

SYLLABUS CHECKLIST

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Part 1: Basic Elements

[Creating an Accessible Syllabus](#) – YouTube playlist featuring 12 “how to” video shorts (averaging 2 minutes) to demonstrate applying accessible document design to a sample syllabus.

[Sample Accessible Syllabi](#) – one that’s a bit more “ordinary,” and one that’s a bit more “visual.”

COURSE INFORMATION

- Course title and number of credits
- Course designator and number, and department
- Virtual Learning Environment location – eg, Moodle, Canvas, blog, or other platform
- Day(s), time(s), and place(s) of class sessions (eg, face-to-face, synchronous, field, or lab)
- Instructor's name / Instructors' Names
- Office location and contact information (phone? email? a best email address? virtual options?)
- Course prerequisites (if any)

COURSE DESCRIPTION and LEARNING AIMS/OUTCOMES

Write descriptions with students in mind as your primary audience. This includes both adopting a direct address tone (*you, participants in the course, we, as learners*), and addressing the larger as well as the more particular purposes of the course (study water systems, prepare for ecology-related careers, and shape future policy to support water-related grand challenges). See the [Course Description examples](#) in the table from Harnish, et al. (The full article reports the authors’ finding regarding [syllabus tone](#).) Course descriptions that also provides a brief overview of course activities, assignments, and assessment help students gain a sense of how the pieces of the course work together to meet the overall course purpose.

Most instructors set out the aims/outcomes as a separate listing following the description, others embed these details in the course description. In either case, be sure to use precise verbs in wording course aims/outcomes, and to make use of verbal and visual cues to assist learners in discerning the aims/outcomes, especially if these are embedded in paragraphs.

For reminders about selecting apt verbs in writing learning aims/outcomes, these two resources incorporate Bloom’s Taxonomy, one as a [Task Wheel](#) that links each level of learning to verbs and activities, and one that sets out [Educational Origami’s Digital Taxonomy](#) with verb and activity suggestions that takes students into virtual realms in completing technology-enriched assignments. For those who work with [Dee Fink’s Significant Learning Taxonomy](#), we’ve select a handy verb matrix resource.

LEARNING INFORMATION – TEXTBOOKS, EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING

Incorporate the following information/ideas/details into your syllabus in (sub)sections you've determined as the appropriate “home” for particular bits of information:

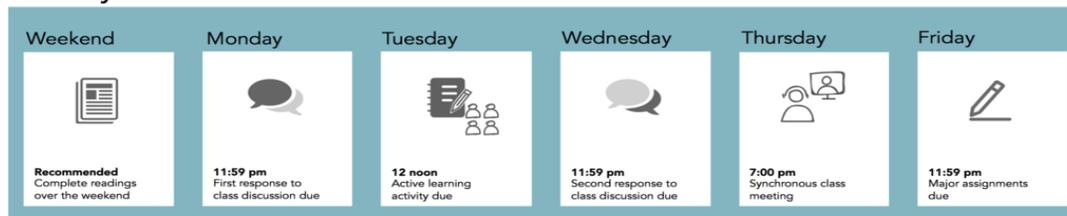
- List key (required and recommended) course texts/multimedia materials students will need to purchase, download, bookmark, noting where to locate materials, using hyperlinks for bookstores, and sites hosting readings students will regularly access.
- List technology tools/sites (required and recommended), including short statements about where to locate support, including hyperlinks to resources, and about any computer set up protocols students should review as part of downloading, accessing, or purchasing materials.
- Address how learning works – linked specifically to your course and discipline, offering your suggestions for effective learning/study practices for this course. As part of establishing a shared understanding about roles and responsibilities, climates and practices that support learning, many instructors incorporate the following syllabus segments:
 - Student role/expectations (specifics about what *learners* need to do to be *doing* to learn course materials/concepts as required for meeting of course aims).
 - Instructor role/expectations (what students can expect from you).
 - Setting out a weekly cadence, or general pattern for/sequence of activities within the course guides students in learning “how to” prepare for and participate in *your* course. The cadence can be especially important for online courses requiring students to interact within modules, to move through an online course as a synchronous cohort rather than primarily individual, didactic learners, and/or for classes that incorporate out-of-class components, such as service learning, field or internship components with time-sensitive requirements.

