



Some Best Practices for Creating a Learning-Focused Syllabus

An effective syllabus is one that gives students clear, complete information about the course and what they can expect as the semester progresses. It makes the course goals and objectives clear to your students and lets them know how their learning will be assessed. Your syllabus should tell students about policies and procedures, but a learning-focused syllabus shows students how they can be successful in your course. It helps you to create a welcoming, yet challenging, learning environment.

Your syllabus:

Sets the tone for your course

- A positive tone helps create a positive learning environment. It affects the way your students see you and how approachable they think you are. If your tone is threatening or punishing, your students may hesitate to ask questions or share ideas in your class.
- Show your students that you are confident that they can succeed in the course.

Conveys expectations

- Your syllabus should make your expectations of your students clear. Course calendar, assignments, and assessments should be described in detail and include rubrics (or information about forthcoming rubrics) when appropriate.
- You should also let students know what they can expect from you: support, guidance, professional behavior, feedback on assignments, etc.

Outlines the course learning objectives

- Clarify to your students what they should be able to accomplish by the end of the course.
- Use measurable verbs in your learning objectives that associate them to the relevant assessments.

Describes how students' learning will be assessed

- Clearly explain how you will determine if students grasped the learning objectives.
- A mix of formative and summative assessments provide students with low stakes opportunities to practice skills and high stakes opportunities to show mastery.

Explains your long-term goals for the course

- Tell your students what you hope they take from this course after the semester is over. What do you want them to remember about your course one year from now? Five years from now?
- Include goals that incorporate a variety of dimensions of learning (see Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning).

KSU Syllabus Resources

[KSU Syllabus Template](#)

[KSU Syllabus Checklist](#)

Learning-Centered Syllabus Resources:

[A Learner-Centered Syllabus Helps Set the Tone for Learning](#)

[University of Virginia's Syllabus Rubric and Resources](#)

References:

Fink, L. Dee. (2003) *Creating significant learning experiences: An integrated approach to designing college courses*. San Francisco: Wiley.

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Wiggins and McTighe. (2005) *Understanding by design*. New Jersey: Pearson.

*For more information on developing or revising your syllabus, please contact
CETL Scholarly Teaching: <https://facultydevelopment.kennesaw.edu/>*

