Syllabus Review Tool

This tool can be used to examine a particular course syllabus from various perspectives. It is important to note that 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 this tool.

# Review for Common Components

The following list outlines the common components of a complete and thorough course syllabus. Use the check 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, Perusall)

## 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](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-integrity-policy)

Statement on [Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Policy](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/academic-accommodations-students-disabilities-policy)

Information regarding the grading scheme adopted for the course

Statement on the use of [Turnitin](https://webpublish.queensu.ca/onqswww/turnitin-conditions)

[Examination policies](https://www.queensu.ca/registrar/exams)

Information for students wishing to pursue [academic appeal](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/student-academic-appeals-policy)

Other policy statements related to [Queen’s student policies](https://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/student-policy-index)

## 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

## 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 |  | | | Inviting |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Perspectives

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| One Perspective |  | | | Multiple Perspectives |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Student Appeal

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| One type of student |  | | | Variety of Students |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Accessible Document

How accessibility is your syllabus as a document? For resources on document

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rules and Regulations |  | | | Inviting |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Learning Outcomes

### Clarity

Are course learning outcomes clearly stated or mainly implied?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mainly Implied |  | | | Clearly Stated |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### 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 |  | | | Appeal to a range of students |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### 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 |  | | | Outcomes cover various domains |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Levels

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| One Level |  | | | Multiple Levels |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Diversity

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| None relate |  | | | All outcomes relate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### 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 |  | | | Several types of assignment |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Formative Assessment

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No formative assessment |  | | | Many formative assessments |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Alignment

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strong  Misalignment |  | | | Strong Alignment |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### 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 |  | | | Assessments reward creativity |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Diversity

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| None relate |  | | | All outcomes relate |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### 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 |  | | | Teaching addresses a diverse set of needs |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Flexibility and Adaptation

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No flexibility |  | | | High degree of flexibility |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### 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 |  | | | Strong alignment |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Interaction Patterns

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Independent |  | | | Collaborative |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### 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 |  | | | Students largely responsible for teaching |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Engagement

To what extent do you encourage students to interact with you and with each other

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

### Content

### Perspectives

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

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

### 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 |  | | | Materials represent broader diversity |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Pace

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

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

### Course Materials

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

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| One format |  | | | Multiple formats |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### Accessibility

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

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

## 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 of 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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Pardon, Y. N., Waxman, H. C., & Rivera, H. H. (2002). Educating Hispanic students: Effective instructional practices (Practitioner Brief #5).