You might present this information to students as simple text, for example:

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Weekend | Complete recommended readings |
| Monday | First response to class discussion due by 11:59pm |
| Tuesday | Active learning activity due by 12 noon |
| Wednesday | Second response to class discussion due by 11:59pm |
| Thursday | Synchronous class meeting at 7:00pm |
| Friday | Major assignments due by 11:59pm |

Or, you could provide this information as a graphic, as in the following example:

Weekly Cadence



Writing with Digital Technologies
WRIT 4662

- *Brief* descriptions of assignments, papers, projects, final exam, and so on – noting due dates, grading weights, assessment practices, and hyperlinks to full assignment descriptions (with resources for completing and full criteria for assessing this work).
- *Overview of Grading* (course- or college-specific grade definitions and overarching criteria) to incorporate grading related policies, such as these:
 - Academic workload policy – noting what this means in your course context.

- Statement on attendance – clarify what you and the university recognise as (un)excused absences, and provide guidance about what modes of participation and engagement count toward attendance/participation in the course. If notable absence or presence of these impact grading, provide that information to students.
- Statement on policy for late work, exam make-up – written in light of newer campus policy for “legitimate absences” and unexcused absences, which includes now parenting situations as a University-recognised legitimate absence, and links to listings of [recognised religious holidays](#).
- Statements regarding teamwork, extra credit, service learning, revision – where any are part of required/optional assessment; note that you’re ruling out extra credit if it might be expected.
- Statement on incomplete coursework

INCORPORATING COURSE POLICIES

The Required Items

A syllabus shared with, for example, University of Minnesota students must include, according to Faculty Senate endorsed policies, “copies of, references to, or statements on the following, and are encouraged to discuss elements of the policies particularly applicable to their course.” This statement underscores the responsibility of instructors to incorporate policy segments, *and* to make decisions about how to incorporate these statements. In the UMinnesota context, we *are required to address* the nine areas listed below. However, to meet this requirement, we *are not limited to simply quoting* the suggested policy statements. To align with practices supporting the creation of a “learning-centered syllabus” it is important for instructors to “own” the policies. That is, to provide language that links policies to the context of our particular courses, that highlights why and how these practices are integral to the course, and that points to new or specific actions students will be expected to take in light of the policy statements.

UMinnesota sets out nine policy areas to be addressed in a syllabus:

1. Grade definitions
2. Scholastic Dishonesty
3. Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences
4. Student Conduct Code & Student
5. Sexual Harassment
6. Equity, Diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Affirmative Action
7. Disability Services
8. Availability of mental health and stress management services.
9. Academic Freedom and Responsibility

The nine items listed above *do not* need to be addressed in one place, nor in a particular order within a syllabus, but should be placed alongside other, “like” course details – eg, grading definitions and make up work in a section on Assignments and/or Grading; or Disability Services at the start of a section devoted to learning resources. See Syllabus Checklist – Part 2 for further suggestions.

Frequently Added Items

The following list sets out additional statements that instructors frequently include, and personalize for their course contexts, as part of communicating clearly with students about learning expectations and course processes. Again, see Syllabus Checklist – Part 2 for further suggestions.

Special procedures or rules for this class (e.g., accessing technology, field trips, etc.)

- Statement regarding course learning practices (activities, collaboration, computers)
- Statement on classroom climate – conduct/civility
- Statement on academic integrity/misconduct
- Statement regarding respect/harassment
- Statement on accommodations for students with disabilities
- Statement on accommodation of religious observances
- Statement on academic freedom and responsibility
- Statement regarding diversity
- Statement regarding mental health

SETTING OUT A COURSE SCHEDULE

The course schedule provides an overview of the sequence of the course across the span of the semester by setting out an organized listing that sets out, minimally the items listed below. For instructors using a Moodle or Canvas course website, most of this information will also be incorporated using tools offered within the virtual site. However, keeping the course schedule within the syllabus will provide students with a single document providing a high-level overview of the course; and, beyond the course, the schedule can serve as a record of course specifics should a student apply to transfer credit, or establish the course as equivalent to an established pre-requisite.

