Faculty Council on Academic Standards Syllabus Guidelines

Statement of Intent for these Guidelines

The general principle behind providing a syllabus is to provide a clear statement of course content and performance expectations from the beginning of a class. This statement should be available in a durable and accessible form, whether on paper or online. The guidelines below are intended to assist faculty in developing that statement for new and revised course proposals. The first two sections of these guidelines address expectations that reviewers will have concerning a syllabus that is a part of an application for a course. The guidelines are also intended to provide information about best practices and resources for syllabi in general. The sample syllabi included below provide different examples of how to provide course content, expectations, and resources for students in different disciplines.

Syllabus Format

A syllabus is required as part of the documentation submitted for review of all new course applications and proposals to substantively change existing courses. In addition to forming an important aspect of the review of course proposals, the syllabus is kept by the Office of the University Registrar to aid in documenting the course content for students. Besides its administrative purpose, students depend on the information on a syllabus to understand what is expected of them in the course. While disciplines will vary in the format and specific content of the syllabus, certain components are important for most courses. A syllabus **should** provide the following information:

1. **Course description**
   a. Logistics to obtain necessary materials and assistance
   b. Learning/intellectual content
   c. Learning objectives
   d. Characteristics of class meeting (online, lecture-based, seminar, etc.)
2. **Course assessment/expectations**
   a. Explicit description of due dates and type of assessments, including method (points, percentages, etc.) and general criteria (participation, improvement, content correctness, etc.), for each assignment
   b. Strategies for success in the course
   c. Overall course grading system (absolute scale, curve, etc.)
3. **Course policies[1]**
   a. Academic misconduct
   b. Accommodation
   c. Grading
   d. Inclusivity
   e. Medical notes
   f. Technology protocol

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[1] These course policies are discussed in the following section.

Policies for Syllabi

Academic Misconduct: The university's policy on plagiarism and academic misconduct is a part of the Student Conduct Code, which cites the definition of academic misconduct in the WAC 478-121. (WAC is an abbreviation for the Washington Administrative Code, the set of state regulations for the university. The entire chapter of the WAC on the student conduct code is here.) According to this section of the WAC, academic misconduct includes

> "Cheating"—such as "unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes", "Falsification" "which is the intentional use or submission of falsified data, records, or other information including, but not limited to, records of internship or practicum experiences or attendance at any required event(s), or scholarly research"; and "Plagiarism" which includes "[t]he use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment."

Departments, schools, colleges and campuses have statements on plagiarism which may be used on a syllabus rather than the definition above. In addition, the University Libraries provides a comprehensive list of tools for understanding and preventing plagiarism.

Students have a right to due process, particularly regarding academic misconduct. Thus, the syllabus is important in providing students with a clear statement of the instructor's expectations. For further discussion of what is meant by the students' right to due process, see the section on the subject in the FROG

Accommodation: Instructors are obligated to provide reasonable accommodations for students who have disabilities. The university's Disability Resources Office (DRO) is the campus partner that provides services for students "with either temporary or permanent physical, health, learning, sensory or psychological disabilities."

Below is the opening paragraph of the statement that the DRO recommends including in a syllabus

> Access and Accommodations: Your experience in this class is important to me. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

The website for the DRO provides other resources for students and faculty for making accommodations.

Grading

Participation: Instructors may not grade students based on attendance. Generally, students cannot be assessed for their behavior and attendance is considered a behavior (See Faculty Resource on Grading (FROG) at https://depts.washington.edu/grading/conduct/grading.html). Students may be assessed on their participation in the classroom as long as the rubric used to assess the quality of that participation is explicit (i.e., described in detail in the syllabus) and not based solely on attendance. In courses where the pedagogy requires that more than 15% of the course grade be based on in-class participation, the assessment rubric is critical so that students understand what is expected of them. Best-practice examples and other information can be found at the Center for

Teaching and Learning website: http://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/. Since disciplines have differing methods of teaching, there are also different types of grading on participation. Departmental, school and college guidelines may provide specific guidelines about participation for certain types of courses. For the purpose of the syllabus, what is most important is providing clear expectations of how participation will be used for evaluation purposes in the class.

