

Western Oregon University
Division of Extended Programs

Guidelines for Development of a Syllabus

"A summary of a course of study or examination of requirements. "
- definition of a syllabus in **Webster's**

A syllabus is a contract for a set of mutual expectations between a student and the course instructor. The syllabus specifies, for each course, who, what, when, where, and how a course will be conducted. It also provides an outline of the course and includes the requirements to earn a grade.

Components of a Syllabus - a Guide to Development and Design

A syllabus has six major sections to clearly and explicitly communicate the course content and expectations from the instructor to the student, and to assure alignment with the university catalog.

1. General information. The syllabus identifies the following:

- Instructor name and office hours
- Office location, telephone # and e-mail address
- Term and year
- Class days, times and location
- Text/materials/equipment

2. Course title and description. Include:

- Course prefix and number
- Title
- Description
- Number of credits

Some courses have open-ended course numbers that permit the instructor to create a title and description unique to that course, and some courses have variable credits. When developing a course title for one of these open-ended courses, be brief, but specific and include any pre-requisites for the course. Additional information may be added to clarify the catalog course description, or to communicate the intent of the instructor. Examples are:

Ed 199	Special Studies: Developing Spanish Literacy Skills
Ed 607	Seminar: Working with Difficult and Disturbed Children

3. Course objectives. Objectives are a series of statements describing what the student is expected to demonstrate as a result of taking this course. Good course objectives specify student outcomes as clearly as possible. Verbs such as analyze, write, debate, perform and compute are more objective descriptions of student outcomes than learn, understand or study. Generally a university will include 5 to 15 objectives in a syllabus.

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- 4. Instructional format.** Indicate whether the course is offered in a traditional lecture format, a time-shortened format, a distance format, a combination of formats, etc. If the course is offered in a time-shortened format or a distance format (e.g. off-campus, electronically, by correspondence, etc.), provide specific details about how:
- you will adapt the curriculum for this format,
 - you will meet the contact hours requirement,
 - students will meet the outside work requirement,
 - will you advise students.

You may need to assign projects, papers, etc., which the students will complete post-session. If so, provide the date when all work is due. The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges has developed guidelines for delivery of distance education, which are available on request.

- 5. Course schedule or outline.** The schedule outlines the sequence of learning and the general plan for each class meeting. Course schedules might include:
- date
 - topic
 - reading assignments
 - guest lectures
 - days the class will not meet (e.g., Martin Luther King Day)
 - any other unusual aspects of the general schedule (meeting at a different site, different dress or equipment requirements)

- 6. Course requirements.** This section should provide the student with a clear understanding of what work will be graded — papers, exams, presentations, performances, lab work, etc. Each requirement should be as detailed and precise as possible to reduce subjectivity in grading and prevent misunderstandings. If the course is a "slash" course (ED 408/508), the instructor must make a clear distinction between undergraduate and graduate requirements.

Course requirements should include-

Format for Papers:	e.g., typed, number of pages, citation requirements
Dates:	e.g., for papers, exams, performances
Criteria for Evaluation:	e.g., originality, creativity, persuasiveness
Exams, quizzes:	dates, or if they will be unannounced

Each course requirement should be:

- matched to at least one of the course objectives
- proportioned in terms of the total: how much will the term paper, the quizzes, and/or the lab work count toward the final grade?

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7. **Grading.** Explain and display your grading system.

- Will the grading be on a curve, use points, or be based on a percentage system?
- What does a student need to do to get an A instead of a B?
- Describe any penalties imposed for absences, missed labs, or late papers.
- If a performance based scoring guide is used, include a copy of the scoring guide and show how it equates to letter grades.

Helpful Statements You May Wish to Include

Disability Statement

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation for any type of disability, please make an appointment to see me during my office hours or contact the Office of Disability Services.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is representing without giving credit the works, data, or ideas of another person as one's own work in any academic exercise. This includes submitting, in whole or in part, prewritten term papers of another or the research of another, including but not limited to the product of commercial vendors who sell or distribute such materials, and the appropriation and/or use of electronic data of another person or persons as one's own, or using such data without giving proper credit for it.

Incompletes

A grad of "I" may be assigned when the quality of work is satisfactory but an essential requirement of the course has not been completed for reasons acceptable to the instructor.

Issues of Academic Freedom

Within a syllabus, there is a balance between the obligation of the university to implement the description in the university catalog and to allow for academic freedom in the teaching of courses. Some key points to consider in development of a syllabus are:

- The course title, credits, pre-requisites, content and description must match the current university catalog.
- All prefixes and numbers must be approved and in the university catalog or on file in the Provost's Office.
- If the course is a newly approved course or a course that has an open-ended number (a seminar or workshop), the title and course description must be included.
- The course objectives should be developed in concert with and/or approved by department faculty and chairs and should reflect the standards of relevant professional organizations.
- Within that basic framework, the course content, teaching methods, requirements and grading are at the discretion of the instructor.

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Benefits

In addition to clarifying the course content to be taught and student outcomes to be demonstrated, specific course syllabi have benefits to the university, to the academic departments, faculty and students.

The University Each course syllabus contributes to the total picture of a university's course offerings. Course descriptions and requirements should reflect the institution's current mission and values with the understanding that the curriculum will evolve as the university develops. Syllabi also demonstrate to accreditation reviewers that the university is meeting its academic mission.

Departments The collection of course syllabi within a department should reflect the goals of that department for imparting knowledge to students, the sequence of course work for academic majors and minors and the selection of courses for breadth and depth of information. The course syllabi assist the departments in planning for and meeting the obligations of the university to fulfill the Oregon University System approved program of course work by documenting the scope of the curriculum.

Faculty Syllabi should reflect careful planning of the course content, the professional knowledge base, methodologies to be used in delivery of instruction, processes for evaluation, and supplemental materials. It should also facilitate clear communication between instructors and students regarding the level of mastery students must demonstrate in order to receive a grade reflective of their achievement.

Students Students should use syllabi to know what is to be taught, how it will be taught, and how their achievement is to be evaluated. While subjectivity cannot always be taken out of grading, the grading criteria should be described as objectively as possible.