For examples, please consult the [Sample Syllabi](#) folder. Typically, a Course Schedule is set out as a table that incorporates the elements noted below

- Headings on a horizontal axis to name the components of the table.
- Topical, unit, and/or week-by-week organization along the vertical axis to provide an overview of course organization – along with listing of day/date, offering key words or questions will help students to focus on topic and activities together.
- Due dates for major assignments and exams.
- Due dates for assigned readings, homework, preliminary iterations of major assignments, and/or other class preparations
- Exam dates, locations, and times (including Final Exam details, if applicable)
- Holidays or other times class does NOT meet

CREATING ACCESSIBLE DOCUMENTS

With six small steps, known as [6 Core Skills](#) and set out below, teachers can create course documents that improve the experience of students using adaptive technology, as well as students with a range of non-apparent disabilities, and learners generally. To learn more about the 6 Core Skills, you might also consult a YouTube playlist focused on [formatting an accessible syllabus](#); each segment is under 2 minutes.

- Insert sections with a document by [using headings](#) via paragraph styles.
- Create a [table of contents](#) (easy if your document uses paragraph styles).
- Embed [hyperlinks](#) in text (rather than copying the full text of the URL into the document).
- Create [bulleted and numbered lists](#) where appropriate (aids scannability).
- Add [alt text \(alternative text\)](#) to all graphics or text boxes.
- Ensure [strong contrast](#) between text and background colors.

RESOURCES

- Harrison, Barbara (and others). "[A Short Guide to Inclusive, Learning-Centered Course Design.](#)"
- Harnish, Richard J., et al. "[Creating the Foundation for a Warm Classroom Climate.](#)" *Association for Psychological Science Observer* 24.1 (2010).
- Miller, A. T. "[The Multicultural Lab: Diversity Issues in STEM Classes.](#)" *Teaching Inclusively: Resources for Courses, Departments and Institutional Change in Higher Education* (2005): 451-59.
- Palmer, Michael S., Lindsay B. Wheeler, and Itiya Aneece. "[Does the Document Matter? The Evolving Role of Syllabi in Higher Education.](#)" *Change* 48.4 (2016): 36-47.
- Saunders, Shari, and Diana Kardia. "[Creating inclusive college classrooms.](#)" Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan.

Part 2: Policy Elements

UMN POLICY GUIDELINES & SAMPLES

Instructors must have, in a UMinnesota context (which is applicable in many other contexts as well) within their syllabi *copies of, references to, or statements on* [emphasis added] the following, and learning syllabus research encourages instructors to both “own” the policy segments, and to discuss with students the policy elements particularly applicable to developing an inclusive, learning-oriented course climate:

1. Grade definitions
2. Scholastic Dishonesty
3. Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences
4. Student Conduct Code & Student
5. Sexual Harassment
6. Equity, Diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Affirmative Action
7. Disability Services
8. Availability of mental health and stress management services.
9. Academic Freedom and Responsibility

UM statement on “Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action”

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents

Policy: http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.pdf.

Driven to Discover – 60 word statement

What Is Multicultural Learning? Multicultural learning explores the tapestry of perspectives in our world, reaching across boundaries of ability, age, class, gender, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation and other social and cultural identities. Differences are valued, awareness of social justice and power is emphasized, and everyone attends respectfully to what others say and mean. Multicultural learning is education for life in our multicultural world.

UM statement on “Disability Accommodation” (new on 10 Dec 16)

The University of Minnesota views disability as an important aspect of diversity, and is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The

Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

- If you have, or think you have, a disability in any area such as, mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the DRC office on your campus ([612.626.1333](tel:612.626.1333)) to arrange a confidential discussion.
- Students with short-term disabilities, such as a broken arm, can often work with instructors to minimize classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, students should contact the DRC as noted above.
- If you are registered with the DRC and have a disability accommodation letter dated for this semester or this year, please contact your instructor early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in the course.
- If you are registered with the DRC and have questions or concerns about your accommodations, please contact [name: access consultant/disability specialist].

Additional information is available on the DRC website: diversity.umn.edu/disability or e-mail drc@umn.edu with questions.

Personalised statement on “Access to Learning for Students with Disabilities”

If you have a documented disability that may impact your learning and /or participation in this course, please talk with me so that we can develop a plan to effectively support your learning and participation.

