

Online Course Syllabus Checklist

The minimum requirements for course syllabi are specified in section 10.02.a.3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with the SIU Faculty Association, and in section 11.04.a.3 of the CBA with the NTT Faculty Association. The language is identical in each CBA and is as follows:

Syllabus: The course syllabus is a document that must be provided to all students at the beginning of each semester (if possible at the first class meeting). Its contents must include, at minimum, course goals and topics, types of assignments (e.g., readings, types of oral and written exercises, term papers, etc.), and the means to be used in the evaluation of students. Additionally, the instructor is to provide his/her office hours, office location, and office telephone number as well as, if available, a University e-mail address.

Items on the Online Course Syllabus Checklist, below, that are not among the minimum requirements specified above should be viewed as best-practice recommendations from the Office of Extended Campus and the Center for Teaching Excellence.

Note: Although both face-to-face and online syllabi contain a lot of the same information, they also include and exclude a variety of information depending on the course format and activities. The following checklist is to emphasize the unique differences for an online class syllabus. Please refer to the Complete SIU Syllabus posted on the Office of the Associate Provost for Academic Programs website for traditional syllabus best practice recommendations.

- Pre-Course Contact:** Confirm that your students know how to log-in to your course and have all the information they need to be prepared prior to the first day of online course access. This includes login information, textbook requirements, and any necessary technical equipment.
- Technical Requirements:** Include technical requirements such as software and auxiliary equipment (web camera, microphone, etc.). Also describe what basic technical skills students will need in order to complete the requirements of the course.
- Dates:** Identify the course start and end dates. Also clarify when students will no longer have access to online course content.
- Course Goal:** Provide a broadly stated, overarching description of what students will achieve upon conclusion of the course.
- Course Objectives:** Provide students with course objectives that are clear and measurable. This will help you more accurately identify the methods to check student learning and assess for mastery. Using action verbs (such as describe, demonstrate, apply) help clarify what students should be able to do. (Terms like “understand” are not measurable.) Make sure that you have thought of learning activities that will help you determine whether students have met the course objectives.
- Calendar:** Ensure that students can see each week of the course at a glance during its duration. Providing a repetition of due dates may also be helpful to students.
- Texts and Assigned Readings:** Be sure to include information on where students can obtain the assigned course materials. In an online course, all efforts should be made to provide digital access to assigned readings.

- ❑ **Course Expectations and Grading:** Provide as much clarity as possible, such as the level of participation you expect in discussions or group assignments. Provide guidelines, checklists or rubrics to help students produce better work. Sharing grading criteria in advance will help your students know upfront how their assignments will be scored during the course.
- ❑ **Assignments:** Ensure that students know how many points will be assigned for each learning activity in your class, as well as the due date and deadline (with the time zone specified) for submitting work. (Note that it is easy to confuse a.m. and p.m. Avoid using “midnight” as a deadline. To avoid confusion, use 11:59 p.m. instead.)
- ❑ **Exams:** Include exam procedures especially if exams will be proctored. Proctored exams require pre-arrangements with Testing Services: <http://testingservices.siu.edu/ForInstructors/index.html>.
- ❑ **Total Point Breakdown:** Make sure that your students know what they need to do to achieve each letter grade in the course.
- ❑ **Communication:** Include information on how your online students can best communicate with you such as email, phone, discussion board, virtual office hours, etc. Include your plan on a realistic response time to their emails. (For example, if a 24 hour turn around on an email is not realistic to you, be sure to clarify what they can expect.)
- ❑ **Attendance:** If you are using a former in-class syllabus, be sure to revise any reference to “seated” attendance. In addition, be sure to include your expectations of your students regarding any specific time commitments, such as logging in to the course multiple days per week and any synchronous events (video conferences, skype, etc.) that students are expected to attend at a specific date & time.
- ❑ **Netiquette:** Provide online etiquette information and expectations. Some students have a tendency to express themselves in a chat room, discussion board, or via email in ways that they might not in person. Including a statement about Netiquette lets students know that you will not tolerate discourteous behavior in your course.
- ❑ **Technical Issues:** Address technical issues and provide a protocol for students if technology fails. (Examples may include: Contacting the instructor immediately or having students take a screen capture of what is displayed (such as an error page) and including the computer time clock in the screenshot.)
- ❑ **Technical Support:** Provide login information, links to tutorials, and how to access the SIUonline Help Desk. Consider linking to the following Online Student Success Guide <http://cte.siu.edu/idblog/student-resources/online-student-success-guide/>.
- ❑ **Supports for Students with Disabilities:** Ensure that students are aware that you will work with Disability Support Services (DSS) to arrange any accommodations that they may need for the course. Online courses may be difficult for students with visual and hearing impairments, so be sure to provide the contact information for DSS (<http://disabilityservices.siu.edu/>).
- ❑ **Syllabus Attachment:** Include the syllabus attachment for your corresponding semester from the Office of the Associate Provost for Academic Programs website: <http://pvcaa.siu.edu/links/index.html>

For additional assistance and development support, contact an Instructional Designer at the Center for Teaching Excellence.