Creating a Syllabus at Carolina – New Faculty Orientation

Overview
A syllabus defines the goals of a course and describes classroom activities, readings and other assignments, and course policies. It’s often the first contact that students have with you (the instructor) and the course, so it’s important to set the right tone. Instructors at Carolina should strive to develop syllabi that are both an effective map of the course’s logistics and an invitation for students to actively engage in the learning process.

Items to Include on Your Syllabus

| Basic course information¹ | Course number, section, title, description, credit hours, course format. 
|                          | ✓ Consider giving an overview of how class time will be used (lecture, group work, discussion, active learning, etc.) |
| Target audience          | Example: First-year students only |
| Instructor information   | Name, office location, office hours, email address, preferred method of contact. 
|                          | ✓ To convey clarity and care, some instructors like to provide additional specific information about how students should address them (Dr., Prof., etc. as well as pronouns used) and how to use office hours. 
|                          | ✓ Some instructors like to include their teaching philosophy and diversity statement. |
| Requisites (if any)      | Example: Prerequisite, CHEM 101 and 101L; co-requisite, CHEM 102L. |
| Goals/student learning outcomes (SLO) | ✓ For instructors, goals/outcomes help determine what to assess. Tips for writing SLOs. 
|                          | ✓ For students, they provide a framework for organizing and synthesizing the course material. |
| Course materials         | How do students access your materials? What’s the cost? 
|                          | ✓ What materials are required vs. recommended? Are materials available online or on reserve at the Undergraduate Library? 
|                          | ✓ Carolina uses the Sakai Learning Management system. |
| Assignment list with due dates | ✓ As far as possible, the dates of all examinations and due dates for important assignments. 
|                          | ✓ How much time do you expect students to work outside of class? |
| Grading schema and scale | The rules that you will use to assign grades. 
|                          | ✓ If applicable, provide how student participation in class will be assessed. 
|                          | ✓ How will late or missed work and exams be handled? |
| Policies and resources   | ✓ Attendance policy 
|                          | ✓ UNC Honor Code 
|                          | ✓ Technology use in the classroom 
|                          | ✓ Accessibility Resources; Counseling and Psychological Services 
|                          | See example statements. |
| Schedule/calendar        | Include a statement about potential changes to the schedule. 
|                          | ✓ See Registrar calendar for holidays & breaks. |
| Final exam/final assessment | Make sure to include the official final exam date and time (as published by the University Registrar). The use of the final exam period is required, but an alternative to a final exam is possible through departmental approval. |

¹ Course information and policies can be found at: https://catalog.unc.edu.
Helpful Tips

- See the Gannon article below for creating a syllabus. For example be personal: use “I” and “you” statements (avoid third-person language). Avoid using ALL-CAPS sentences for emphasis, which can be interpreted as yelling. Consider a tone that welcomes students to the course and doesn't feel adversarial.
- Check with your department to determine if they have additional requirements for syllabi.
- Edit your syllabus to avoid typos, formatting issues, and references to previous semesters.
- Some new instructors have been surprised to learn that there are additional dates that are important to students (i.e., the day after Halloween). Consult a colleague for other dates.

Additional Resources

- Gannon, Kevin. How to Create a Syllabus. The Chronicle of Higher Education
- Center for Faculty Excellence | Office of Instructional Innovation | Undergraduate Curricula

Campus Resources:

- Undergraduate Testing Center
- Exam Scan (for multiple choice exam scanning)

Tech Tools:

- PollEverywhere (free classroom response system for participation)
- Gradescope (free grading tool to improve efficiency and allow for collaborative scoring)
- Sakai Sign-up (or other scheduling software to arrange student meetings)
- Zoom (for virtual meetings, office hours, or lecture recording)

Instructors should distribute syllabi to students (paper or electronic) by the first day of class and upload it to the College’s Online Syllabus Management (OSM) system.

Prepared by: Office of Undergraduate Education and Office of Undergraduate Curricula
Last revised: 7/22/2019