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For some faculty members, the syllabus is a guide that outlines what learners should expect in a course and clarifies what is expected of them. For students, the syllabus helps them figure out what they need to do to ensure they will pass the course. However, in many ways the syllabus conveys so much more than rules and course expectations and as such, serves a larger purpose that can shape the students' academic experiences and foster their success. In traditional syllabi that focus on rules and course expectations, instructors outline basic course requirements. However, with well-crafted syllabi, faculty design learning experiences that positively shape and alter how students perceive their instructors and seek assistance for academic challenges.

In this resource, we outline the traditional purpose of the syllabus, use findings from empirical and peer-reviewed articles to answer questions that are often asked about syllabi, and offer examples of language for syllabi that support or hinder learners' experiences.

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For students:

- Provides learners with the expectations and required components of a course (Harnish & Bridges, 2011).
- Clarifies course expectations and goals along with the grading system used to assess learners' performance (Canada, 2013; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Slattery & Carlson, 2005).
- Sets the classroom's tone and motivates learners to set goals that are high, yet achievable (Slattery et al., 2005).

For instructors:

- Welcomes students to the class (Habaneck, 2005).



- Serves as a planning tool that helps organize the work that students must complete during a course (Calhoon & Becker, 1995; Slattery et al., 2005).
- Helps faculty meet the course goals during the semester (Calhoon et al., 1995; Slattery et al., 2005).

For both:

- Often viewed as a contract between students and faculty, syllabi inform students about what to expect in a course and outline how they should interact with faculty (Calhoon et al., 1995; Dowd et al., 2015; Sulik & Keyes, 2014; Habanek, 2005).

Students usually receive the course syllabus on the first day of class, however with the availability of online courses and electronic distribution of syllabi prior to the first day of class, this first point of contact between students and faculty may occur before the two meet face-to-face.

Therefore, how the syllabus is written informs learners' decisions to complete or withdraw from a course (Smith & Razzouk, 1993), shapes the way they view the course and interact with faculty (Habanek, 2005; Harnish et al., 2011), and informs their decisions to seek assistance when academic difficulties arise (Perrine, Lisle, & Tucker, 1995).

Findings from a review of studies and articles, focused on syllabi and their influence on learners' academic experiences, answer four questions that are often asked about course syllabi:

- Do students use the syllabus beyond the first day of class?
- How can the language in the syllabus affect students?
- In what ways can syllabi provide help when students have academic difficulty?
- Why are the content and style of syllabi important, particularly for students of color?



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- Faculty perceive that students do not use the course syllabus beyond the early weeks of class or ignore it altogether however, this

perception is articulated by Calhoun & Becker (2008). (n)-2 (ne)-s4 (s y (l)-5ll (d) (o)-1u3 (t))2 (n)-5-4 (h)-22 (n)

- While students often focus on certain aspects of the syllabus over others (e.g., test or quiz dates and grading policies versus academic dishonesty policies and textbook information) (Becker & Calhoun,

1999; Marcis & hooo12 12 (s)-00 (t)70 (t)7312 (s)-00 (n)40 (t)746 (o)5 (t)-5 (t)-7 (76 (s1a)14 ((a0)-a7(s)l)4)-.o12

ambiguous and confusing processes, give students access to the language of the institution, and improve their chances for success (Collins, 1997).

- Examples of items that are usually unclear in syllabi: Details about effective work and study habits, definitions of terms such as 'office hours, and locations of important places, such as the bookstore and tutoring center.

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The course syllabus can be perceived solely as a means for sharing information about the course and rules for academic success. However, sp (c)544

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