

Guidelines for Creating an Inclusive Syllabus

As the first point of contact with students, the syllabus lets you set an inclusive tone for your course.

Student-Centered Language

Your syllabus should be written using first-person and second-person pronouns. The tone, text, and course policies should convey a welcoming, supportive, and encouraging climate for all students.

Contact Information

Introduce yourself and your Teaching Assistants (TAs) and tell students how they can reach you. This includes office location, drop-in (office) hours, and preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc.).

Course Details and Modality

Share the course Blackboard site URL, title, number, credit hours, and whether there are any prerequisites. Be clear about the [course modality](#) (e.g. on-campus, online asynchronous, hybrid) and include course meeting times, dates, and locations so students can plan ahead.

Course Description

Welcome students with a brief 1-3 paragraph course description that includes why students should care about the course, what is compelling about the topic, why you are personally passionate about the material, or how it fits into the larger curriculum. Normalize that course material and assignments may be challenging at times and that students may need to reach out for help. Share information on how students can succeed in the course.

Learning Objectives

Provide students with a concrete idea of what they will learn or be able to do after completing this course, and for GenEd Courses provide a statement of General Education learning objectives. Learn about crafting effective learning objectives from the [CATE Learning Objectives Teaching Guide](#).

Required Materials

List the required reading and viewing materials, supplies, software, and technology such as classroom polling tools or video conference technology. Consider the financial costs of purchasing course texts and choose texts that can be acquired in multiple ways (e.g., open source, through the library). Select materials that feature diverse authors, playwrights, composers, and researchers.

Assessment of Learning

This includes grading procedures, late or missing assignment policies (including regrade requests), attendance and participation guidance, and information about how grades will be calculated. Provide opportunities for practice and give students feedback on their learning process using lower-stakes assessments such as homework and reading quizzes. Break higher-stakes assessments like final exams, papers or performances into smaller components with opportunities to revise or resubmit. Assign grades based on learning, not ranking of students, to motivate student engagement and promote learning. Check out the [CATE Guide on Equitable Assessments and Grading Practices](#).

Class Schedule

Provide a logically sequenced course schedule with topics/concepts listed chronologically by class period, along with readings and other assignments required of students together with due dates, and

specifying whether items need to be completed before, during, or after class meetings. The goal is to provide students with a clear understanding of their responsibilities each week.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Include language about how you make your courses welcoming and inclusive for all, and in particular for students with disabilities. The UIC Disability Resource Center (DRC) and Disability Cultural Center (DCC) [Quick Guide to Accessible Teaching and Accommodations](#) recommends including the following statement in your syllabus:

"UIC is committed to full inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of university life. If you face or anticipate disability-related barriers while at UIC, please connect with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at drc.uic.edu, via email at drc@uic.edu, or call (312) 413-2183 to create a plan for reasonable accommodations. In order to receive accommodations, you will need to disclose the disability to the DRC, complete an interactive registration process with the DRC, and provide me with a Letter of Accommodation (LOA). LOAs can be presented at any point of the semester and, unless otherwise noted, do not expire once obtained. Upon receipt of an LOA, I will gladly work with you and the DRC to implement approved accommodations."

Create a digitally accessible syllabus to ensure all students can fully engage with your course materials. Microsoft Word or PowerPoint files are generally the most digitally accessible formats, and Microsoft offers [built-in accessibility checkers](#) (found under "Review" → "Check Accessibility") you can use to see if your file is already accessible. PDFs can be made digitally accessible when properly tagged, which takes extra development time. [UIC resources for creating accessible course content](#) provides step-by-step guidance on how to create accessible Word documents and other course content so you can ensure your syllabus and course materials are accessible to all of your students.

Community Agreements and Classroom Expectations

Communicate to your students that you want them to be successful, while also setting clear boundaries around your availability (especially for very large classes). Include statements on how to succeed in your classroom, by considering the challenges students previously faced in your courses and what you could have communicated more clearly that may have helped prevent those issues. Discuss academic integrity by referring students to [UIC Community Standards](#) and reminding them of the commitment on the part of faculty and students to uphold these standards.

Inclusivity Statement

This can be included in your classroom expectations above, or as a separate more general statement:

"UIC values diversity and inclusion. Regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic background, religion, political ideology, language, or culture, we expect all members of this class to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of our class. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion, engagement, accurate assessment or achievement, please notify me or your TA as soon as possible."

Resources

Include information about both academic resources and support services for students. For example, how to study, where to find academic help, and how to access resources supporting well-being. A comprehensive list of student resources is available on the [UIC Current Student Resources](#) website and many links to campus resources are auto populated for students in Blackboard.