

# Learner-Centered Syllabus Guide

---

## Overview

A learner-centered syllabus focuses on the needs of the learner, addressing basic course information and going beyond to anticipate questions and promote academic success. The syllabus sets the tone for a course, lets learners know what to expect, establishes a rationale, shares grading strategies and provides learner resources.

An effective learner-centered syllabus will:

- Set the tone for the course
  - Communicate what, when, and how students will learn
  - Establish what students need to do in order to succeed in the course
  - Communicate expectations in terms of student responsibilities and instructor feedback
  - Articulate university policies
  - Deter misunderstandings about course policies and requirements
  - Motivate students to refer to the syllabus
- 

## How to use this guide

This Syllabus Guide is designed to be a resource for developing a learner-centered syllabus. The outlined topics align with Quality Matters and are mindful of WASC standards and universal design. See [References](#) for more information.

Instructions:

- Incorporate the outlined topics in your learner-centered syllabus.
  - Click the links below to jump to the topic for more guidelines.
  - Click the up arrow (↑) to return to the top.
  - Look for an orange asterisk (\*) to indicate items that are not required or recommended for online courses.
- 

## Topics

1. [Course Information](#)
2. [Teaching Methods and Learning Outcomes](#)
3. [Course Structure and Learner Interaction](#)
4. [How Learning Will be Assessed](#)
5. [Student Resources for Support and Learning](#)
6. [UC San Diego Academic Policies](#)
7. [Subject to Change Policy](#)



## 1. Course Information

- Course:  
*Title, quarter, year*
- Instructor:  
*name, website url, office location, office hours; best mode of contact*
- Instructional/Teaching Assistant:  
*name, website url, office location, office hours; best mode of contact*
- Course description:  
*Add the general course catalog description or extend it to address the questions below:  
What is the course about: its purpose, rationale? What are the general topics or focus? Who is the course aimed at? Why does this course exist? How does it fit in with the rest of the field/area's curriculum? Thinking from the prospective students' point of view, what general outcomes is the course designed to achieve? How will it contribute to them professionally? How does it fit with other courses in the department or on campus? Why would students want to take this course and learn this material? Does the course have a Prerequisite; is the course a prerequisite for other courses? Are there required skills or competencies this course builds on?*
- Course materials:  
*textbook, reader, library resources, supplies and materials*
- Required or recommended tools and technology resources  
*TritonEd Learning Management System (<https://triton.ed.ucsd.edu>)  
iClicker  
Software (include links and instructions for downloading)  
Publisher digital materials and assessments  
Other online resources*

## 2. Teaching Methods and Learning Outcomes

- Teaching Methods\*  
*This is your opportunity to invite students into the course, set the tone, convey positivity, and communicate the value and importance of this topic. Why should students care about this course? What is compelling about this topic? Why are you as the instructor passionate about this? How does this course fit into a curricular pathway/major if applicable? Consider any global/national/regional current events or issues that can also help reinforce the importance of this topic  
How is the course structured and how will classes be carried out? If the course has multiple formats (like lecture & recitation, lab and discussion, group learning projects and/or presentations) these should be explained clearly.*



*Include a welcome video or a photo.\**  
*Invite students to introduce themselves.\**

o Learning Outcomes

*List measurable outcomes that clearly define what learners will know, be able to do (skills), value (disposition), and create as they progress through the course. Will learners be expected to demonstrate core competencies, analytical skills, express their understanding through forms of communication? Outcomes should be specific, speak to skills and performance rather than just knowledge and understanding. Outcomes should align with course content, assessments, and activities. See [Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs](#).*

o How to succeed in this course

*List what you expect from learners and how to succeed in the course. You can specify how many hours learners should spend on academic work, expectations about attendance and participation, and guidelines on student conduct. It is essential to convey a commitment to integrity and creating a learning environment that promotes active learning, critical thinking, and ethical work. Consider that learners may vary in their learning processes and that achieving course goals requires effort on the learner's part.*