Extra credit: Extra credit is discouraged. Should it be used, extra credit opportunities must be offered judiciously and not as a replacement for primary course material. Such opportunities are to be: fair; that is, available to all students equally; not dependent upon a specific time outside the regularly scheduled class period (e.g. attending a specific talk or performance); not dependent upon the ability to travel to or from specific locations (e.g. attending a specific talk or performance); not dependent upon the expression of political or social interest (e.g. caucusing, voting, watching a debate, volunteering); and made explicit in the syllabus. In no event should extra credit be offered to only a subset of students. If any student in a class cannot feasibly complete an extra credit opportunity, the instructor should offer an alternate but commensurate opportunity to that student.

Peer evaluation: Peer evaluation must be used judiciously and in moderation. Peer evaluation may not replace grading by the instructor; while peer evaluation may be included in a grading rubric, students are not to assign grades to other students.

Incompletes: An incomplete grade (I) is given only when a student has done satisfactory work up until the last two weeks of the quarter but cannot complete the remaining work because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student's control. The instructor must file a written statement with the head of the department or the dean of the college listing the work that a student will need to do to remove the incomplete. For further information on incompletes, see how the Registrar treats them and the university policy on their use.

Inclusivity: Among the core values of the university are inclusivity and diversity, regardless of race, gender, income, ability, beliefs, and other ways that people distinguish themselves and others. The Diversity page provides an overview of the ways the university addresses this value. Inclusivity applied to teaching a course means that assignments and activities should be accessible to all students, including class trips or research in the field. In such cases, alternative assignments should be available to those who need them.

Medical Notes: Instructors are **strongly** discouraged from requiring medical or legal documentation from a student for any absences.   Requiring such documentation places burdens on all parties involved. For faculty, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) imposes legal requirements upon those who possess the medical information of others (in particular, identifiable health information falls under "The HIPAA Privacy Rule"). For health care providers, in particular Hall Health, requests for "medical excuse notes" consume valuable time that could be spent treating students. For students, requiring documentation discriminates against students who do not have access to medical or legal providers.

In the cases of absences that result in a student missing a course requirement (class activity, assignment submission, exam, e.g.) and of extended absences, accommodations are left to the discretion of the instructor. Accommodations might include makeup exams, alternate assignments,

or alternate weighting of missed work, so long as the grades for other students in the class are not affected by the accommodation."

Technology Protocol: There is no general policy on the use of technology (phones, tablets, laptops, etc.) at the university. However, instructors can set expectations about how these devices may be used, including banning them (except in cases where a disability may require use of a device). Any policy on the use of electronics should be included in the syllabus.

Other Resources

Disability Resources for Students: Disability Resources for Students is housed in Mary Gates and provides a host of resources for students. In addition, The Access Technology Center, providing support for access to university technology, is also located in Mary Gates.

Faculty Resource on Grading: The FROG is a site that has been developed by the Office of Educational Assessment with input from FCAS and the Office on Student Conduct. It provides explanations of the UW grading system, grading on participation, academic conduct, and other topics.

Syllabus Design:. The Center for Teaching and Learning is a campus resource for all aspects of teaching. They provide advice on course design and syllabus development, beginning with http://www.washington.edu/teaching/teaching-resources/preparing-to-teach/designing-your-course-and-syllabus/ The UW Tacoma Faculty Assembly has a webpage that provides statements for inclusion in syllabi on topics addressed above and others such as classroom civility. The UW Bothell Campus Council on Academic Standards & Curriculum (CCASC) has a list of FAQs for developing a syllabus for a course requiring curriculum review. The Chronicle of Higher Education has a website on syllabus development.

The Student Conduct Code: Chapter 478-121 of the Washington Administrative Code is the set of official policies developed to implement the Revised Code of Washington, which was passed as a statute by the Legislature. The Student Governance Policy, Chapter 209, is on academic misconduct. The code describes instances of misconduct as well as rights to privacy and due process that students have**.**

UW Libraries Resource on Plagiarism Prevention: This useful guide for students is found at http://www.lib.washington.edu/teaching/plagiarism