Syllabus Review Tool

Updated: July 2025

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Expectations regarding syllabus design and content are influenced by Faculty and Departmental expectations. It is important to check with your Departmental supports for guidance in addition to using this tool.

Review for Common Components

The following list outlines the common components of a complete and thorough course syllabus. Use the list to identify any outstanding content you may wish or need to add.

Instructor Information

- Instructor name(s) and contact information
- Teaching Assistant (TA) name(s) and contact information
- Name(s) and contact information for any other members of the teaching team
- Office hours and location
- Statement of identity and/or land acknowledgement

Course Information

- Course code and title
- Course description
- Information regarding locations, dates, times
- Pre-requisites, Anti-requisites
- Course learning outcomes
- Rational explaining course approach and/or teaching philosophy
- Overview list of all major assignments, weight of assignments for calculating overall course grade, and due dates

Course Materials

- Information regarding required/supplementary readings, textbooks, and materials
- Information regarding technology requirements for participation in the course (which tools will be used, such as onQ, Feedback Fruits)

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Course Schedule

- Schedule of topics, weeks, or modules
- Indication of required and optional course events
- Consider integrating information on relevant due dates into the course schedule

Assignment Details

- Written outline explaining each assignment task
- Indication of the evaluation criteria that will be used to grade students work (e.g. rubrics or indication of where rubrics are available)
- Instructions on how/where to submit assignments, along with a reiteration of due dates

Institutional and Departmental Policies

- Statement on Academic Integrity
- Statement on Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Policy
- Information regarding the grading scheme adopted for the course
- Conditions of Use for Turnitin
- Examination policies
- Information for students wishing to pursue academic appeal
- Other policy statements related to Queen's student policies
- Policy on Generative AI use

Course Policies

Course policies are set at the discretion of the instructor and may include:

- A statement on attendance or participation expectations
- Policy/practice on missed or late assignment submissions
- Policy/practice for students facing extenuating circumstances
- Statement on practices for equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism in the course

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Supports For Students

Course policies are set at the discretion of the instructor and may include:

- A statement on attendance or participation expectations
- Policy/practice on missed or late assignment submissions

Inclusive by Design

This section is adapted from Brantmeier, Broscheid, and Moore's Inclusive by Design Worksheet (CC BY-SA). This section is intended to support examination of a particular syllabus to get a broader perspective on inclusion in your teaching practices.

Inclusion and Syllabus Text

Summarize your thoughts quantitatively, using the five-point scales provided. In addition, you may want to write short explanatory notes for each question that provides examples and/or describe why you selected a particular score.

Frame and Tone of the Syllabus

Tone: What is the balance between inviting, friendly, and supportive sections and rules or prohibitions in your syllabus? Is the syllabus written in an inviting, friendly, and supportive tone, or is it mainly a list of rules and regulations?

Rules and Regulations	1	2	3	4	5	Inviting

Perspectives: Does the syllabus communicate openness to multiple perspectives and experiences, or is it mainly focused on one perspective?

One Perspective	1	2	3	4	5	Multiple Perspectives

Student Appeal: Does the course description/introduction appeal to a variety of students and perspectives or does it mainly target one type of student?

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One Type of Student	1	2	3	4	5	Variety of Students

Accessible Document: How accessibility is your syllabus as a document?

Rules and Regulations	1	2	3	4	5	Inviting

Learning Outcomes

Clarity: Are course learning outcomes clearly stated or mainly implied?

Mainly Implied	1	2	3	4	5	Clearly Stated

Student Interests: To what extent do the outcomes appeal to a range or variety of student interests? Do the outcomes appeal to and reflect the interests and learning needs of different groups of students?

Appeal to one type of student	1	2	3	4	5	Appeal to a range of students

Learning Domains: To what extent do the learning outcomes appeal to the head, heart, and hand? In other words, do they cover the cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and spiritual domains of learning?

Outcomes belong to one domain	1	2	3	4	5	Outcomes cover various domains

Levels: To what extent do outcomes appeal to different levels or types of thinking? E.g. summary, evaluation, application, analysis, synthesis, etc.