*Course Expectations (Sample)*

What I expect of you	What you can expect of me
<b>Be informed.</b> Read this syllabus carefully and completely so you understand the course structure and expectations.	<b>Enthusiasm.</b> To be prepared for each class and to bring my enthusiasm for teaching to each lecture, lab, and office hour meeting.
<b>Be attuned.</b> Keep up with readings and lab assignments, as each one builds on the previous one.	<b>Responsiveness.</b> To respond to emails within 24 hours. For those that know me already, you know that I usually respond faster than this. Emails received on weekends or while I'm traveling may take longer.
<b>Ethical.</b> A good attitude and maintenance of honest and ethical principles towards me, your classmates, and the execution of the course. Please read UC San Diego's <a href="#">Principles of Community</a> and <a href="#">Conduct Code</a> .	<b>Timely feedback.</b> To make every effort to return graded assignments within one week of the submission date and to post solutions or code as soon as is reasonably possible after the submission date.
<b>Integrity.</b> An honest, fair, responsible, respectful, trustworthy, and courageous effort on all academic work and collaboration. Please read UC San Diego's Policy on <a href="#">Integrity of Scholarship</a> . Then, take the <a href="#">integrity pledge!</a>	<b>Integrity.</b> To uphold integrity standards and create an atmosphere that fosters active learning, creativity, critical thinking, and honest collaboration.
<b>Be flexible.</b> Sometimes my schedule gets affected by unavoidable work	<b>Reasonable</b> accommodation and understanding for student situations that



travel, necessitating some office hour rescheduling at the last minute.	arise; however, I will not make exceptions for one person that are not available to every other person in the course.
---	---

### 3. Course Structure and Learner Interaction

- Outline of course content/readings/assignments/activities  
*Provide an outline of the content of the course with dates for reading assignments, midterms, quizzes, papers, etc. Organize by theme or topic. Include a narrative description of what each topic is about, how it connects to the theme and objectives of the course, how assessments scaffold, etc. Be clear about what will happen in class and what students should do in advance of class. Indicate when assignments will be handed out, when they are due, when exams will occur, etc. Check the Registrar's webpage for the Academic Calendar, so you can be sure to prepare for holidays, etc:*  
<https://blink.ucsd.edu/instructors/resources/academic/calendars/2018.html>
- Identify the format of the course  
*Provide instructions on how the course will be delivered via LMS or other synchronous tool, when lectures occur, how learners access instructional materials and non-text alternatives, how learners submit assignments, participate in labs or activities, and how to take a proctored exam, etc. \**

### 4. How Learning Will be Assessed

- Assignments and Activities  
*Include graded and non-graded assignments. Choose assignments that (a) align with the course objectives; (b) require students to learn the expected material and demonstrate the competencies; (c) teach and test; (d) are appropriately demanding; and (e) foster active learning.*
- Attendance, Participation policy, Expectations  
*Statement on attendance and participation: What are acceptable/unacceptable reasons for missing a class, activity, or assessment? What should a student do if they have to miss class? What are the consequences of an unexcused absence? What are the expectations for class participation and engagement in a face-to-face course and in an online course? \* Does participation account for a portion of the student's grade?*  
  
*Include UCSD policy on excused absences: Absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance, or practice will be accommodated where reasonable. **(See Academic Regulations and Policies)***



- Grading Procedures
  - Describe how students will be graded and evaluated: On a curve or absolute scale? Clarify weighting of course components. Keep in mind, the weight of different assignments and activities will have a major impact on learners' effort distribution. For example, if you have many homework assignments and/or quizzes, but not any one of them will count significantly toward the final grade, students may invest less time and commitment to doing them. If a certain percentage of the students' grades are based on class participation, what criteria will be used to make that assessment: quantity or quality? authoritarian?*
  - Define when students should expect to receive feedback. Clarify the form of evaluation and feedback (digital feedback, handwritten feedback, rubric/grading forms, peer reviews, etc).*
  
- Incompletes, pass/non-pass Policy\*
  - Explain policies regarding requests for incompletes and documentation supporting the learner's request. See <https://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Regulations/500#B>*
  
  - If students wish to change their selected grading option after enrolling, they may use WebReg in [TritonLink](#), or complete an add/change/drop card and file it at the [Office of the Registrar](#). The last day to change grading options is the end of the fourth week of instruction.*
  
  - Only a grade of P or NP is to be assigned for courses numbered 97, 98, 99, 195, 197, 198, and 199. Subject to the approval of the Undergraduate Council, departments may impose additional limitations or restrictions.*
  
  - Only a grade of P or NP is to be assigned an undergraduate student's work in a noncredit (zero-unit) course. See "[Undergraduate Colleges](#)" section for further information regarding the P/NP grading option.*
  
