

## B. Creating an Effective Course Syllabus

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Preparation and organization of a course with an eye toward effective instruction can be enhanced by developing an effective course syllabus, or a detailed course outline or document, in which our decisions about course objectives, content, assignments, and policies are explicitly stated. In this section, the general functions of an effective course syllabus will be reviewed, after which contents of a typical syllabus will be described along with two sample course syllabi developed by ICU faculty members. Finally, a few steps in creating and publishing a course syllabus on the ICU Home Page will be explained. 2 Should you have questions, you might wish to contact the FD Support Desk at (0422) 33-3639 or via e-mail at fd-support@icu.ac.jp. You can find a copy of the "Step-by-Step Guide to Publishing Your Course Syllabus" in Appendix C.

### General Functions

A nicely prepared course syllabus performs several functions for you:

- a . It facilitates course planning;
- b . It helps students understand what your course is about as well as what is expected of them;
- c . It communicates to your students that they have enrolled in a well-organized and designed course;
- d . It helps colleagues, counselors, tutors, and others to better understand your instructional materials and methodologies;
- e . It lowers the possibility of complaints of capricious grading;
- f . It assists each student to assess the compatibility of your course with his/her learning style and goals;
- g . It indicates the level of difficulty;
- h . It helps students to estimate how much time and effort must be committed to your course.

### Sample Content

Here are some of the suggested items a course syllabus might include:

#### (a) Administrative Information

- Course Title/Number
- Registration Number/Section Number
- Language of Instruction
- Classroom Information (Room Location, Days, Time)
- Course-related Mailing Lists and/or Web Sites (if any)
- Prerequisites/Co-Requisites (List courses that must be completed prior to enrollment and courses that must be taken concurrently.)

#### (b) Instructor Information

- Name
- Phone/FAX

- Office Location
- Office Hours
- E-Mail Address/Own Home Page

(c) Course Description

- Provide a brief description of your course, summarizing what will be covered as outlined in the next 5 sections.

(d) Learning Objectives

Describe what new skills and knowledge students will have developed or learned from participating in your course. For examples, these could be certain motor skills, thinking skills, analytical skills, or combinations thereof. Usually, only the major objectives are listed here. Use specific and precise “action” statements to describe what students will be able to do after completing your course. For example, if you teach a course on applied statistics, you might want to write, “Students will be able to perform fixed-effects ANOVA with post hoc contrasts for medium-sized samples.”

(e) Course Requirements & Policies

List in this section any activities and products that each student must complete in order to receive a minimum passing grade for the course. Some of the areas for which you might want to specify minimum requirements include quizzes and tests, exams, homework assignments, papers, laboratory reports, group projects, class attendance and participation, class contribution, oral presentations, among other things.

(f) Textbooks and Readings

If you will use some textbooks or readers for your course, you might wish to give reference information including prices and editions. Also, you must indicate whether such textbooks or readers are required or only recommended.

(g) Examinations, Papers, Laboratory Projects

Provide detailed information about each course requirement, including format, length, and due dates. Also, you may explain how each assignment will be graded and when it will be returned to students.

(h) Grading System

Explain what system of grading you will be adopting for your course (e.g., absolute performance distribution, or class curve). Spell out how each course requirement will be reflected in the final course grade (A, B, C, D, E). Where appropriate, include a table that equates points earned with a letter grade.

(i) Course Schedule and Content

List such important dates in the life of your course as exam dates, holidays, and assignment due dates. Some instructors prefer to include a weekly schedule specifying topics to be covered and the due date of weekly assignments on a simplified calendar.

(j) Class Format and Activities

Briefly describe the activities that comprise a typical day in your class (e.g., lectures, presentations, debates, videos, guest speakers). List some of the basic ground rules that govern student behavior (e.g., eating and drinking in class, private talk, mobile phone, using a notebook computer for note-taking, class attendance, questions).

(k) Additional Readings and Other Learning Resources

Provide any information that may be of help to students in successfully completing your course (e.g., additional books and articles, web-sites, tutorial services, computer consultation).