

# The Syllabus as a Teaching Tool

## Mapping Your Course

Your UMBC course is probably new territory for students, so they'll need a syllabus to guide them through the course and introduce what they will learn and do. A syllabus shares your approaches to teaching and expectations for students.

Begin your course "map" with a description and rationale to show students how your course will contribute to their UMBC learning as a whole. A [syllabus quiz](#) or [activity](#) combined with a first-day overview can help students use your syllabus more effectively.

## Integrating Outcomes

Next, help students envision what they will learn and how their work will demonstrate their achievements. Craft explicit, measurable student learning outcomes (SLOs) that specify what students will be able to learn and do by the end of the course.

Ask students to reflect on what the SLOs mean and how their personal learning goals intersect with the course outcomes. Help them imagine how your course can be a key part of their education.

## Creating Learning that Lasts

Plan for lasting impact by showing how your SLOs fulfill program and institutional goals. These connections help students see how courses work together to build transferable skills. Point out to students how your course contributes to institutional-

level learning outcomes, our [Functional Competencies](#).

## Student-Centered Revising

To strengthen your syllabus, review it against a checklist like the one below. Or share it with colleagues for their feedback. Think about revising your first-day draft

with student feedback or keep a running list throughout the semester as confusion or questions emerge.

You can also visit the [Faculty Development Center](#) website for resources on course design or arrange for a consultation.

## Syllabus Checklist

- ❑ *Course details:* title, classroom, and time.
- ❑ *Instructor information:* office, office hours, phone, email, etc.
- ❑ *Course description and rationale:* What is the course about? How does it connect to the rest of the curriculum?
- ❑ *Student Learning Outcomes:* What will students take away from this course? Begin your list of learning outcomes with "By the end of this course, students will be able to..."
  - Program Learning Outcomes: Link students to your program's learning outcomes.
  - Institutional Learning Outcomes: Show how your course contributes to [UMBC's Functional Competencies](#).
- ❑ *Format and procedures:* How will the course be structured? What teaching techniques will you use?
- ❑ *Course requirements:* What readings, homework, participation, tests, papers, projects, etc. are required?
- ❑ *Grading:* What will be graded and when? How are grades distributed among the assignments? What rubrics are used to assess student work?
- ❑ *Course policies:*
  - [Academic Integrity Statement](#)
  - [Student Support /Disability Services Statement](#)
  - Late work rules
  - Attendance requirements
  - Technology use rules
  - Expectations for personal conduct
- ❑ *Course schedule:* class meeting dates, topics, readings, problems, assignments, test or presentation dates, final exam schedule.
- ❑ *Suggestions for success:* What learning resources should students know about to succeed in your course? What strategies have worked well for past students?

# Selected FDC Library Resources

- Brien, J., Millis, B., & Cohen, M. (2008). *The course syllabus: A learning-centered approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for teaching* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Diamond, R. (2008). *Designing and assessing courses and curricula: A practical guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Duffy, D. & Jones, J. (1995). *Teaching within the rhythms of the semester*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Filene, P. (2005). *The joy of teaching: A practical guide for new college instructors*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Fink, L. D. (2005). Self-directed guide to designing significant courses <http://www.deefinkandassociates.com/GuidetoCourseDesignAug05.pdf>
- Fink, L.D.(2013). *Creating significant learning experiences an integrated approach to designing college courses*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (The 2003 edition is also available.)
- Hansen, E. (2011). *Idea-based learning: A course design process to promote conceptual understanding*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Nilson, L. (2007). *The graphic syllabus and the outcomes map: Communicating your course*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Saroyan, A. & Amundsen, C. (2004). *Rethinking teaching in higher education: From a course design workshop to a faculty development framework*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

## FDC Library Link

To search for resources, visit <http://fdc.umbc.edu/resources/fdc-library/>.

Then drop by Engineering 101 to visit the FDC Library and take a closer look. Just let us know if you want to borrow anything. See the FDC website for additional information at [fdc.umbc.edu](http://fdc.umbc.edu).

## Links from Reverse Side

- Syllabus Quiz: <http://blogs.agu.org/geoedtrek/2014/08/27/syllabus-quiz/>
- Syllabus Activity: <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/first-day-of-class-activities-that-create-a-climate-for-learning/>
- Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): <http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/SLOSresources.html>
- Faculty Development Center: <http://fdc.umbc.edu>
- UMBC's Functional Competencies: [http://fdc.umbc.edu/files/2015/02/General Education Competencies 0805.pdf](http://fdc.umbc.edu/files/2015/02/General_Education_Competencies_0805.pdf)
- Academic Integrity Statement: <http://oue.umbc.edu/home/academic-integrity/>
- Student Support/Disability Services Statement: <http://sds.umbc.edu/recommended-disability-statement-for-course-syllabi/>