

Guidelines for Syllabus Development and Content

POLICY STATEMENT

Instructors are required to develop a course syllabus for each offering of a course and communicate the syllabus to students no later than the day of the first class meeting. In the case of a course offered to an individual student, such as [Independent Study](#) and [Directed Study](#), the appropriate process must be followed. Departments and Colleges/Schools may have additional requirements for accreditation purposes. For the purposes of this guideline, a syllabus is a written or electronic document that contains information students need to know in order to successfully complete the work of the course.

Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to minimize sources of confusion and misunderstandings that lead to complaints and grade disputes. These guidelines are not intended to limit faculty freedom or to determine course structure and modes of evaluation; rather, these guidelines focus on the key elements that, if present in the course, are expected to be communicated to the students at the beginning of the semester.

At a minimum, each syllabus should include two types of information:

- Information specific to the course, such as its title, course description, topics to be covered, learning outcomes, prerequisites, assignments, grading rubric, and instructor-specific policies.
- University policies that pertain to the course, such as the University grading system, a disabilities statement, and how to resolve problems between students and instructors, etc.

I. Course Specific Information

- a. Course title, course prefix, number and section number, term and meeting pattern, and location.
- b. Instructor's office location, office hours, phone and e-mail address, any relevant web addresses or use of LMS.
- c. If applicable, any TA or Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Leader information, including hours, location, and contact information. Please include a brief description of the type of help the TA can offer and/or overview of how PALs will conduct small-group practice with course content.
- d. Course description (insert the catalog course description and include how the students will benefit from the course, the specific content that will be covered, and how the course fits into the curriculum. List any prerequisites.)
- e. List of all required materials, books, and readings, as well as any course-related Websites and MyCourses resources, if applicable. Provide full citation and edition numbers for textbooks and other course resources. As per Federal Guidelines instructors are required to inform students about course materials, which can be done by registering their course materials at the bookstore, whether they are using physical textbooks, ebooks, OER resources, other equipment/materials, or no required materials – each course must have an entry at the bookstore.
- f. Attendance policies, with a clear statement of the consequences for violating course attendance policy.
- g. Expectations and any special requirements for papers, projects, lab reports or exams, with a clear statement of the consequences of a late submission or missed exam.
- h. Grading and/or evaluation criteria and the weight of each element in the final grade or evaluation, including policy for extra credit (such opportunities must be announced and made available to all students).
- i. Examination schedule and any make-up or rescheduling policies, including the scheduled day and time of the final exam in the class.
- j. Course learning outcomes/goals (including University Studies learning outcomes, if applicable). Describe the major concepts, skills, attitudes, and knowledge students are expected to achieve by the end of the semester. Describe how these outcomes are tied to standards or other principles that drive the curriculum.
- k. Course Content and Outline (may be in the form of a course calendar). Provide a detailed list of meeting dates, major topics and themes, reading assignments, and due dates for all exams,

- scheduled quizzes, papers, projects, assignments, labs, etc. Use a grid format to help students easily read and understand the information.¹
- l. Notes on classroom policies, such as and, if appropriate, a statement on the use of copyrighted materials and the use of tools (generative AI, such as ChatGPT), individual and group work, and classroom comportment, such as mutual civility, respectfulness, use of cell phones or electronic devices, and eating and drinking in the classroom.
 - m. If applicable, list or reference policies related to lab work, such as safety, human subjects, and University property. Statement on laboratory safety or risk assumption in courses requiring physical activity or field trips.
 - n. Notification of possible changes to the course syllabi should be noted on the syllabus.
 - i. *A sample statement for the course might be: This syllabus is a guide and every attempt is made to provide an accurate overview of the course. However, circumstances and events may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester and may depend, in part, on the progress, needs, and experiences of the students. Changes to the syllabus will be made in writing with advance notice.*
 - o. A statement describing what forms of electronic communications will be employed for student contact and the expectations for typical response times. Reference should be made to University policy, which specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondence sent to their standard UMD e-mail address (@umassd.edu).
 - p. Consider using a “Student Acknowledgement” as a means to document students’ receipt of the material on the course syllabus. The sheet can be placed at the end of the syllabus and removed by students after they have signed the form, or the sheet can also be given as a handout.

II. University Policies

The university policies that should be addressed within all syllabi are best summarized in the omnibus language for syllabi. The “Omnibus Language for Syllabi” was developed by the Faculty Senate’s Student Faculty Academic Affairs Committee (SFAAC) and approved by the full Senate in AY18/19. The purpose of it is to make it easier for faculty to comply with prevailing federal regulations and accreditation requirements. Toward this end, a dedicated link on the Provost’s website has been developed that contains the approved language in order to allow faculty to either copy and paste the full text in its entirety into their syllabi or to include a link directing students to the page instead. This link can be found at: <https://www.umassd.edu/provost/resourcesforfaculty/syllabus-language/>. You are strongly encouraged to include this language in all your course syllabi. Doing so will not only ensure we are in compliance with regulatory requirements, it will also assist our students in clearly understanding our academic policies and their rights and obligations.

¹ All syllabi should demonstrate that the course work and associated out-of-class work meets the federally mandated course credit hour requirement:

Credit Hour Definition: A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

- (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out- of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks [includes exam week] for one semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.
- (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

For further information, please see the [NECHE Policy on Credits and Degrees](#).^[66]