

Effective Syllabi

Tips for Success



by Jennifer Moss

As you prepare your syllabus for Summer or Fall semesters, why not give it a thorough critical look-through to make sure it looks great, functions well, that it meets all UAF requirements, and, for eLearning-supported courses, that it has all of the components helpful for the online student that are included in the syllabus template your instructional designer provides. Your syllabus is one of the students' first point of contact with their instructor and is their primary road map for the course. Making your syllabus complete with relevant information and easy to read will help pave their way to success.

TIPS FOR REQUIRED ITEMS

First, check that all UAF Faculty Senate requirements are present in your syllabus: <http://goo.gl/swcMKO>

Learning Outcomes

Here are some tips for writing good learning outcomes and objectives based on measurable evidence—see especially the section on good/bad examples: <http://goo.gl/gO7VWO>

Course Schedule

Does your course schedule fully represent the topics, activities, and assessments for each lesson? It is not enough to say 'Lab' or 'Quiz' — describe each item in your schedule with contextual titles so students can use the schedule to navigate the material and assignments. Especially in the asynchronous course, this type of lesson outline can help students stay on track. A fully formed calendar is also mandatory during any faculty senate review process.

Student Resources

Check to make sure the information you provide under student support services and disability services are current. If you are teaching an eLearning-supported course, the syllabus template you receive from your instructional designer will also contain a section for how to contact UAF eLearning Student Services for things like technical help, proctoring, or advising.

TIPS FOR OTHER ITEMS

Consider augmenting your syllabus with the following items. Although they are not specifically required, they can help your students get started, stay connected, and stay on track through your course.

Getting Started

Consider creating a section in your online course materials to give students direction right up front. Let them know what they should do first — where they should go and what they should look for.

How To Submit Assignments

Students will need to know how and where assignments should be submitted (Blackboard Assignment Upload, Blackboard Discussion Forum, class blog, etc.).

How to Check Grades

We recommend using the Blackboard Grade Center, as it provides an easy way for students to look at their grades and receive feedback.

Instructor Response Time

Let students know how long it will take you to get back to them if they email you and for grading assignments. Here's an example: "Inquiries from students will be acknowledged promptly — often within a few hours but most always within 24 hours. Lessons will be graded within one week after the due date."

Proctored Exams

You may wish to require proctored exams. If you do, provide a section in your syllabus for information on how to schedule a proctored exam, which may involve advance planning. If you are teaching an eLearning-supported course, we provide assistance with proctoring and guiding students through the process.

Technical Requirements

Are there any technical requirements that students should be aware of such as access to a camera, microphone, free software not part of the textbook specifications, etc. ? Outline these in your syllabus.

LEARN MORE

Join Madara Mason and Chris Beks for *Syllabus Building* at **Third Thursdays, April 16, 12-1pm, Bunnell 319B.**



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