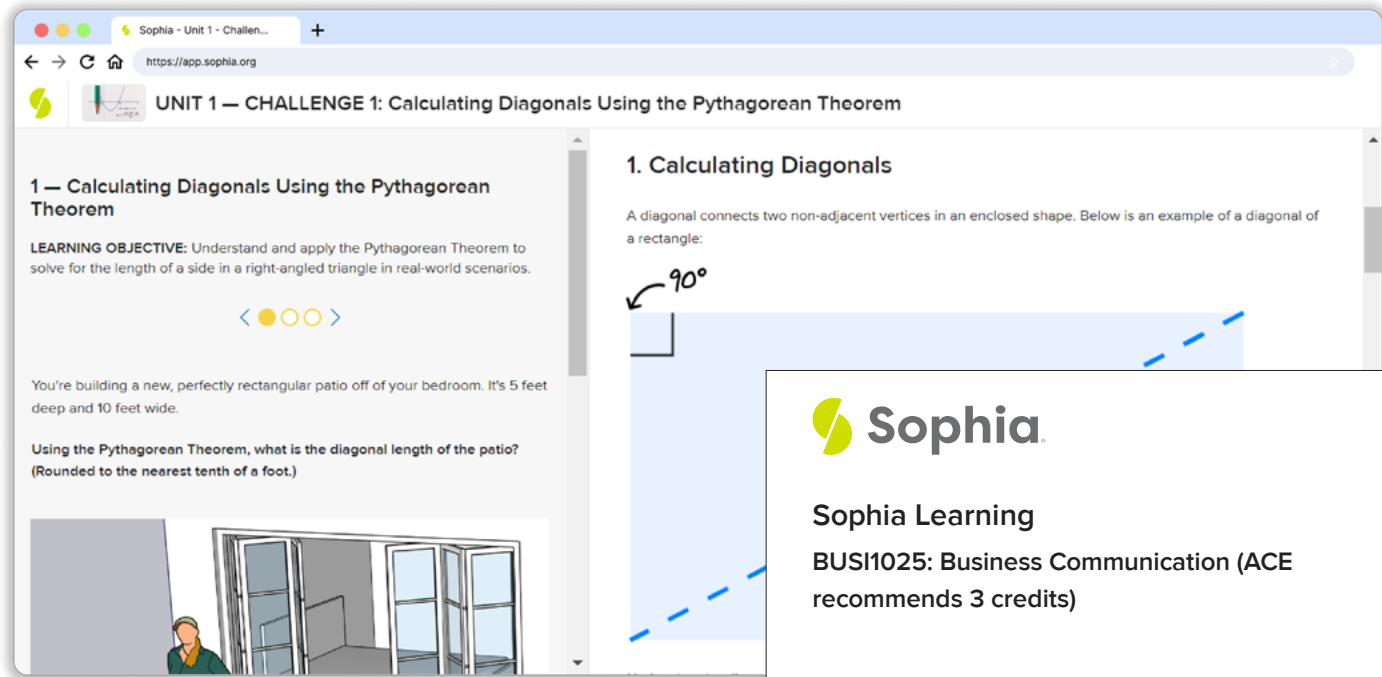
What kind of support do you provide to the students while they are enrolled?

Students have a range of options for support, including Learning Coaches available by phone, email, or online chat. Academic support options via our Learning Coaches and tutoring are available with every subscription plan from the first course to the transcript.



Could we provide our faculty a sample outline of the course or sample assessments similar to what you've provided ACE to assess equivalency?

We can provide access to the syllabus and demo versions of the courses for partner university review.



