What is a Syllabus?

"A syllabus is most simply defined as a concise outline of a course of study. But it is also the students' introduction to the program, the subject matter, and *you*." (Nilson, 2016, p. 61)

"…contains the information students need in order to understand what the program is all about, where you are trying to go with the program, and how it is going to operate." (Fink, 2013, p. 159)

Whether you call it a workshop agenda, program information, a contract between instructor and student, or a syllabus, this document's underlying purpose is to provide preliminary information to your learners. The syllabus set's the tone and presents a first impression of you, and the purpose of your time together. The Chronicle of Higher Education *How to Create a Syllabus: Advice Guide* (Gannon, K. 2019) states "an effective syllabus is a promise, that as a result of our course (or time together), students will be able to do a number of things either for the first time, or at least better than they could before."

Syllabus Components

The following table presents the key components (communication points) for your syllabus.

Syllabus Section	Typical Components
Title	Program titles should be concise, be free of jargon, and convey the key purpose of the program.
Educator contact information, availability	An initial introduction creates a sense of connection between the instructor and the learners. It presents the instructor as professional as well as approachable and includes the essentials, such as the instructor's name, title, field of expertise, email address and phone number, and what times the instructor is typically available or may be reached by phone.
Program description	The description sets the tone for the program, lets learners know what to expect, and provides guidance to ensure learners get off to a good start. Provide information to help learners understand the purpose of the program and how the learning process is structured and carried out, including program schedule, delivery modality (i.e. face-to-face, online or blended), modes of communication, types of learning activities, and how learning will be assessed. Clearly state the dates of the program or the amount of time learners have to complete it, especially in the case of programs whose dates do not correspond to the

Syllabus Section	Typical Components
	standard academic calendar, or if the program is self-paced. Include information about any prerequisite knowledge and competencies.
Program organization and structure	Explain how the instructional materials, resources, technologies and learning activities are used in the program and how each will help them achieve the stated learning objectives or prepare them to demonstrate program competencies. Also, provide an overview of the steps to complete the program, the program time frame, and general activities to support learning.
Program objectives	Establish measurable program learning objectives or competencies to precisely and clearly describe what learners will learn and be able to do upon successful completion of the program, are written from the learner's perspective, and use terms that are specific and observable enough to be measured. They precisely describe the specific competencies, skills and knowledge learners will master and demonstrate at regular intervals throughout the program. Introduce the program objectives with a phrase such as • By the end of this program, you will be able to… Convey the idea that critical program components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes.
Learning activities	Provide learners with an explanation of how the instructional materials, resources, technologies and learning activities are used in the program and how each will help them achieve the stated learning objectives or help them prepare to demonstrate program competencies.
Assessment plan and recognizing completion	Provide specific and descriptive criteria for the evaluation of learners' work. These criteria must be tied to the program policy for determination of successful completion. Assessments may include pre- and post-quizzes, formative and summative assessments, video quizzes, and more. Be sure all learning objectives are assessed. Provide feedback/rationale for all quiz questions. Explain how successful completion of the program will be recognized. If the program does not grant academic credit, specify the form of recognition to be received for completion of the program. Examples include pass/fail grade, professional certification, certificate of completion, verification of participation, and continuing education credit.

Syllabus Section	Typical Components
	At the end of the program, provide an opportunity for anonymous program feedback/evaluation.
Required and optional resources	Clearly explain the distinction between provided, required and optional materials. Distinguish required materials that are applicable to the entire program from those that apply to a particular topic or module. Provide text information and include a link to purchase (Amazon or another source). For students that seek additional information and want to learn more, provide a detailed description of each additional resource, including what it offers and how to access it, such as within the online program or on an external website.
Accommodation Statement	Include a statement about accommodations, such as "If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this program, or if disability-related accommodations are necessary (for example, extended time on exams, materials in an alternate format), please notify your instructor."
Acknowledgements	It is customary to recognize contributing authors, project editors, project coordinators, program developers, and peer reviewers in an acknowledgments section.

This table and components were created using Quality Matters standards.

Now It's Your Turn

Your time spent planning facilitates the rest of your program design and development. As one of the first pieces you design, your syllabus becomes a critical milestone in your program development process. Use the space below to develop your program syllabus and then share with your education director and other contributing authors.

Program title:

Instructor contact information, availability

Program description

Program organization and structure

Program objectives

Learning activities

Assessment plan and recognizing completion

Required and optional resources

Accommodation statement

Acknowledgements