

I Write a Course Syllabus

Are you updating or re-working a course syllabus?

All students benefit from an organized, well-written and complete syllabus. They are also better equipped to plan their semester if they have a clear idea of the expectations of their educators, the demands of their courses and the due dates of their assignments. With these tips you can make your course and course syllabus accessible to the greatest number of students.

General Tips on Writing an Accessible Course Syllabus

- Communicate clearly the essential requirements of the course to all students (e.g. learning outcomes)
- Include a course outline that covers the required readings, assignments and defined expectations
- Present your teaching philosophy.
- Highlight any outings, labs and all deadlines
- Provide the contact information and office hours for all instructors involved in the course (e.g. professors, TAs)
- Allow students to contact you by more than one method: office hours, e-mail, phone (during office hours)
- Highlight any activity that may be “out of the ordinary” in the class (field trips, changes in time or class location, etc.)
- Consider having multiple means of student evaluation: e.g. exams, presentations, papers, etc. There may be more than one appropriate way of meeting and measuring learning objectives
- Ensure ample time between assignments for students to receive feedback; consider the time required for your students to complete assignments and for TAs and yourself to mark and return assignments
- Encourage students to come forward and speak to you about any accessibility concerns
- Review your syllabus throughout the course to ensure it stays updated; send this out to students, or post it where it can be accessed by the class in an accessible format
- Review your syllabus on an annual basis – what worked well? What could be changed?
- Learn from your peers and discuss what works well

Your university offers services to help you create an accessible environment for learners – be sure to reach out to their offices for more tips and find out about the supports that are available ([Open Learning and Educational Support](#), [Library Accessibility Services](#), and the [Centre for Students with Disabilities](#))

Make the Document Accessible

- Your syllabus will be one of the first contact points that students have with your class, so you should ensure that it is accessible - i.e., easily read by individuals with perceptual disabilities who may be using a screen reader or magnifier or another type of adaptive technology. This will demonstrate the inclusivity of the course (see “I use Word documents and/or PDF’s” for more information)
- Make the syllabus available electronically to all students, and update it if there are revisions during the course; this could be done through [CourseLink](#), by e-mail or a course website

I Write a Course Syllabus

Choosing Course Materials

- Choose course materials and develop a reading schedule early; this will give [Library Accessibility Services](#) time to convert textbook and CourseLink readings into alternative formats if required. If you're using video, it will also give you time to ensure that it is transcribed and captioned. It's useful to have core material covered through a variety of media (lecture, textbooks, audio-visual materials)
- If possible, chose accessible electronic versions of course readings; if you're unsure whether a reading is accessible, check with [Library Accessibility Services](#) or [Library E-learning and Reserve](#).
- Note that PDFs created by scanning paper originals are almost always inaccessible because they consist only of an image of text, not actual electronic text that can be read with a screen reader.
- If you need to convert part or all of a paper reading into an e-text reading, or have captions and/or a transcript added to a video or podcast, contact [Library E-Learning and Reserve](#). They will ensure that this material is made accessible and copyright compliant at no charge to you or your department.

List Campus Services and Supports and Relevant Policies

- Use the syllabus to inform students about other services on campus that may assist them in their academic success, e.g. the [Centre for Students with Disabilities](#), [Counselling Services](#), the [Learning Commons](#), etc.
- Include University Policy statements, such as [Academic Integrity](#), [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), and [Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#), etc.

Include an Accessibility Statement

- Including an accessibility statement as part of your syllabus gives you an opportunity to demonstrate your willingness to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom

More resources on creating accessible syllabi:

University of Guelph, Teaching Support Services, Centre for Open Learning and Educational Support, Creating a Syllabus using the Principles of Universal Design: [Creating a Syllabus using UID](#)

UDL- Universe, [A Comprehensive Faculty Development Guide, Syllabus Rubric](#)

The University of Toronto Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation has a [Tip Sheet on creating syllabi](#)

To obtain this document in an alternative format, please contact:

Library Accessibility Services
First Floor, McLaughlin Library
University of Guelph
Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1

Tel: 519-824-4120 ext. 52312
Email: liblcsd@uoguelph.ca
Web: www.lib.uoguelph.ca/assistance/LCSD/