

# Syllabus Design

## Advice from the Center for Faculty Development

The syllabus is a blueprint for a class. It provides students with a detailed plan or outline of the essential components of the course, as well as the instructor's expectations. It keeps faculty focused on a semester plan and serves students with references to due dates and course expectations. The material below explains what should be on and what could be on a well-designed syllabus. Pages 1-6 includes material that must be on your syllabus, Pages 6-9 lists optional syllabus information. A syllabus design checklist is found on page 9.

## Begin with Course Title and Number at the Top of the Syllabus

### Course Information

- Your name as the course instructor, preferred pronouns, email address, office location and office hours in person or via ZOOM
- Course title, number, section
- Days, times, location
- Semester and year
- Indicate that you are using CANVAS and that the Syllabus and Assignments can be found there
- Add link to a welcome video (optional)

### Course Description

**Your Course Description:**

*Begin with your course description.*

**Entry-level Requirements:**

*List prerequisites applicable for your course (if any apply).*

### Required Materials

**Required Textbook(s) and Other Required Course Materials:**

*Consider using free [Open Educational Resources \(Links to an external site.\)](#) (OER) as an alternative to textbooks.*

- *[Author(s), Title, Year & Edition, ISBN, Link]*
- *[Author(s), Article Title, Journal Title, Volume, Publication Date, pages, Link].*

Other Required Materials (Ex. Software):

- *[Title, Author, Year, Link]*

### Recommended Materials (Optional):

- *[Title, Author, Link]*

## Course Learning Outcomes

*Add your course learning outcomes. Course learning outcomes describe what your students will be able to do after completing the course. They are often listed as bullet points.*

### [Writing Good Learning Outcomes](#)

## Expectations and Tone

*What is expected of the instructor? What is expected of the student? You can list expectations below. Some suggestions are included here.*

- *I will ensure the accuracy of the course content.*
- *I will provide clear guidelines for course assignments.*
- *I will be available to answer your questions and provide meaningful feedback.*
- *I will do my best to create a rewarding learning experience for all of students.*
- *I will follow fair and clear grading guidelines for all course assignments.*
- *I will do my best to prepare you for exams and assignments.*

What is expected of you as a student:

- *Attend all class meetings unless you have a valid reason for missing class.*
- *Spend an average of three (3) hours each week studying and preparing for class.*
- *Complete all course readings and assignments in a timely manner.*
- *Participate respectfully and thoughtfully in class and after class discussions.*
- *Follow the ODU Honor Pledge.*
- *Do your best to succeed in this course.*
- *Contact me as your instructor if you have any problems.*

Sometimes instructors word a syllabus as a series of commands using a legalistic tone. The “promising syllabus” uses positive language and reflects an instructor’s enthusiasm for a course.

## Course Schedule

*Add Table/Chart showing the week, class meeting days, dates, topics, assignments, and due dates. Providing a detailed course schedule allows your students to understand the course topics, time commitment, and deadlines for completing their assignments.*

**EXAMPLE:**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Topic:</b>	<b>What is required to prepare for class:</b>	<b>Assignment Due Dates:</b>
List the date of the class meeting.	Give the topic for that class meeting.	List work students should complete before coming to class.	What is due in this class. List what students need to submit on this date or during this week.

**Course Disclaimer:** While it is never advisable to change the syllabus once a semester has begun, you can include language in the syllabus to explain why changes could occur.

**Sample:** *“This schedule is tentative, and it may change during the semester, especially if class is cancelled due to a weather-related or other unexpected events. The content is subject to change as well, depending on students' interests and progress. In some cases, we may need to focus longer on some topics to ensure students understand key concepts. All changes will appear in Canvas.”*

If you alter the syllabus significantly, you should issue a new syllabus.

## Grading Criteria

Every syllabus needs to show how grades will be calculated. You may use percentages or points, but let students know how they will be graded.

**Example:**

In this course, your final grade will be calculated based on the following categories:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Attendance and Participation</b>	25%
<b>Homework (10)</b>	25%
<b>Exams (3)</b>	25%
<b>Special Projects (2)</b>	25%

*Please include a grading scale. Edit to match your department or college preferred scale.*

## Grading Scale

**Letter grades will be based on the following percentage scale:**

Percentage	Letter Grade
94-100 =	A
90-93 =	A-
88-89 =	B+
84-87 =	B
80-83 =	B-
78-79 =	C+
74-78 =	C
70-73 =	C-
68-69 =	D+
64-68 =	D
<64 =	F

**Note:** ODU does not give A+ grades; A is the highest grade. The designation of the grade of "I" indicates assigned work in the course has not been completed. The grade of "I" is assigned only upon the instructor's approval of a student's request. The "I" grade may be given only in exceptional circumstances beyond the student's control, such as serious illness. In such cases, the student is responsible for notifying the instructor. The "I" grade will become an "F" if not removed by the last day of classes of the following semester (excluding the examination period) according to the following schedule: Fall semester "I" grades become "F" grades if not removed by the last day of classes in the spring semester; Spring and summer session "I" grades become "F" grades if not removed by the last day of classes in the fall semester. An "I" grade may not be changed to a "W" under any circumstances.

