

# Office of The Ombudsperson



## Grade Evaluations

The syllabus must contain a description of the grading policy for the course. Grade disputes can usually be avoided if your policies are clearly conveyed to the students. We suggest including:

- Method of testing and evaluating
- The grading scale: the number or percentage necessary to receive a letter grade *and* what each assignment or exam is worth
- Make-up procedures for missing class, assignments, and/or tests

## Availability of Coursework

In addition, you might want to include information about the availability of a student's coursework for his or her review. Students have a right to review their work. The *General Information* catalog states that written materials that are submitted to meet the requirements of a course "that are not returned to the student must be retained by the faculty member or the department for at least one long-session semester following the completion of the course."

## E-mail

University policy suggests that students should check e-mail at a minimum of twice per week. Instructors who choose e-mail for instructional use should specify this in the syllabus.

## Special Regulations

Please check with your department and college about special regulations.

## Who We Are

We are a resource of The University of Texas at Austin. Our office is a place where students come to share their concerns. We can also help faculty, staff, and administration by providing information, problem-solving, and reporting data trends back to the university.

## What We Do

- Develop options
- Make referrals
- Clarify policy
- Explore solutions

## Common Concerns

- Grade disputes
- Financial aid concerns
- Parking and transportation issues and appeals
- Academic probation and dismissal
- Scholastic dishonesty issues
- Enrollment and registration problems
- Conflicts between students or with the university

# Guide to Writing an Effective Syllabus

In the 2008-09 school year, The University of Texas at Austin implemented a new course syllabus policy. Faculty are now required to provide students with a course syllabus on the first day of class. This brochure outlines required content and offers some additional tips on what to include in a syllabus.

The syllabus should be viewed as a contract between an instructor and the students. Hopefully, this guide will help instructors clarify their expectations for their students and simultaneously avoid future conflict. These suggestions have been compiled based on university policy and frequent concerns students bring to our office. Please call us if you have any questions or concerns.

**Office of the Ombudsperson**  
Student Services Building Room G1.404

512-471-3825

[ombuds@uts.cc.utexas.edu](mailto:ombuds@uts.cc.utexas.edu)\*

[www.utexas.edu/student/ombuds](http://www.utexas.edu/student/ombuds)

1 University Station A6000

Austin, TX 78712-0177

\*Email is not a confidential form of communication.

**Office of the Ombudsperson**

The University of Texas

at Austin

# What to Include

## Personal Information

This section of the syllabus is a place for you to specify how you can be reached and must include the following:

- Your name
- Building and office number
- Office hours
- E-mail address (recommended)
- Phone number(s) (recommended)

Including the same information for the teaching assistants of the course is also required. It is recommended that you indicate the preferred method of contact for both instructor and TA.

## Course Description

This is a description of the course. According to university policy, the syllabus must contain the following:

- Course name and number
- Course overview
- Prerequisites for the course
- Course website

It is also suggested that you include:

- Unique number
- Meeting place and time
- Labs or discussion sections information
- Final exam date and time

## Course Materials

This section must include books, supplies, and packets to be used during the semester. If a packet is required, please indicate where it is to be picked up and when it will be available.

## Class Attendance

The university requires the syllabus to state whether class attendance is used to determine the course grade. It is also suggested that you include how attendance is tracked and factored into the grade. Be specific about the number of acceptable absences and include information about ways a student can make up absences.

University policy on holy days states:

*A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.*

## Deadlines

Deadlines for course assignments should be included in the syllabus. We hear many concerns about unclear expectations. It is required that the syllabus include dates for exams and assignments that count 20% or more of the total course grade. We also recommend that you include:

- Tentative dates for all readings and assignments
- Final exam time including date, location, and format
- Other dates, such as the last day to drop and last day to change to credit/no credit

When setting your schedule for the semester, please remember that according to *University Policy Memorandum 3.201*, "No other class-related activity, with the exception of office hours," may be scheduled during the no-class days and the final examination period.

## Accommodations

The syllabus must contain the following statement regarding Services for Students with Disabilities:

*The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-6441 TTY.*

## Academic Integrity

Student Judicial Services (SJS) of the Office of the Dean of Students recommends that you include a statement in your syllabus stressing that scholastic dishonesty will not be tolerated. A suggested general statement for syllabi :

*Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information please visit the Student Judicial Services Web site: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.*

Refer to the Dean of Students Student Judicial Services website or call 471-2841 for the official university policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty.