

# Syllabus Guidelines

Last updated: February 26, 2021



**University  
of Victoria**  
Learning and  
Teaching Support  
and Innovation

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**Adapted from:**

Grunert O'Brien, J. (2008). *The course syllabus: A learning-centered approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, and *Preparing Your Course Syllabus* by Marty Wall

**For:** Laurene Sheilds, Executive Director



## Syllabus Guidelines

No single syllabus format or content applies to every university course. However, a number of components can make the course syllabus more informative, useful, and engaging. The course syllabus serves at least four functions: (a) a contract between you and your students that guides everyone's behaviour toward successful learning (b) a tool you can use in designing a new course or revising an existing course, (c) an historical record that documents the course structure and procedures, and (d) a resource for the external review of your teaching. Therefore your course syllabus should engage and inform students and focus your teaching; it should reflect the overall organization and purpose of the course; it should be a structured snapshot of the course that you can preserve in your teaching dossier; and it should facilitate evaluation of your teaching. Inclusion of the following components will help ensure that your syllabus serves these functions. Further, the suggested components below comply with [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) requirements.<sup>1</sup>

### General Information

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
Course name, department, number, section, key dates and times, and location(s).			
Instructor and TA office hours, locations, contact information, and communication protocol for the course			
Course prerequisites and how the course fits into university programs			
Instructor bio and teaching statement that includes relevant background, teaching experience, and research interests and experience			
Website and/or Brightspace information			
Opportunities for students to provide feedback, such as early, mid-term, and CES are described			

<sup>1</sup> For further information see: <https://mtsac.libguides.com/udl/syllabus>

**Course Environment**

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
Tone is positive, respectful, and inviting. "I," "we," and "you" are used instead of "students" and "instructor."			
Active rather than passive voice is used (e.g. "I will assess your learning..." rather than "your learning will be assessed...")			
Purpose and value of course is described as a series of opportunities rather than as a series of hurdles			
Communicates high expectations and confidence of success <sup>2</sup>			
Syllabus is well-organized, easy to navigate, and available both electronically and in hardcopy formats			

**Intended Learning Outcome**

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
Course-level intended learning outcomes are clearly articulated so that students know what they need to do in the course to be successful			
...with action verbs			
...appropriately pitched			
Unit-level intended learning outcomes are clearly articulated so that students know what they need to do in each unit to be successful			
...with action verbs			
...appropriately pitched			

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<sup>2</sup> Clearly state what students need to do to be successful in the course. This may include having students set goals, self-assess, and establish criteria for judging their performance. As the instructor, design activities so that students take responsibility.

**Assessment Activities**

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
Assessments are aligned with intended learning outcomes			
Summative assessments clearly described, percentages assigned, how they support intended learning outcomes explained, and if appropriate, links to examples			
Formative assessments aligned with summative assessments			
Assessments effectively spaced and sequenced			
Formative assessments frequency provides sufficient practice opportunities			
Grading information provided ( <a href="#">Undergraduate Grading Scale</a> )			
Rubrics for assignments provided or indicated that they will be provided			
Study guides, suggestions, or other aids to support learning provided			
Multiple ways are provided to submit assignments			

**Learning Activities**

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
Course schedule with unit-level intended learning outcomes			
Major topics, questions, and dates listed			
Learning activities are aligned with assessment and intended learning outcomes			
Learning activities derive from evidence-based practices			
Learning activities are active and provide timely formative feedback			

## Required Readings and Materials

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed		Well developed
Required readings with complete citations, price, and where available explained, and accessible to students prior to the course beginning (to allow time for conversion to an alternate formats if needed)			
Explanation as to why required readings were chosen			
Additional resources required, approximate costs, and purposes			

## Policies, University Support Services and Acknowledgements

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
<p><a href="#">Medical documentation for absences:</a></p> <p>Faculty and instructors are asked to waive the medical documentation requirement (i.e. a physical or mental health care practitioner's note) for students—regardless of how long they are ill—for the summer and fall 2020 terms (check with department for Spring 2021).</p>			
<p><a href="#">Captioning Statement:</a></p> <p>Auto-generated captioning is enabled in this course. Please be aware that automated captioning is at best 70-90% accurate and by nature will include error. This depends on the subject matter, speaker, audio quality etc. Words prone to error include specialized terminology and proper names. Students are asked to refer to the audio feed for clarification of any errors. If you find captioning that is offensive, please contact your instructor and/or teaching assistant so that they are aware. If you require captions as part of an academic accommodation, please contact <a href="#">CAL</a>.</p>			
Attendance (lateness and absences) policy			
Missed or late exams and assignments policies with rationale			
Personal electronic devices use and civility policies			
Participation policy, <a href="#">expectations related to English usage</a> , and referencing system (e.g. APA), or other expected academic conduct related to your discipline or faculty			

