



Seven Areas of Consideration for Inclusive Syllabus Design

1. **Tone and Frame:**

This category might include text that communicates a welcoming and/or a friendly tone, excitement for learning, an emphasis on learning as a lifelong pursuit, and/or an attempt to foster positive motivation. The syllabus might also be student/learner focused with an emphasis on student agency and a collaborative spirit (“We’re in this together!”). Other elements in this section could be how the learning environment will be fostered and maintained by both the students and instructor, a brief teaching philosophy, and/or description of your teaching approach.

2. **Learning Goals and Objectives:**

Learning objectives could be framed in compelling ways. For example, as beautiful questions or big ideas that allows students to see the cognitive, personal, social, civic, and/or professional relevance in a clear and dynamic way. There might also be connections made to core principles of the discipline and/or statements on how the learning objectives appeal to different levels/types of thinking.

3. **Learner-Centered Framework:**

This aspect of the syllabus addresses what efforts are made to promote messaging that each student can succeed. This may be achieved by stating a shared responsibility for the learning environment such as student led discussion groups, opportunities for students to partner and potentially reteach concepts, as well as encouraging student agency.

4. **Content Selection:**

This portion might identify how multiple perspectives, identities and experiences will be used in the course to provide a full spectrum of viewpoints on topics. Course materials are offered in multiple formats that appeal to a broad range of learning preferences.

5. **Learning Activities and Assessment:**

In this section, we might see a variety of assignments with students having the ability to demonstrate understanding in a host of ways. This may be through formative assessment with opportunities for immediate feedback and development prior to the final submission. We could also see the identification of purposeful and transparent alignment between learning goals and assignments.

6. **General Statements and Policies:**

In this section, we consider the language and tone you are using to communicate course policies. For instance, we might see policies framed in positive statements rather than a list of “don’ts.” You might also include statements about communication – how do you expect students to communicate with you, with their colleagues, etc? There could also be a

customized statement on inclusion, diversity, and/or accommodations for students with disabilities. Formal and informal rules, assumptions, values, and expectations are explicitly stated. This may also include providing language acknowledging diverse learning and student differences, perspectives, and identities (ie. first generation status, ability, sexual orientation, etc.). Information is provided to direct students to campus resources on how students can meet their basic physiological, emotional, and social needs.

7. **Visual, Organizational, and Clarity:**

For this component, we are examining the elements that allow students to easily navigate the document. Some points to consider:

- Is the organization clear?
- Does the syllabus have a logical flow?
- Do you utilize section headings that might facilitate the students' ability to quickly access important course information?
- Have you clearly communicated that students will need to continually interact with the document for course resources, reading assignments, and other information?
- Do you incorporate visuals such as images, graphics, charts or diagrams that will reinforce content and engage the student in a different way?
- Is the document fully accessible?

Inclusive Syllabus Feedback Form adapted from Brantmeier, E., Broscheid, A., and Moore, C. S. (n.d.). Inclusion by design: Survey your syllabus and course design, a worksheet (modified). [PDF file]. Retrieved from https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/sites/default/files/basic-page-supplementary-materials-files/inclusion_by_design_survey_your_syllabus.pdf

Other References used:

- Palmer, M. S., Bach, D. J., & Streifer, A. C. (2014). Measuring the promise: A learning-focused syllabus rubric. To improve the academy: A journal of educational development, 33(1), 14 -36. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/tia2.20004>
- Inclusive Classroom Climate: https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/sites/default/files/basic-page-supplementary-materials-files/inclusive_classroom_climate_handout.pdf