If you have an undocumented disability you'd like me to know about, or are opting to not register your disability with the university, or just want to talk about learning to learn, you are invited also to set up a conversation so we can plan for ways you might collaborate with me, peers, others on campus, and family members to maximize your learning

The Disability Resource Center link provides information regarding student access and support: <https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/student-services>.

Personalised UM teacher disability disclosure

Instructor limitations. I have irreparable nerve damage in my arms/shoulders, apparently due to “overuse”: many years of long hours in ergonomically bad computer workstations, or writing by hand. I welcome assistance in lifting, carrying, and door-opening. I avoid writing on whiteboards, which hurts me. Sometimes my chronic pain means that I am unable to give feedback on assignments quickly (or at all), but know that I am doing my best. I am one of many people with invisible limitations and disabilities; if you are another, please feel free to let me know.

[[“Owning” policy statements

- example below
- wording that links policy to your course: may be as basic as an orienting paragraph at the start of a policy section that’s otherwise composed of “boilerplate” language, or may be as individualised as in the example below
- “sense making” placement of elements (individually and/or as a whole) within a syllabus
- discussion with students and making time for "[Making A Statement](#)" (Mark Pedelty) is central co-development of course climate / climate for inclusive, learning-centered course]]

CLASSROOM CLIMATE - POLICY PRACTICE

Access to Learning for Students with Disabilities: *If you have a documented disability* that may impact your learning and /or participation in this course, please talk with me so that we can develop a plan to effectively support your learning and participation. *If you have an undocumented disability* you'd like me to know about, *or are opting to not register your disability with the university, or just want to talk about learning to learn*, you are invited also to set up a conversation so we can plan for ways you might collaborate with me, peers, others on campus, and family members to maximize your learning. The Disability Resource Center student services page provides information regarding access and support: <https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/student-services>.

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Diversity and Collegiality: Drawing on the diversity of participants' cultural contexts, academic experiences, assumptions regarding knowledge, and ways of approaching learning, teaching, will enrich this course. All participants in the course will be expected to learn ways of exploring, shifting, acknowledging, and expressing perspectives.

In our course, every attempt will be made to address interpersonal conflicts and tense moments in a timely, direct, educative, and respectful manner. If a participant's behavior violates ground rules we establish to support diversity and learning, or aspects of the [Student Conduct Code](#), that person may be referred to the [Office for Student Conduct](#).

- Together we all create a climate in which it's safe to take risk – to interact, ask, reflect, learn.
- The primary responsibility for asking participants to moderate behaviors, or to ask disruptive students to leave a class sits with the course instructor.

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Integrity and Harassment: The university holds *instructors and students* responsible for maintaining climates in which students can expect to be treated civilly, interact with integrity, and deepen their understandings regarding respect. Individuals might contact

- the Office for Equity and Diversity with concerns about [sexual harassment](#), and [LGBTQA resources](#),
- and the course instructor, the [program coordinator](#), or a campus [ombuds person](#).
- The instructor will address observed and reported incivility forthrightly and confidentially.

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Wellbeing / Mental Health: Academic research encourages human beings to address special circumstances as well as factors of everyday life that can cause stress and erect barriers to learning – such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. Useful University resources include:

- [Student Mental Health Website](#), a resource developed by UMN's psychological health services
- [Dealing with Stress](#), a UMN Extension resource
- On WellBeing, see [Center for Spirituality](#) & [International Student & Scholar Services](#) resources.

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Academic Integrity / Plagiarism: The [core values](#) cited in “10 Principles of Academic Integrity for Faculty,” and in the [UM policy](#) on academic integrity are the default expectations for this course. In short:

- course work you submit must be composed on your own or in your role as an active team member;
- when incorporating ideas, text, images, teaching materials into your work, you will attribute these to sources in your work, and cite them in as resources in a bibliography or notes field;
- the instructor will address *suspected* or *unintentional* plagiarism via individual conversations;
- and *intentional* academic dishonesty may lead to earning a failing grade for the course, to substantial, supervised revision of the work; and/or to conversation with the participant's departmental advisor, Director of Graduate Studies, department chair, and/or dean about the serious transgression.