

Resolution 2012-11. On Guidelines for Course Syllabi.

The Faculty Council resolves:

Preamble

In the section, Suggested Classroom Procedures, in the 2012-13 Undergraduate Bulletin, p. 402, the following statements appear: “In general, instructors are strongly encouraged to follow the guidelines for course design and classroom procedures recommended by the Center for Faculty Excellence. When students enter into a learning relationship, they have certain needs and expectations. They are entitled to information about course procedures, content, and goals. Instructors should provide a syllabus that describes the course and methods of evaluation. Particular attention should be paid to several areas of special concern to students, including provision of reserve readings and grading policy. The Faculty Council endorses the following guidelines for the faculty–student relationship. This endorsement shall not be construed as faculty legislation, is not intended to establish a contractual undertaking by the University or any individual, and shall not constitute the basis for civil action in a court or a claim in any administrative or judicial body of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.”

The purpose of this Resolution is to establish guidelines for use by the College of Arts and Sciences and the several professional schools in establishing requirements for course syllabi appropriate to their various learning environments.

Guidelines

Each course offered for credit has a syllabus that addresses the elements detailed below. A syllabus must be provided to students no later than the first day of class and is retained by the respective department or educational unit of the University for a period of 4 years.

Course Identifiers: The course number, section number, department, term, and times at which the class meets are stated.

Instructor Identifiers: The instructor’s name, office location, office hours, phone number(s), email address, and web address are provided.

Target Audience: The syllabus explains how the course fits into a broader educational program and to whom the course is targeted.

Course Prerequisites: The syllabus explains course prerequisites or other important rules that describe who is eligible to take the course, who can obtain credit, and how to satisfy any special course registration requirements.

Course Goals and Key Learning Objectives: The syllabus states course goals and key learning objectives. It is important for students to understand what they will accomplish by taking the course. Course goals and objectives are not simply statements about course topics. They are descriptions of competencies that students should expect to develop in the course.

Course Requirements: The syllabus explains what kinds of work students must do to successfully complete the course, such as whether students will be discussing literature, working problems, or undertaking other activities. The syllabus also lists any other requirements such as mandatory recitations, labs, term papers, or mandatory activities

outside of class meeting times.

Dates: As far as possible, the dates of all examinations and due dates for important assignments are listed.

Grades: The rules that the instructor uses to assign grades are explained in sufficient detail to clearly inform students as to how their grades will be determined. In particular, the syllabus states how student participation in class will be assessed.

Course Policies: The instructor explains his or her expectations for student conduct during the course. Examples include the consequences of missing an exam; whether regular attendance is expected; the consequences for missing class too often; whether or not late work is accepted and, if so, how late work is penalized. The syllabus states that the course final exam is given in compliance with UNC final exam regulations and according to the UNC Final Exam calendar.

Course Resources: The syllabus provides a list of required text books and other course resources, and an explanation of how to access them. It also lists teaching assistants for the course and provides their contact information, and explains whether and how Sakai is used.

Honor Code: The syllabus explains requirements for the course that could have Honor Code consequences, such as whether students are permitted to work together on problem sets, what help they are permitted to obtain in preparing various assignments, and whether exams are closed or open book.

Time Table: The syllabus contains a course calendar that gives topics and assignments for each class meeting.

Syllabus Changes: It is appropriate to include in the syllabus a clause that informs students of possible modifications, such as “The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.”

Submitted by the Educational Policy Committee.

Comment: The teaching – learning process develops from clearly communicated expectations. A course syllabus serves as a concise vehicle for providing course scope, defining course parameters, establishing course goals, and setting expectations. It is the blueprint from which faculty establish course structure and students build their experiences. Key syllabus components provide students with the framework to move through the course predictably and systematically.