- Extra Credit Policy\*
  - Explain the policy on Extra Credit if any. How is extra credit evaluated and what is its point/weight value?*
  
- Regrade Policy\*
  - Explain the regrade policy if applicable. How do students submit a request for a regrade?*
  
- Late or Missing Assignments
  - Statement on late papers, missed exams: What should a student do if a paper will be late or if an exam will be missed? What are the consequences?*



*Check with department chair about any other department norms or policies that should be here*

- Attachments  
*Rubric and Grading Forms at the end of the syllabus.*

## 5. Student Resources for Support and Learning

*Use this section to provide students with resources available to them if they seek assistance. Sample language is provided which you may or may not choose to edit. You can add additional resources here as well that may be unique to your course.*

- Library Help  
*For questions about eReserves and research tools:*  
<https://library.ucsd.edu/ask-us/triton-ed.html>
- Learning Resources  
[Writing Hub](#)  
[Supplemental Instruction](#)  
[Tutoring](#)  
[Mental Health Services](#)
- Community Centers  
*Learn about the different ways UC San Diego explores, supports and celebrates the many cultures that make up our diverse community.*  
<https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/diversity/index.html>
- Accessibility  
*Campus Approved Language:*  
*Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.*  
*Contact the OSD for further information: <https://disabilities.ucsd.edu/>.  
osd@ucsd.edu | 858. 534.4382*

*Whenever possible, use universal designs that are inclusive. For example, choose colors that are distinguishable by most colorblind and non-colorblind people, and use a font that is designed to be dyslexic friendly.*

- Inclusion  
*Express a commitment to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspective, experience, and identities. Encourage*





*students to participate in discussion and contribute to the field from their perspective. Invite anonymous feedback as an option.*

Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

858.822.3542 | [diversity@ucsd.edu](mailto:diversity@ucsd.edu) | <https://diversity.ucsd.edu/>

<https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/diversity/index.html>

<https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4400.html>

- Basic Needs

*Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in this course, is encouraged to contact:*

[foodpantry@ucsd.edu](mailto:foodpantry@ucsd.edu) | [basicneeds@ucsd.edu](mailto:basicneeds@ucsd.edu) | (858)246-2632

- Technical Support

*For help with accounts, network, and technical issues, contact the ITS Service Desk:*

<https://acms.ucsd.edu/contact/index.html>

*For help connecting to electronic library resources such as ereserves and e-journals:*

<https://library.ucsd.edu/computing-and-technology/connect-from-off-campus/>

*For help installing Zoom for video conferencing, virtual office hours, synchronous lectures:\**

<https://blink.ucsd.edu/technology/file-sharing/zoom/index.html>

## 6. UC San Diego Academic Policies

- Academic Integrity

*Standard Syllabus Statement*

Academic Integrity is expected of everyone at UC San Diego. This means that you must be honest, fair, responsible, respectful, and trustworthy in all of your actions. Lying, cheating, or any other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated because they undermine learning and the University's ability to certify students' knowledge and abilities. Thus, any attempt to get, or help another get, a grade by cheating, lying or dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office and will result in sanctions. Sanctions can include an F in the class and suspension or dismissal from the University. So, think carefully before you act. Before you act, ask yourself the following questions: a) is my action honest, fair, respectful, responsible, and trustworthy, and b) is my action authorized by the instructor? If you are unsure, don't ask a friend, ask your instructor, instructional assistant, or the Academic Integrity Office. You can learn more about academic integrity at [academicintegrity.ucsd.edu](http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu).



(Source: Bertram Gallant, T. (2017). Teaching for integrity. UC San Diego Academic Integrity Office.)

*[Add your own personal language that will clarify and reframe the perception and importance of academic integrity. Educate students on the specifications of collaboration, permissible and non-permissible discussion and group work, and how to develop deeper approaches to learning. Explain that integrity violations may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action. For more information, see [how to promote integrity.](#)]*

o Classroom Behavior Policy

*Present policies to foster a positive learning environment, including use of cell phones, mobile devices, etc.*

*Express expectations for how learners are to communicate online and in the classroom including tone, awareness, and sensitivity.*

