

January 31, 2024

Department Chairs
Program Director
College Provosts

Re: Senate Guidance on Course Syllabi

Dear Colleagues,

Following a request from VPDUE Hughey, the Committees on Educational Policy (CEP), Courses of Instruction (CCI), Teaching (COT), and Graduate Council (GC) would like to offer the following guidance regarding course syllabi. We hope that the FAQ below is helpful, but do not intend or wish to assess syllabi beyond requirements for CCI course approval. We acknowledge that CSAs have different needs or expectations, and so some questions are best left to CSAs and instructors to determine what is appropriate in a specific field or course. We further affirm that the logistics and specifics of how a course is managed are the instructor's purview.

FAQs:

- *In what cases is a syllabus required to be provided to students?*
The Senate trusts that colleagues are providing syllabi for most courses. Some independent study courses may have a very limited syllabus or a syllabus that only becomes fully specified as the course proceeds.
- *When is the syllabus to be made available to students?*
We trust that our colleagues are providing syllabi at the beginning of the quarter. The Senate recommends a syllabus be made available within the first week, but understands there may be circumstances that delay posting. These should be rare, and it would be best if clear communication explains to students why the delay is necessary, and when possible a planned delivery date. A syllabus may sometimes require updates as a course is taught; changes while teaching should be modest and made mainly in response to unexpected circumstances.
- *Should the syllabus only be available to students currently enrolled in the class, or should it be available more broadly?*
The availability of syllabi should be determined by instructors and CSAs. The Senate acknowledges there are good reasons for not publicly sharing many syllabi, though the Senate encourages posting of syllabi on a protected website or learning management system (e.g., Canvas) when the instructor deems appropriate. CCI encourages capture of syllabi in CAT whenever there are significant course changes or every three years.
- *Are there specific things that must be included in a syllabus provided to students?*
Yes, [CCI Syllabus requirements](#).
- *What if syllabus items are missing?*

There is no mechanism by which CCI or CEP will conduct checks of syllabi for courses as they are offered. However, because syllabi can provide evidence of teaching effectiveness beyond what is captured by Student Experience of Teaching surveys, we encourage faculty to consider their submission with merit review materials as one of the ways in which teaching can be documented/assessed.

- *Are these requirements the same as syllabus requirements for CCI for new courses and major revisions?*

Yes. If a CSA is unsure when a syllabus is needed for CCI review, the webpage notes “CCI would like to have a current syllabus on file in CAT for every course taught at UCSC. Therefore CCI requests that a current syllabus be submitted with every course revision, even minor ones, unless a syllabus has been submitted through CAT in the previous three years.” Additionally, CCI has advised in the past that a syllabus is needed for every new course, or for any request to substantially change an existing course. Examples of substantial changes include: change in content, credits, GE addition or removal, DC change, reactivation. With few exceptions, a syllabus is not needed for changes such as cancellation/suspension, enrollment restrictions, independent study, and simple changes to title or description that do not change content.

- *Can the Senate communication regarding Changes to Syllabus be further clarified?*

The Senate understands that a course syllabus is a communication tool, and will necessarily require updating as circumstances unfold. While the Senate does not encourage frequent changes, instructors may need to make adjustments due to the contents of their syllabi over the course of a term. The Senate encourages instructors to be transparent in explaining the purpose of these changes to students. Ideally, changes should only be made when there is a clear need and the change will positively impact students’ wellbeing and learning. Changing the basis for grading and course assessment are a particular concern, and should be minimized once a course begins and an initial syllabus has been distributed. The Senate notes that divisions or departments may have their own syllabus guidance, which should apply to the courses under their purview.

- *How should syllabi reflect an instructor’s policies about the use of Artificial Intelligence in their courses?*

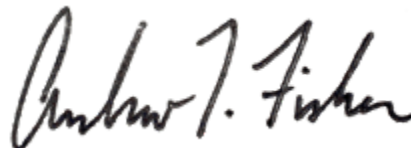
The Senate recognizes that it will in future have to take up the question of the campus’ general policy on the use of AI. At present, we recommend making use of resources provided by the Teaching and Learning Center on [their webpage](#).¹ In particular, [this crowd-sourced document](#) provides a repository of different instructors’ course policies on AI, organized by topic area of courses. We encourage each instructor to consider what role they do or do not want AI to play in their students’ completion of course requirements, and to include that in their syllabi so that expectations about coursework are as clear as possible to students. We encourage our colleagues to attend the Senate Generative AI Forum this winter quarter, which will be held on Wednesday, February 28, from 2:30 – 4:00 pm.

¹ <https://tlc.ucsc.edu/resources/artificial-intelligence-in-teaching-learning>

Sincerely,



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