## Course Policies

### Attendance and Participation:

Per university policy, students are expected to attend class. Please review the University attendance policy and determine if you require attendance and how many points will be deducted for absences.

*Include information on your attendance policy.*

### Late/Make-up Work Policy:

*Add your late/make-up work policy: conditions and criteria.*

## Other Important Syllabus Statements

There are a variety of statements that faculty regularly include on their syllabi. Some are listed below. Some are required, others are optional.

### Required:

#### Academic Integrity

*The Office of Student Conduct & Academic Integrity (OSCAI) oversees the administration of the student conduct system, as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct. Through their interactions with students, they seek to foster a climate of personal and academic integrity that facilitates the success of all members of the University community. For more information, please visit the Honor Council online at [The Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity](#).*

#### Honor Code

Instructors are encouraged to include statements on their syllabi about academic integrity. The ODU Honor Code is listed below.

**We are ODU Monarchs, and we value integrity, good citizenship, and honor. Please review what Monarch Citizenship means and the ODU Honor Pledge: [Monarch Citizenship](#).**

***Honor Code:** “We, the students of Old Dominion University, aspire to be honest and forthright in our academic endeavors. Therefore, we will practice honesty and integrity and be guided by the tenets of the Monarch Creed. We will meet the challenges to be beyond reproach in our actions and our words. We will conduct ourselves in a manner that commands the dignity and respect that we also give to others.”*

#### Educational Accessibility and Accommodations

Old Dominion University is committed to ensuring equal access to all qualified students with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Office of Educational Accessibility (OEA) is the campus office that works with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. The OEA also offers two options for syllabus statements that you can use on your syllabus.

***Option 1:** “If you experience a disability that will impact your ability to access any aspect of my class, please present me with an accommodation letter from OEA so that we can work together to ensure that appropriate accommodations are available. If you feel that you will experience barriers to your ability to learn or take tests in my class but do not have an accommodation letter, please consider scheduling an appointment with OEA to determine if academic accommodations are necessary.”*

**Option 2:** *“Students are encouraged to self-disclose disabilities that the Office of Educational Accessibility has verified by providing Accommodation Letters to their instructors early in the semester in order to start receiving accommodations. Accommodations will not be made until the Accommodation Letters are provided to instructors each semester.”*

The Office of Educational Accessibility is located in the Student Success Center 1021 and can be reached at 757-683-4655. Additional information can be found on the OEA website: [Educational Accessibility](#)

### **Optional but recommended:**

#### **Cultural Diversity**

Faculty are encouraged to include a diversity statement on their syllabi. A few examples are below.

*“Old Dominion University fosters a campus community that values and supports the cultural identities of each of its members. The University also fosters an inclusive environment and provides programs that cultivate a climate of awareness, understanding, and respect for diverse individuals and groups.” Adapted from [The Office of Intercultural Relations](#).*

*“Fostering a diverse community of faculty, staff and students; Uncovering systemic barriers: Promoting an inclusive and equitable community; Supporting social justice in our programs and disciplines.” Adapted from the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies.*

You may need to craft your own diversity statement for your course that explains why inclusivity matters to you. Remember to be as inclusive as possible in the construction of your statement and recognize the multiple forms of diversity that exist.

Sample syllabi diversity statements can be found here from the Carnegie-Mellon University Eberly Center website: [Sample syllabi diversity statements](#).

#### **AI Use Guidelines and Academic Integrity**

Depending on your course learning outcomes and expectations, consider adopting or modifying one of the following examples:

**Attention:** Please note that ODU does not require an AI statement in your syllabus, but it is highly recommended.

#### **Option 1 -- Use of AI tools to generate content is prohibited:**

*In this course, the use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT and DALL•E 2, to generate content (including text, images, digital art, sound, video, and programming code) is strictly prohibited. You must*

*complete all course assignments on your own or with your classmates. Using AI tools to create content for your assignments is a form of academic dishonesty and a violation of the University Honor Code.*

***Option 2 -- Partially allow AI-generated content with attribution:***

*In this course, you may use AI tools such as ChatGPT and DALL•E 2 to brainstorm ideas and create outlines. However, you may not include AI-generated content in your final submission without attribution. Using AI-generated content without giving proper attribution is a form of academic dishonesty and a violation of the University Honor Code.*

***Option 3 -- Allow AI-generated content with attribution:***

*In this course, you may use AI tools such as ChatGPT and DALL•E 2 to generate content for your assignments, provided that the content is accurate, unbiased, and appropriate for the assignment. To ensure academic integrity, you must (1) specify which AI tool you used, (2) use quotation marks or a different font color to distinguish AI-generated content, and (3) include citations to the AI tool sources in your references. Failure to properly cite AI-generated content is a form of academic dishonesty and a violation of the University Honor Code.*

## **Notifying Students About Other ODU Practices and Policies**

### **University Email Policy**

The Old Dominion University email system is the official electronic mail system for distributing course-related communications, policies, announcements, and other information. In addition, the University email user ID and password are required for authentication and access to many electronic resources (online courses, faculty webpages, etc.). For more information about student email, please visit: [Student Computing](#).