*Refer to:*

*[UCSD Student Conduct Code](#)  
[Principles of Community](#)*

o Religious Accommodation

*It is the policy of the university to make reasonable efforts to accommodate students having bona fide religious conflicts with scheduled examinations by providing alternative times or methods to take such examinations. If a student anticipates that a scheduled examination will occur at a time at which his or her religious beliefs prohibit participation in the examination, the student must submit to the instructor a statement describing the nature of the religious conflict and specifying the days and times of conflict.*

*For final examinations, the statement must be submitted no later than the end of the second week of instruction of the quarter.*

*For all other examinations, the statement must be submitted to the instructor as soon as possible after a particular examination date is scheduled.*

*If a conflict with the student's religious beliefs does exist, the instructor will attempt to provide an alternative, equitable examination that does not create undue hardship for the instructor or for the other students in the class.*

o Discrimination and harassment

*The University of California, in accordance with applicable federal and state laws and university policies, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy (including pregnancy, childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), physical or mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, ancestry, marital status, age,*





*sexual orientation, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services (including membership, application for membership, performance of service, application for service, or obligation for service in the uniformed services). The university also prohibits harassment based on these protected categories, including sexual harassment, as well as sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. The nondiscrimination policy covers admission, access, and treatment in university programs and activities.*

*If students have questions about student-related nondiscrimination policies or concerns about possible discrimination or harassment, they should contact the Office for the Prevention of Harassment & Discrimination (OPHD) at (858) 534-8298, [ophd@ucsd.edu](mailto:ophd@ucsd.edu), or [reportbias.ucsd.edu](http://reportbias.ucsd.edu).*

*Campus policies provide for a prompt and effective response to student complaints. This response may include alternative resolution procedures or formal investigation. Students will be informed about complaint resolution options.*

*A student who chooses not to report may still contact CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center for more information, emotional support, individual and group counseling, and/or assistance with obtaining a medical exam. For off-campus support services, a student may contact the Center for Community Solutions. Other confidential resources on campus include Counseling and Psychological Services, Office of the Ombuds, and Student Health Services.*

CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center  
858.534.5793 | [sarc@ucsd.edu](mailto:sarc@ucsd.edu) | <http://care.ucsd.edu>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)  
858.534.3755 | <http://caps.ucsd.edu>

## 7. Subject to Change Policy

*Include a statement indicating that the information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be – under certain circumstances such as mutual agreement to enhance student learning – subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.*



## References

- Academic regulations and policies. (2018). *UC San Diego General Catalog 2017-2018*. Retrieved from <http://ucsd.edu/catalog/front/AcadRegu.html>
- Adair, D. & Legon, R. (2014). *Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric, Fifth Edition, 2014*. Annapolis, MD: MarylandOnline, Inc.
- Bart, M. (2015). A learner-centered syllabus helps set the tone for learning. *Faculty Focus*. Retrieved from <https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/effective-classroom-management/a-learner-centered-syllabus-helps-set-the-tone-for-learning/>
- Bertram Gallant, T. (2017). Academic integrity as a teaching and learning issue: From theory to practice. *Theory into Practice*, 56 (2), 88-94. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00405841.2017.1308173?needAccess=true>
- Gravel, J. & Rose, D. (2010). Technology and learning, meeting special student's needs. *National Center on Universal Design for Learning*. Retrieved from [http://www.udlcenter.org/sites/udlcenter.org/files/TechnologyandLearning\\_1.pdf](http://www.udlcenter.org/sites/udlcenter.org/files/TechnologyandLearning_1.pdf)
- Reis, R. (n.d.) Diversity and inclusion – Put it in the syllabus! *Tomorrow's Professor Postings*. Retrieved from <https://tomprof.stanford.edu/posting/1625>
- Richmond, A. S. (2016). Constructing a learner-centered syllabus: One professor's journey. *IDEA Paper*. Retrieved from [https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA\\_60.pdf](https://www.ideaedu.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IDEA%20Papers/IDEA%20Papers/PaperIDEA_60.pdf)
- University of California, San Diego. (n.d.). Student conduct code. Retrieved from <https://students.ucsd.edu/files/student-conduct/ucsandiego-student-conduct-code-interim-revisions1-16-18.pdf>
- University of California, San Diego. (n.d.). UC San Diego principles of community. Retrieved from <https://ucsd.edu/about/principles.html>
- WASC Senior College and University Commission. (2015). Standards at a glance 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.wscuc.org/content/standards-glance-2013>

