Designing Your Syllabi and Assignments to Support Student Success

Carmen Skaggs, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs
Mandy McGrew, Director of Supplemental Instruction and Learning Assistant Programs
Community
Community

Guiding Principles:

• “All student must experience genuine welcome and deep care”

• “Relationships are a powerful means to inspire all students to learn” (10)

“Relational teaching makes visible the humanity of the teacher and each individual student, as well as the humanity of the class content, subject matter, and text.” (63)

➢ Convey our belief in students’ ability to succeed

➢ Set high expectations and then cultivate a supportive environment to help students learn, make mistakes, and try again (84)
Lessons from the Pandemic (in Teaching and Life)

We are all in this together—for better or worse.

Barriers to our success are real—even if invisible.

Knowing that someone listens to, cares for, and respects us as a person matters.
Syllabi Design: Setting Us Up for Success

- Invites the student to the learning experience
- Establishes a tone for the course and our mutual relationship
- Communicates our expectations
Simple Signals for Establishing a Tone of Mutual Respect

Communication Statement

Use links for KSU policy statements (e.g. academic integrity, grade appeals)

Course policy statements should set expectations rather than anticipate violations
“The syllabus becomes an invitation to share responsibility for successful learning”

(Grunert, O’Brien, Millis, & Cohen, 2008, p.22)
YOUR SYLLABUS . . .

Sets the tone for your course
Conveys expectations
Outlines the course learning objectives
Describes how student learning will be assessed
Explains your long-term goals for the course
In other words, a learning-centered syllabus may help your students feel as if they have a voice in the class (and that the instructor is listening), respected as a member of the community of learners, and that the instructor cares about their success in the course.
KSU'S SYLLABUS TEMPLATE LINK

- https://cia.kennesaw.edu/index.php
KSU SYLLABUS REQUIREMENTS

- Does the syllabus contain the elements required by the university?
- Instructor contact information
- Course description from catalog, including prerequisites
- Learning outcomes (Gen Ed courses in areas A-E have standard language to insert in addition to course outcomes).
- Grading policy, including evaluation scale
- Attendance policy
- Institutional policies (included in this link): https://cia.kennesaw.edu/instructional-resources/syllabus-policy.php
- Course schedule, including dates of assignments and exams
- RECOMMENDED link to student resources: https://cia.kennesaw.edu/instructional-resources/syllabus-resources.php
REVISING SYLLABUS STATEMENTS
EXAMPLE: COMMUNICATION STATEMENT

Original:
I will reply to emails sent to my KSU campus email address within 48 hours Monday-Friday. On the weekends, I’ll be watching Netflix or spending time with my family. I rarely check D2L, and I will NOT respond to emails sent to that account.

Revised:
If you have questions or concerns about our course, please send your messages to sampleprof@kennesaw.edu. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours Monday-Friday. While I will also respond to messages sent through the D2L email client, it may take longer for me to respond. If you prefer to communicate in person, you may visit me during our regularly scheduled office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2-3pm.
EXAMPLE: CLASSROOM “RULES”

Original:
Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Such behaviors include: failing to complete the assigned work, arriving late, talking during class, gaming during class, or leaving early.

Revised:
Students are expected to complete all assignments; to conduct themselves with decorum; to arrive on time and to remain until class concludes.
EXAMPLE: ATTENDANCE POLICY

Original:
You will be marked absent for the following reasons: you forget to sign in; you arrive after attendance is taken; you leave early.

Revised:
Your active, engaged participation in each class period contributes to the learning experience. To ensure that you receive credit for your attendance, please arrive on time and prepared, remaining until class is over.
EXAMPLE: GRADE APPEALS

Original:
Once I have posted final grades, I will not change your grade. You can tell me a sob story, but it will not change the outcome. There is no extra credit in this class. DO NOT ask me to change your grade.

Revised:
Link to university’s grade appeal policy (included in Student Resources link on syllabus template)
<https://cia.kennesaw.edu/instructional-resources/syllabus-resources.php>
Clarity
“The Expert Blindspot”

Kevin Tumlinson

- Dunning-Kruger Effect
- A Framework for Learning
- Shoshin – the beginner’s mind
TILT (Transparency in Learning and Teaching)

**Purpose**
Explain why it is important to know this and/or to be able to do this

**Task**
Describe how to complete the task in a clear way and at an appropriate level

**Criteria**
Provide specific criteria for assessment and clearly outline your expectations

[Click here to join the KSU TILT Team]
Seek Mid-Semester Feedback

Stop – Start – Continue

CIQ: Critical Incident Questionnaire

Anonymous Survey or Discussion Board Opportunity

SGID: Small Group Instructional Diagnosis

Visit CETL for more information