One Level	1	2	3	4	5	Multiple Levels

Diversity: To what extent do some of the outcomes aim at diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, or decolonizing knowledge, skills, or attitudes?

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None relate	1	2	3	4	5	All outcomes relate

Assessment

Variety: To what extent does the course employ a variety of assignments? Do the students have a variety of ways to show what they know or does the course rely on a few types of performance?

One type of assignment	1	2	3	4	5	Several types of assignment

Formative Assessment: Is there a variety of formative assessments (assignments) that provide students with immediate feedback and opportunities to improve?

No formative assessment	1	2	3	4	5	Many formative assessments

Alignment: To what extent do assessments measure student knowledge and skills that are taught in the class and correspond to outcomes?

Strong Misalignment	1	2	3	4	5	Strong Alignment

Fixed and Flexible Options: Is divergent and creative thinking rewarded or do assessments necessitate a common norm or standard of performance?

Assessments require a norm	1	2	3	4	5	Assessments reward creativity

Diversity: To what extent do some of the assessments aim at diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, or decolonizing knowledge, skills, or attitudes?

None relate	1	2	3	4	5	All outcomes relate

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Teaching & Learning Activities

Culturally Responsive Teaching: To what extent do teaching activities meet the needs of diverse learners, expectations, ways of processing information, and performative styles?

Teaching addresses one type of need	1	2	3	4	5	Teaching addresses a diverse set of needs

Flexibility and Adaptation: How much flexibility is there in the course design to modify and adjust to meet the learning opportunities in the moment as they arise?

No flexibility	1	2	3	4	5	High degree of flexibility

Alignment: To what extent do teaching activities connect to the knowledge, skills, and values that are taught in the class and correspond to outcomes?

Strong misalignment	1	2	3	4	5	Strong alignment

Interaction Patterns: Do learning activities promote inclusive interaction between learners? Do students cooperatively learn together? Or is instruction largely independent?

Independent	1	2	3	4	5	Collaborative

Shared Teaching: Do students have shared responsibility in their and their fellow students' learning? For example, leading discussion groups, reteaching concepts, otherwise contributing to teaching?

Instructor alone responsible for teaching	1	2	3	4	5	Students largely responsible for teaching

Engagement: To what extent are students encouraged to interact with the instructor and with each other

No interaction	1	2	3	4	5	Interaction strongly encouraged through various means

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Content

Perspectives: To what extent do materials, such as readings, provide a spectrum of perspectives on topics?

Materials are focused on one perspective	1	2	3	4	5	Materials present a wide variety of perspectives

Voice: To what extent do course materials represent a variety of voices–particularly those historically marginalized, under-represented, or not valued by the academy?

Materials are limited to mainstream	1	2	3	4	5	Materials represent broader diversity

Pace: To what extent does the pace of the course allow for multiple processing speeds and speed of work?

Content requires common pace	1	2	3	4	5	Content permits for multiple speeds

Course Materials: To what extent does the format of course materials offer different modes of engagement (written text, visual and audio materials)?

One format	1	2	3	4	5	Multiple formats

Accessibility: To what extent is the course material accessible to all students, including those with disabilities?

Materials pose barriers to access	1	2	3	4	5	Materials are accessible

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Inclusion and Subtext

In this section, write short responses to explore the implicit assumptions, rules, and requirements of your course.

Implicit Rules

What formal and informal rules, assumptions, and values are important to the course but not stated in the syllabus?

Implicit Messages

What unwritten messages does the syllabus convey about the course, content, and learning? Is there a "hidden curriculum" embedded in the syllabus?

Hidden Biases

In what ways does the "hidden curriculum" potentially discriminate against some students? For example, do you only use one type of assessment to determine grades? Might this unintentionally disadvantage some students who excel at other forms of assessment?

Teaching Philosophy

What is your teaching philosophy and how does the syllabus communicate it to students? Do you clearly communicate your philosophy?

References

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