

Syllabus Guidelines

A detailed and organized syllabus serves not only as a first-day preview of your course, but also as a semester-long reference for students. One element of the syllabus is a class-by-class “forecast” of the topics you intend to cover. As the semester progresses, you may find it necessary to revise this “forecast.”

Addressing certain issues in your syllabus reduces potential confusion and conflicts. The policies under which an instructor conducts his/her course vary significantly from instructor to instructor. Unfortunately, many students, especially those new to the Haas School, wrongly assume that a course policy is a school-wide policy. Therefore, it is important to clarify as many issues as possible in your course syllabus. (It is insufficient to discuss these issues orally at the first class meeting since students often add a course after its first class meeting.)

The syllabus should include at least these items:

- Course number (e.g., MBA 200) and title and your name.
- Course meeting day(s), meeting time(s), and meeting room(s).
- Your office number, phone and fax number, e-mail address, and office hours. (Also include the same information for the Graduate Student Instructor or Reader associated with the course, if any).
- A summary of the course requirements (i.e., exams, papers, and projects), including the dates of examinations and the due dates of papers and projects.
- A summary of your policy about students working in groups on an **ungraded** assignment. When an assignment will not be graded (e.g., a case analysis or a problem set), may students work in groups? If so, may students form their own groups, or will you assign them to groups?
- A summary of your policy about students working in groups on a **graded** assignment. When an assignment will be graded (e.g., a case analysis or a problem set), may students work in groups and submit the assignment as a group? If so, what is the maximum group size, and may students form their own groups, or will you assign them to groups? If the assignment should be submitted individually, may students at least discuss the assignment in a group and then write and submit it individually, or must all aspects of the assignment be done individually?
- A summary of your policy about a student missing a class. If a student will miss a class, how and when should he/she notify you? Will a missed class affect the student’s grade, and, if so, how? Is there a way to “make up” a missed class? Do your policies vary depending on the reason for the missed class, and, if so, how?
- A summary of your policy about the use of calculators/computers during an in-class examination. Many models of today’s calculators are sophisticated enough to store text, spreadsheets, etc. Therefore, during an in-class examination, it is unreasonable to permit a calculator but forbid a laptop/notebook computer, unless you specify the permissible calculator models and inspect them before the exam.
- A summary of your grade policy, including the weights you will give to exams, papers, projects, and class participation.
- A class-by-class summary, including the following information for each class: the class’s date, the topics to be covered, the required and recommended readings, and any other associated assignments for the class (e.g., a case analysis or problem set).