

Creating a Syllabus at Carolina – New Faculty Orientation

Overview

A syllabus defines the goals of a course and describes the activities, readings, assignments, and 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 information ¹	<p>Course number, section, title, description, credit hours, instructional format (e.g., In Person, Remote Synchronous).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider giving an overview of how class/synchronous time will be used (lecture, group work, discussion, active learning, etc.) ✓ For Remote classes, will it involve synchronous or asynchronous delivery (or a mix of the two)?
Target audience	Example: First-year students only
Instructor information	<p>Name, office location, office hours (in-person or virtual), email address, preferred method of contact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Some instructors like to provide specific information about how students should address them (Dr., Prof., etc. as well as pronouns used), how to use office hours, their teaching philosophy, and a diversity statement.</i>
Requisites (if any)	Example: Prerequisite, CHEM 101 and 101L; co-requisite, CHEM 102L.
Goals/student learning outcomes (SLO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 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	<p>How do students access your materials? What's the cost?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ As far as possible, the dates of all examinations and due dates for important assignments. ✓ What is the typical amount of time required to complete work for the course (e.g. 9-12 hours weekly including class/synchronous activities)
Grading schema and scale	<p>The rules that you will use to assign grades.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If applicable, provide how student participation will be assessed. ✓ How will late or missed work and exams be handled?
Policies and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attendance policy ✓ UNC Honor Code ✓ Community Standards (e.g., face masks) ✓ Technology use ✓ Accessibility statement that includes ARS, CAPS, and Title IX² ✓ Policy statement on non-discrimination <p>See example statements.</p>
Schedule/calendar	<p>Include a statement about potential changes to the schedule.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ See Registrar calendar for holidays & breaks.
Final exam/final assessment	<p>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.</p>

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

² As per Faculty Council Resolution 2020-6, all syllabi must include information about Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), and Title IX resources to ensure that students are aware of these services and how to access them.

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. See additional resources for creating inclusive syllabi.
- 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

- UNC Faculty Council [Resolution 2012-11](#): On Guidelines for Course Syllabi.
- Gannon, Kevin. [How to Create a Syllabus](#). The Chronicle of Higher Education
- ACUE. [Inclusive Teaching Toolkit](#)
- [Center for Faculty Excellence](#) | [Office of Instructional Innovation](#) | [Undergraduate Curricula](#)

Campus Resources:

- [Keep Teaching, COVID-19 Resources for UNC Instructors](#)
- [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.

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