

Crafting Exemplary Syllabi for F2F & Online Courses

ABHE CAO Forum,
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Overview

- Syllabus Purpose and Objectives
- Syllabus Essentials
- Standard of Excellence
- Syllabus Currency and Review

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Syllabus Purpose and Objectives

Who are syllabi for?

Internal audiences	External audiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students (F2F, online, hybrid)• Course instructor (same)• Future instructors• Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Other IHEs• Parents• State HE oversight• Accreditation teams

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Syllabus Purpose and Objectives

Learner-centered vs Teacher-centered syllabus

Factor	Anchor 1	Anchor 2
Access	Available for prescribed number of office hours only	Multiple means of access and requires interaction
Student's role	Student is told what he/she is responsible for learning	Students take responsibility for bringing additional knowledge to class via ongoing class discussion or regular presentations
Evaluation	Tests only (not comprehensive)	Multiple means of demonstrating outcomes and both self- and peer-evaluation

from Table 1, Richmond et al., 2016

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Syllabus Purpose and Objectives

What are syllabi for?

Functional lenses

1. Motivational
2. Structural
3. Evidentiary

(Slattery & Carlson, 2005)

Metaphors

1. Map
2. Legal code
3. Contract
4. Letter
5. Promise
6. Others?

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Syllabus Purpose and Objectives

Alignment issues

- Course ⇄ Department ⇄ School ⇄ Institution
- Assessment, culture, values
- Branding (visual and verbal tone)

Tension: length and usability

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Syllabus Essentials

A caveat

- My reluctant journey: standardization vs academic freedom
- Syllabi and academic freedom
 - Minima/maxima, document structure, branding...
 - Content, assignments/grade weights, methods...

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Syllabus Essentials: Literature

Sources

- Boldt, 2014
- Garavalia et al., 2000
- Slattery & Carlson, 2005
- Stanny et al., 2015

Consensus is lacking...

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Syllabus Essentials: Literature

What does a syllabus include?

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| • Intro to course/course description | • Grades & grading process |
| • Faculty contact info | • Assignments & grade weights |
| • Required texts/materials | • Instructor policies, procedures |
| • Course objectives (SLOs) | • Schedule/calendar |
| • Institutional policies, rules (w/rationale) | |

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Syllabus Essentials: Literature

What does a syllabus include?

- Non-required supplemental materials
- Assignment details
- Prereqs & how course fits into program of study
- Rationale for topic sequence & assignments
- Accommodations/special needs policy/services
- Participation expectations
- Institutional support services

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Syllabus Essentials: Literature

What does a syllabus include?

- More detailed intro to professor
- Required skills
- Time commitment for students
- Class format
- Group work expectations
- Motivational messages
- Topics covered

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Syllabus Essentials: My List

1. Course info
2. Faculty info
3. SLOs with assessment
4. Required materials
5. Grade weights/scale
6. Assignment overview
7. Rubrics/checklists
8. Academic misconduct statement
9. Accommodations statement
10. Calendar
11. Subject-to-change note

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Syllabus Essentials: Objectives and Learning Taxonomies

- Backward design (see Wiggins & McTighe, 1998, and Richlin, 2006)
- Verb focused
- Learning/thinking taxonomies
 - Bloom's cognitive revised (Heer, n.d.)
 - Others: Krathwohl's affective, SOLO, Fink's, etc. (O'Neill & Murphy, 2010)

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Standard of Excellence

Develop (or revise) a syllabus template

- Consider making it a faculty project
- Branding and usability
- Digital integration/interaction
- Contents: institution-level information, minimum required components, regulatory compliance
- Challenge: set a standard for tone (Slattery, 2020)

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Standard of Excellence

Considerations

- Research (both primary and secondary sources)
- How does your template reflect...
 - Chickering and Gamson's (1987) 7 good-practice principles?
 - Barr and Tagg's (1995) learning paradigm?
 - Research into student perceptions?

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Standard of Excellence

Student perceptions

- Appearances can matter
 - *Kim & Ekachai, 2020; Harrington & Gabert-Quillen, 2015*
- Details of the right kind especially seem to matter
 - *Garavalia et al., 2000; Harrington & Gabert-Quillen, 2015; Saville et al., 2010*
- Tone matters
 - *Harnish & Bridges, 2011; Richmond et al., 2016; Stowell et al., 2018*

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Syllabus Currency and Review

Good practices

- Annual review for minimal compliance
- Incorporate into faculty review/assessment
- Syllabus fair or other workshop
- Include syllabi review in program evaluations

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Syllabus Currency and Review

Leverage for excellence

- Develop a syllabus rubric
 - Baseline ("essentials" above, sources)
 - Excellence (Richmond et al., 2019; Stanny et al., 2015)
- Regularly use rubric(s) and track progress (Stanny et al., 2015; Welsh, 2000)

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References

See references in a [supplemental document here](#)