UNIT 1 — CHALLENGE 1: Calculating Diagonals Using the Pythagorean Theorem

1 — Calculating Diagonals Using the Pythagorean Theorem

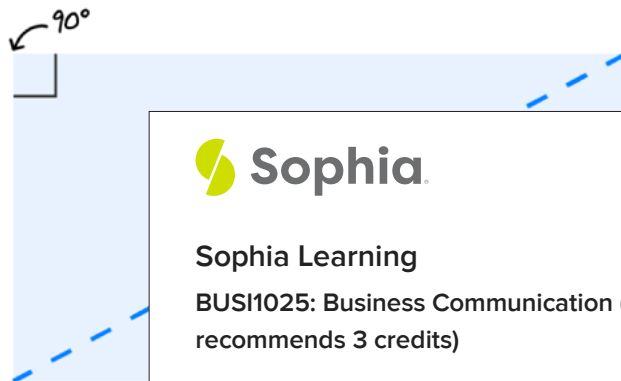
LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understand and apply the Pythagorean Theorem to solve for the length of a side in a right-angled triangle in real-world scenarios.

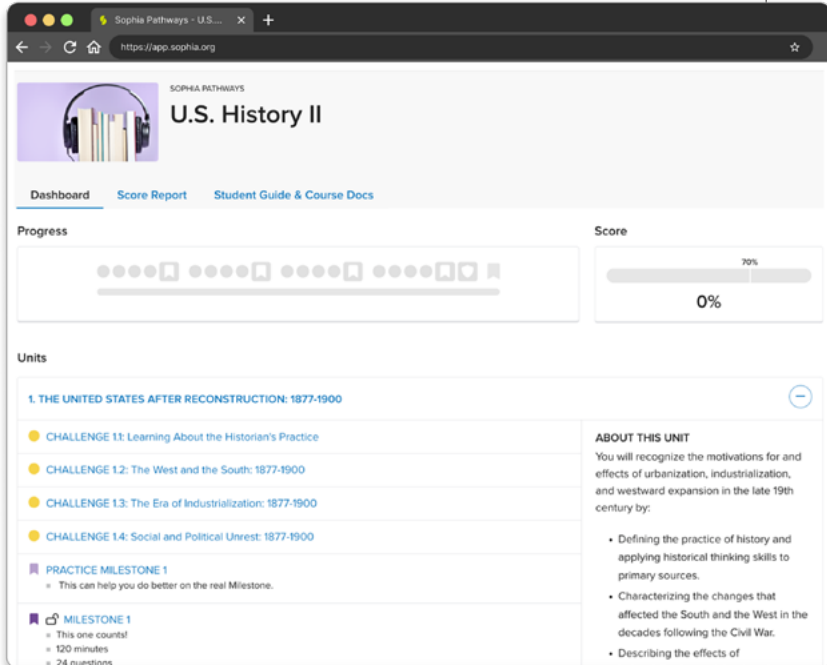
You're building a new, perfectly rectangular patio off of your bedroom. It's 5 feet deep and 10 feet wide.

Using the Pythagorean Theorem, what is the diagonal length of the patio? (Rounded to the nearest tenth of a foot.)

1. Calculating Diagonals

A diagonal connects two non-adjacent vertices in an enclosed shape. Below is an example of a diagonal of a rectangle:





SOPHIA PATHWAYS

U.S. History II

Progress

Score

70%

0%

Units

1. THE UNITED STATES AFTER RECONSTRUCTION: 1877-1900

- CHALLENGE 11: Learning About the Historian's Practice
- CHALLENGE 12: The West and the South: 1877-1900
- CHALLENGE 13: The Era of Industrialization: 1877-1900
- CHALLENGE 14: Social and Political Unrest: 1877-1900

PRACTICE MILESTONE 1

- This can help you do better on the real Milestone.

