

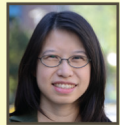
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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Centre for Teaching and Learning

**Tools
For
Excellence**

Syllabus Creation

There has been a lot of emphasis on the syllabus as a ‘contract’ for learning. It is probably more useful to think of it as a guide or valuable organizational tool than as a binding contract. The first day of class is typically when the students would receive the syllabus either in paper or online format. First impressions go a long way, so why not start the semester off in a positive developmental journey type of scenario rather than offer the students a formalized list of rules and regulations filled with ‘musts’; ‘don’ts’, etc.

You may need to communicate standards and regulations but do so in a welcoming way. The first day should not be full of barriers, but an outline of opportunities to succeed. Pay attention to the language used in your syllabus to ensure you are welcoming the student to join a learning community.

Yes, the instructor and students have obligations to answer to, but a less rigid format is welcomed in most cases.

Typically the student’s first glance of the syllabus includes a speedy trip to the assessment description and any dates and deadlines given so that they can organize their life and other

course loads effectively. Give them time to do this before reviewing over some important points or your efforts will be wasted. The syllabus should be referred to continually to avoid the accusation that the students were not aware of a policy or deadline.

Some faculty go as far as giving a test on the syllabus material to emphasize its importance as a communication tool and as a pre-requisite for further success in the course. Points that are more standardized and rigid should be approached as necessary for the survival of the class and yourself in a cooperative learning adventure. Be ready with rationales for all your initiatives. You are the professional who uses your experience/reflection and student and peer feedback to develop superior courses every term.

Students should be provided with:

- The learning outcomes of the course and the assessments planned to measure the achievement of those outcomes.
- Communication avenues – email, phone, office hours, etc
- Purchases necessary for successful completion – text, clicker, etc
- Deadlines and important dates
- Classroom routine expectations – attendance, breaks, discussion, note-taking, etc.
- University-wide policies that affect successful completion of the course.

Resources:

[Tips for an Effective Syllabus](http://ets.tlt.psu.edu/learningdesign/syllabus/) Penn State University's Teaching & Learning with Technology
<http://ets.tlt.psu.edu/learningdesign/syllabus/>

[Creating Stellar Syllabi](http://www.personal.psu.edu/scs15/idweb/stellarsyllabi.ppt) - PSU Royer Center PowerPoint presentation
www.personal.psu.edu/scs15/idweb/stellarsyllabi.ppt

[Constructing a Syllabus](http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan_Center/docs/construct_syllabus.pdf) Brown University's Harriet W. Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning
http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan_Center/docs/construct_syllabus.pdf

[Tools for Teaching: Creating a Syllabus](http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/syllabus.html) - Barbara Gross Davis - University of California at Berkeley
<http://teaching.berkeley.edu/bgd/syllabus.html>

[Writing a Syllabus](http://www2.honolulu.hawaii.edu/facdev/guidebk/teachtip/writesyl.htm) By Howard B. Altman, University of Louisville and William E. Cashin, Kansas State University
<http://www2.honolulu.hawaii.edu/facdev/guidebk/teachtip/writesyl.htm>

Centre for Teaching and Learning

The Centre for Teaching and Learning at UBC's Okanagan campus promotes and supports excellence in teaching and learning. The Centre provides campus-wide support for all models of teaching and learning, including online learning.

It is our Mission:

"To lead, support and promote teaching and learning excellence, innovation and scholarship at the UBC Okanagan campus."