



Stearns Center  
for Teaching and Learning

## Syllabus Checklist for Online Courses

**Why is the syllabus so important for online courses?** The syllabus for an online course sets the structure and tone for the course, conveying what the instructor expects from students as well as what students can expect from their instructor. The syllabus also establishes a contract with the students by stating the learning outcomes or objectives, policies, requirements, and procedures for the course. The syllabus provides information about course materials, assignments, and grading for the course and should show clear mapping of all assignments to the course learning outcomes or objectives. It also conveys the instructor's enthusiasm for the subject matter and for teaching.

**The following brief checklist provides the minimum standards for a quality online syllabus.** The checklist is based on national standards of best practice and instructional design principles. Please consult the checklist as you prepare and finalize the syllabus for your online course. Your department or program might have specific guidelines for course syllabi, so please check with them and be sure to follow their requirements. This checklist is available at [Online Syllabus Checklist](#) on Stearns Center [Teaching Online](#) site. The Stearns Center website also provides [general guidelines for syllabus design](#) (regardless of course delivery format).

**Questions?** Please contact us at [stearns@gmu.edu](mailto:stearns@gmu.edu) or 703-993-6200.

### Syllabus Checklist

A syllabus should include the following basic components (at a minimum):

#### Basic Information

- Instructor information (name, contact information—preferred and alternate)
- Office hours (where to meet with instructor for virtual office hours)
- Basic course information (course number/section, title, credit hours)
- Nature of course delivery (asynchronous, synchronous, are there any required live meetings?)
- Blackboard login instructions
- E-reserve instructions (if applicable)

#### Course Details

- Course description (about the course, prerequisites, and so on; include the course description from the University catalog)
- Required textbooks (title, author, publisher, edition, ISBN)
- Clear and measureable course learning objectives or outcomes (here are [tips for writing student learning outcomes](#) from The Stearns Center website)
- General education (Mason Core) learning outcomes or program learning outcomes (if applicable)
- Technology requirements, specific to the course
- Course schedule (weekly course schedule presented in a tabular format, including units or modules with start and end dates, readings, assignments, due dates, and so on)

## Assignments and Grading

- ❑ Assignment descriptions (due dates, requirements, expectations, criteria for grading, rubrics, points, and percentages; also map each assignment to the course learning outcomes or objectives)
- ❑ Grading scale (show how the percentage earned in course relate to course letter grade)
- ❑ Attendance and participation requirements (if applicable)
- ❑ Course policies (late work, make-up exams, extra credit, incompletes, and so on)

## Additional Course Resources

- ❑ Academic integrity (please include a statement about academic integrity and link to the Mason Honor Code: <https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>). Office of Academic Integrity has provided [examples for suggested syllabus language about academic integrity](#) .
- ❑ Disability accommodations
  - Please include link to Office of Disability Services ([ds.gmu.edu](https://ds.gmu.edu)) and state that students need to contact Disability Services to request accommodations, with appropriate documentation ([ds.gmu.edu/forms/](https://ds.gmu.edu/forms/)).
- ❑ Remind students of [the core rules of "Netiquette"](#); students must carefully craft their communication in the online classroom to avoid misinterpretation
- ❑ Exam proctoring guidelines: please include [Instructions about Respondus Monitor and Lockdown Browser](#) if you will be using these online tools for exam proctoring; if you require students to arrange for a proctor or to take exams on campus, please provide details and instructions in the syllabus
- ❑ Any recommended course resources (readings, tutorials, external websites, multimedia, and so on), if applicable

## Department/Program Requirements

- ❑ Please consult with your department or program to find out if there is any required department or program information to provide in your syllabus

## University Requirements

- ❑ Diversity, religious holidays, and so on
  - Share with your students that you value creating an inclusive learning experience to support their learning. One way to do this is to have a diversity statement on your syllabus. Examples of diversity statements include [the Women and Gender Studies Diversity/Inclusion statement](#) and the [School of Integrative Studies Celebrating Diversity statement](#). Faculty, please adopt [inclusive teaching practices](#) in your online course.
  - Please include a link to the Mason University Life religious holiday calendar <https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/>; indicate that it is the responsibility of student, within the first two weeks of the semester, to let their instructors know the dates of major religious holidays on which the student will be absent or unavailable due to religious observances. Faculty should be aware of religious holidays when planning tests, assignments, or project due dates.
- ❑ Student privacy
  - Please include a link about student privacy and student rights under FERPA (<https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>).
- ❑ Student responsibilities
  - Please include information about what the instructor expects from students in the course, and what students may expect from the instructor
- ❑ Student services: please include links to the following services:
  - Keep Learning, Learning Services ([learningservices.gmu.edu/keeplearning/](https://learningservices.gmu.edu/keeplearning/))
  - University Libraries ([library.gmu.edu](https://library.gmu.edu))
  - Writing Center ([writingcenter.gmu.edu](https://writingcenter.gmu.edu))
  - Counseling and Psychological Services ([caps.gmu.edu](https://caps.gmu.edu))
  - See [a longer list of Mason student support services posted on The Stearns Center website](#). You may want to include additional services (from this list), which are relevant for your course.