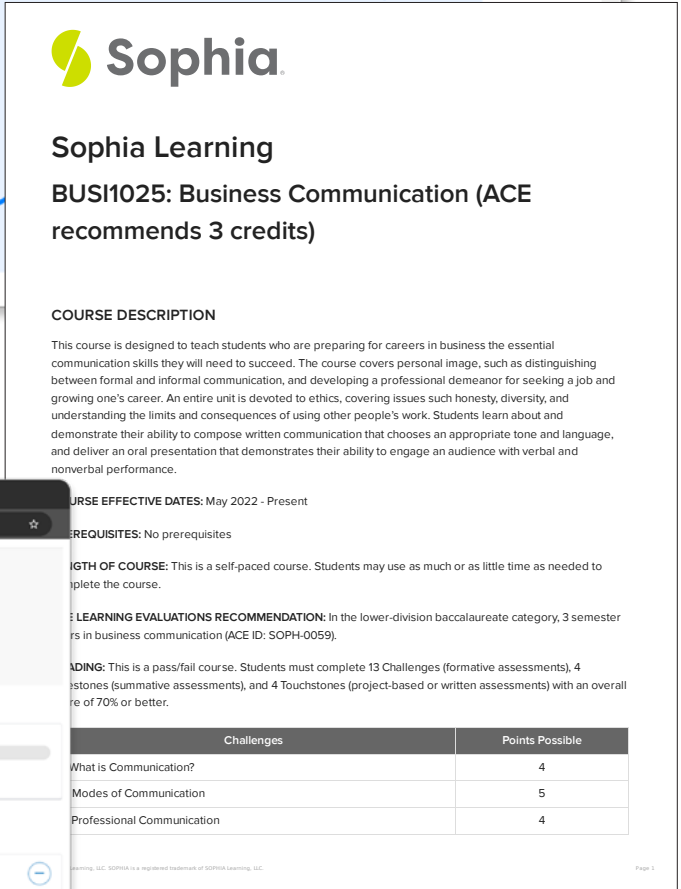
MILESTONE 1

- This one counts!
- 120 minutes
- 24 questions

ABOUT THIS UNIT

You will recognize the motivations for and effects of urbanization, industrialization, and westward expansion in the late 19th century by:

- Defining the practice of history and applying historical thinking skills to primary sources.
- Characterizing the changes that affected the South and the West in the decades following the Civil War.
- Describing the effects of



Sophia Learning

BUS1025: Business Communication (ACE recommends 3 credits)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to teach students who are preparing for careers in business the essential communication skills they will need to succeed. The course covers personal image, such as distinguishing between formal and informal communication, and developing a professional demeanor for seeking a job and growing one's career. An entire unit is devoted to ethics, covering issues such as honesty, diversity, and understanding the limits and consequences of using other people's work. Students learn about and demonstrate their ability to compose written communication that chooses an appropriate tone and language, and deliver an oral presentation that demonstrates their ability to engage an audience with verbal and nonverbal performance.

COURSE EFFECTIVE DATES: May 2022 - Present

REQUISITES: No prerequisites

LENGTH OF COURSE: This is a self-paced course. Students may use as much or as little time as needed to complete the course.

LEARNING EVALUATIONS RECOMMENDATION: In the lower-division baccalaureate category, 3 semester hours in business communication (ACE ID: SOPH-0059).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: This is a pass/fail course. Students must complete 13 Challenges (formative assessments), 4 Touchstones (summative assessments), and 4 Touchstones (project-based or written assessments) with an overall score of 70% or better.

Challenges	Points Possible
What is Communication?	4
Modes of Communication	5
Professional Communication	4

How do you maintain the integrity of the course content and questions within your assessments?

We have several processes in place to maintain course integrity, including:

- **Learning Coaches** browse sites to look for course assignments and issue cease-and-desist letters.
- **Internal** processes to identify compromised courses and update them for integrity.
- **Randomized** questions for the Milestones to ensure variety and three times the questions to ensure the same Milestone isn't assigned repeatedly.
- **Verifying** originality using Copyleaks plagiarism checker.

How do you ensure that the student who enrolled is the one taking the course?

Like face-to-face courses and the leading online universities, it's difficult to have 100% certainty that the same student enrolled is taking the course. We do take steps to ensure academic integrity, however, such as:

- **Monitoring** unusual behavior like multiple accounts from the same IP address. If accounts demonstrate signs of fraudulent behavior, they are blocked.
- **Using TypingDNA** to ensure that the person who registers is the same person completing assignments. This technology relies on biometrics data, or keystroke dynamics, based on the timing and duration of student's key press events. The typing patterns are collected after enrollment and checked before summative assessments.
- If necessary, Sophia uses **Jumio ID verification** as a Tier 2 intervention, which validates identification using AI.
- **Using Copyleaks**, an AI-powered plagiarism tool.
- Currently testing for **ChatGPT** usage and other AI-powered writing tools.