## Policies, University Support Services and Acknowledgements (continued)

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
<p><a href="#">Academic integrity<sup>3</sup> guidelines</a></p> <p>Students are required to abide by all academic regulations set as set out in the University calendar, including standards of academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity (e.g. cheating and plagiarism) are considered serious and may result in significant penalties.</p>			
<p><a href="#">Accessibility and accommodation policy</a></p>			
<p>Other: emergency preparedness, how to <a href="#">request for academic concession</a>, pronouns, explicit content, mental health and wellness, inclusivity and diversity, <a href="#">privacy and access to information</a>, and <a href="#">sexual misconduct</a></p>			
<p><a href="#">Mental Health Statement</a></p> <p>A note to remind you to take care of yourself. Diminished mental health can interfere with optimal academic performance. Do your best to engage in self-care and maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. The source of symptoms might be related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. However, problems with other parts of your life can also contribute to decreased academic performance. The UVic Counselling Services provides cost-free and confidential mental health services to help you manage personal challenges that impact your emotional or academic well-being.</p>			
<p><a href="#">Territory acknowledgement</a> and link to <a href="#">First Peoples House</a></p> <p>We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.</p>			
<p>Support services:</p> <p><a href="#">Learn Anywhere</a> is the student support portal for a full range of student academic and support services. Services include: <a href="#">Centre for Academic Communication</a>, <a href="#">Math &amp; Stats Assistance Centre</a>, <a href="#">Counselling Services</a>, <a href="#">Health Services</a>, <a href="#">Library</a>, <a href="#">Ombudsperson</a>, and <a href="#">Computer Help Desk</a></p>			

<sup>3</sup> Another way of phrasing this is to have a section about, “How you can protect your intellectual credibility.”

## Policies, University Support Services and Acknowledgements (continued)

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
<p><b>Accessible Learning</b></p> <p>The University of Victoria is committed to creating a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you have a disability or chronic health condition, or think you may have a disability, you may also want to meet with an advisor at the <a href="#">Centre for Accessible Learning</a> (CAL).</p>			
<p><b><u>Online conduct statement</u></b></p> <p>The University of Victoria is committed to promoting critical academic discourse while providing a respectful and supportive learning environment. All members of the university community have the right to this experience, and the responsibility to help create, such an environment. The University will not tolerate racism, sexualized violence, or any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment.</p> <p>Please be advised that by logging into UVic's learning systems and interacting with online resources you are engaging in a university activity.</p> <p>All interactions within this environment are subject to the university expectations and policies. Any concerns about student conduct, may be reviewed and responded to in accordance with the appropriate university policy.</p> <p>To report concerns about online student conduct: <a href="mailto:onlineconduct@uvic.ca">onlineconduct@uvic.ca</a></p>			
<p><b>Copyright</b></p> <p>All course content and materials are made available by instructors for educational purposes and for the exclusive use of students registered in their class<sup>4</sup>. The material is protected under copyright law, even if not marked with a ©. Any further use or distribution of materials to others requires the written permission of the instructor, except under fair dealing or another exception in the Copyright Act. Violations may result in disciplinary action under the <a href="#">Resolution of Non-Academic Misconduct Allegations policy (AC1300)</a>.</p>			

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<sup>4</sup> Syllabi belong to the department through which the course is administered.

### University of Victoria Students' Society (UVSS) Statement

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
The <a href="#">UVSS</a> is a social justice based non-profit run by students, for students and is entirely separate from UVic. As an undergrad student, you are already a member! We work on issues affecting students such as affordability, public transit, sexualized violence, sustainability, student employment, and much more. We fund clubs and course unions, and have several advocacy groups. We also have a Food Bank and Free Store, a Peer Support Centre, and run your health and dental plan. We are here to support you, so please reach out to us at <a href="#">uvss.ca</a> !			

### Organization and Aesthetics

Component	Strength of Evidence		
	Well developed	Developed	Needs developing
Section 1: Course information, territory acknowledgement, instructor and TA contact and office hour information			
Section 2: Course Intended Learning Outcomes			
Section 3: Assessment			
Section 4: Instructional strategies and course outline with unit-level learning outcomes			
Section 5: University, departmental, and course policies			
Fonts have to be accessible, readable and images create interest			
Visually appealing			