

## Grade Evaluations

Grade disputes can usually be avoided if your policies are clearly conveyed to the students. The following grade policy **must** be included:

- Whether attendance is used in determining the final grade. A tardiness policy is also recommended
- Whether plus/minus will be assigned for the final grade.
- Description of all major course requirements and assignments, with dates and exams and assignments that count for 20% or more of the class grade.
- Make-up procedures for missing class, assignments, and/or tests

## Availability of Coursework

Students have a right to review their work. The *General Information* catalog states that submitted written materials 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.

## Posting Syllabi

University policy requires the class syllabus be provided for each organized section taught to the home department/office and any cross-listed department by the first day of class. An electronic version of this syllabi must be posted by the seventh day of class.

# Office of The Ombudsperson

## 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.

## Principles

- Confidential
- Neutral
- Independent
- Informal

## What We Do

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



# Guide to Writing an Effective Syllabus

The University of Texas at Austin implemented a new course syllabus policy in 2009. 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 in order to avoid future conflict. These suggestions have been compiled based on university policy and frequent concerns that students bring to our office. Instructors should check with their departments or colleges about special regulations. Please call us if you have any questions or concerns.

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\*Email is not a confidential form of communication.

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**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
- Office location and number
- Office hours
- E-mail address and phone number(s)

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
- Subject of each lecture/ discussion
- Course website, if any
- Final exam date and time

It is also suggested that you include:

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

## 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. You must specifically include final exam date and time. We also recommend that you include:

- Tentative dates for all readings and assignments
- 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 Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).*

## Honor code:

Best practice is that the following statement regarding the University of Texas honor code be included in the syllabus:

*The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.*

## 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.