It is recommended that the syllabus include a statement about how student email will be answered. Faculty are only required to respond to student email coming from the official ODU system. It is generally assumed that faculty will answer student email within twenty-four hours of receiving it. You may explain other schedules for answering email on weekends, for example, or when you are away from the university in your email statement. For more on student email please visit: [Information Technology Services Student Email Standards](#).

### **Withdrawal**

A course syllabus represents an agreement between the student and the course instructor regarding course requirements. A syllabus statement about withdrawal could read: *“Enrollment in this course indicates your acceptance of its teaching focus, requirements, and policies. Please review the syllabus and the course requirements as soon as possible. If you feel that the nature of this course does not meet your interests, needs or expectations, if you are not prepared for*

*the amount of work involved – or if you anticipate that the class meetings, assignment deadlines or adherence to course policies will be an unacceptable hardship for you – you should drop the course by the drop/add deadline, which is listed in the [ODU Schedule of Classes](#).” See the [Office of the University Registrar](#) for more information.*

## Syllabus Design

### Syllabus Variation

Please note that a syllabus is reflective of an instructor’s personal teaching philosophy, identity/identities, and interests. Please feel free to craft the syllabus based on what you feel it should look like and contain, acknowledging some information listed above is required. For example, some syllabi begin with the honor pledge and diversity statement; others include this material at the end. Many faculty use graphic syllabi that contain images, visuals, and links to videos. You can find out more about a graphic syllabus here: [Graphic Syllabus](#).

There is also a syllabus learning module on the Center for Faculty Development website: [CFD Syllabus Module](#).

### Telling Students About Yourself

Some faculty include a short paragraph in their syllabi about who they are and their link to the discipline in which they teach. Others include a link to a short welcome video to the course that also includes instructor information.

## Useful Information: Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook

It is a good practice to review what the *Old Dominion University Teaching and Research Faculty Handbooks* states about syllabi. See page 135. [ODU Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook](#).

## Useful Information: Classroom Behavior

**Before beginning your course, please review the standards of classroom behavior.**

The primary responsibility for managing the classroom environment rests with the faculty. Students who engage in any prohibited acts that result in disruption of a class may be directed by the faculty member to leave the class for the remainder of the class period. Longer separations from a class must be preceded by a conduct conference or hearing as outlined in Section V of the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

Faculty who encounter disruptive classroom behavior are encouraged to follow the procedures outlined in the Guidelines and Policy on Dealing with Disruptive Students published in the [Faculty Handbook](#). A student dismissed from class may be required to meet with a Department Chair, Program Director, the faculty member or the Director of Student Conduct &



Academic Integrity, or designee, before the student is permitted to return to the class from which the student was directed to leave.

Expectation of faculty conduct is also a consideration. It is a good practice to review the Faculty Code of Conduct found in the *Old Dominion University Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook* on page 117. [Faculty Code of Conduct](#)

“In summary, faculty members are expected to conduct themselves in a manner, both on campus and in the community, that is in consonance with the University's reputation as an institution of high ethical values. At the same time, the University affirms and protects faculty members' rights to academic freedom, freedom of expression, and due process.”

### Useful Information: Student Feedback

You can use and create forms to gather feedback from your students. You can customize the feedback in weekly and/or mid-semester forms to help you better understand student learning. These are “checking-in” methods giving student an opportunity to share with you what they need to achieve their goals in your class. You can create simple forms using Google Forms ([Feedback Forms](#)) asking students if they are struggling with course materials; however, these methods are not required.

- Student Opinion Surveys are the official tools the university uses to gather anonymous feedback from students. These are distributed at the end of every semester. [Student Opinion Surveys](#).

### Final Syllabus Checklist

A syllabus can be individualized by each faculty member; however, the *Old Dominion Teaching and Research Faculty Handbook* (p. 135) specifies that all syllabi must contain the following:

- Course Description
- An outline (schedule) of material to be covered in the course
- Course objectives
- Course expectations
- The instructor's requirements for student participation
- Required and optional course materials
- A list of assignments
- The instructor's grading system and attendance policy
- A statement about academic dishonesty
- An educational accessibility and accommodations statement

The Center for Faculty Development highly recommends that the syllabus also include a diversity, equity, and inclusion statement.

It is always recommended that you proof your final syllabus for accuracy before posting it to Canvas.

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