CAS Syllabus Checklist

Overview

In order to communicate effectively with reviewers, and ultimately with students, please include the following elements, in this order, on your syllabus:

I. Course identity, teaching staff, and logistics
II. Course description
III. Expected learning outcomes
IV. Estimated student workload
V. How grades will be determined
VI. Course schedule and assignments
VII. Course policies: e.g. etiquette/inclusiveness, academic integrity, late or missed work
VIII. Supporting material

Further instructions, including the desired level of detail, are given below for each of the elements.

You are free to construct a syllabus that is appropriate for your field and that suits your pedagogical style, but keep in mind that your syllabus will be evaluated by reviewers who are non-specialists. Moreover, reviewers try to consider syllabi from the perspective of other non-specialists – namely, students. They want to ensure that important information is included in a clear form. This will allow students to understand the content of a course, its place in the curriculum, and its workload and grading expectations—both in a general sense and on a weekly basis.

I. Course Identity, Teaching Staff, and Logistics

- Subject code, course number, and course title
- Instructor and GTF names
  - Contact information
  - Office hour information (time and place)
- Classroom and section/lab information (estimated meeting times and locations)
- Required course materials (e.g. books, course packets) and where to obtain them (Duckstore, Canvas, Library reserves)
- Course website (if applicable)

Detail on GTFs, sections/labs, and required course materials may be placed in a later section if this is needed to keep the course description on the first page of the syllabus.

II. Course Description

Provide a description that is long enough (typically 100-250 words) and sufficiently specific to make your course appealing and accessible to its target student audience. Please take care to use language that is meaningful to non-specialists. If your course is intended to count toward the General Education Group requirement and/or the Multicultural requirement, indicate how the course addresses the specific criteria for those categories. If the course is part of a sequence or series, indicate how it fits conceptually with the other course(s).
III. Expected Learning Outcomes

Please devote a section of your syllabus to a list of expected learning outcomes – that is, the major skills, abilities, and concepts a student is expected to acquire from your course. The point is to make your expectations more transparent by articulating academic objectives that may be only implicit in the course description and workload design. Three to six short sentences or bullet points will suffice.

Active verbs (“evaluate,” “analyze,” “demonstrate,” etc.) are preferable to vague ones (“appreciate,” “learn,” “study,” etc.). The test of an appropriate learning outcome is that it is possible, through standard means (e.g. exam questions, papers, talks or creative projects), to determine whether a student has grasped the concept or mastered the skill in question. More guidance is available at cas.uoregon.edu/learning-outcomes.

If multiple instructors will teach the course at different times, focus on the learning outcomes that are likely to be expected by all of them.

IV. Estimated Student Workload

In a paragraph or so, succinctly describe the kinds of work students will do in your course (e.g. reading, writing papers, working problem sets, doing field work). Give an estimate of the amount of time required to complete the work in a typical week—as well as in crunch weeks, such as when papers or exams are due. If appropriate, you may also want to indicate what students will do in discussion sections or laboratories and the relationship of that work to the learning outcomes of the course as a whole.

The narrative description you provide here for students should jibe with the quantitative tally required by the curriculum committees on what is called the Student Engagement Inventory (SEI). The SEI is part of the New Course Proposal form and is used by the curriculum committees to ensure that the proper amount of credit is being assigned to the course. You probably won’t want to put an SEI on your syllabus, but you will still need to tally up how many hours you think a typical student would spend on different course tasks. Be honest! Per federal policy, one undergraduate credit hour equals 30 real hours of student work, typically 10 hours in class and 20 hours outside of class. For graduate students, it’s 40 hours per credit. This means that graduate students in 4xx/5xx courses are expected to perform roughly a third more work than their undergraduate counterparts. Be specific about what additional work graduate students will be required to do in 5xx courses; grading them more stringently is not enough.

V. How Grades Will Be Determined

List the required assignments (e.g. papers, exams, projects) and how much weight each will carry in the final grade. Describe each in enough detail (e.g. provide page length for written assignments) that a student (and reviewer) can understand what will be required. Expanded descriptions of individual assignments may be placed at the end under “Supporting Material” if desired. It’s probably obvious, but perhaps still worth noting, that your assessments of student achievement should be clearly related to the learning outcomes you’ve articulated.

Also please indicate what distinguishes A, B, C, D, and F level work for the major types of assignments—and include your policy on A+. Here, the idea is to go beyond the point ranges corresponding to particular grades, and explain qualitatively the type of achievement each grade represents. You may simply refer students to your department guidelines, posted at gradeculture.uoregon.edu if available, or provide your own.

(For 4xx/5xx courses) Describe what additional work will be expected of graduate students and how it will be graded. Again, graduate students are expected to put in a third more work than undergraduates.
VI. Course Schedule and Assignments

The format for the course schedule is flexible. Some instructors use grids while others use lists or even short paragraphs to describe the content that will be covered in the course. Grids and minimalist lists often omit key detail, however, while paragraphs can be hard to assimilate quickly. So strike a balance between clarity and detail.

Whatever format you choose, please include all of the elements below:

- Topics/titles for all individual lectures, sections, labs, and other class meetings
- Titles of conceptual units within the course (if applicable)
- Readings assigned – with indications of when they are to be completed. Include page numbers in all instances – even in cases where you also give chapter numbers*
- Due dates for all major assignments, including papers, problem sets, presentations, performances, midterms, etc.
- Final exam date, time, and location (if known)

*Page numbers (not merely chapter numbers, or book and article titles) are needed so that both reviewers and students can evaluate workload expectations. Reviewers understand that different types of material require differing amounts of time to read. However, they cannot evaluate these differences in the absence of the relevant specific information. Special circumstances that govern exceptionally high or low numbers of pages should be explained—to both the students and the committees—in the “Estimated Student Workload” section above.

VII. Course Policies

You may want to spell out your expectations with respect to behavior and individual responsibility for students in your course. Policies on the kinds of things listed below are recommended but not required for curriculum committee review.

- Classroom etiquette, inclusiveness, and prohibited discrimination
- Accessibility and disability accommodation
- Academic integrity, including citation of sources and use of external aids (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Make-up of late or missed work
- Opportunities for extra credit work
- Need for examination booklets or other materials, and where to buy them
- Formatting of papers (single or double spacing, point size, etc.)
- Technology needed for the course and related policies
- Attendance
- Recording of lectures and sharing of notes among students

VIII. Supporting Material

Expanded descriptions of course assignments may be placed here. These will help reviewers understand how students will be spending their time in your course and will also provide assurance that students will be given appropriate guidance in approaching their work.

Other material that supplements your syllabus in some way (e.g. a full bibliography of course readings) may also be placed here, if desired.