Instructions for Using the UNEX Syllabus Template

INTRODUCTION

A syllabus is the foundational document for a course and contains key elements of information including the course’s target audience, learning objectives, and topical outline. In short, the syllabus defines the course. The syllabus also reflects the institution that offers the course, hence UC Irvine Extension’s desire to have one look and feel for all its syllabi, regardless of program content or department. We want UC Irvine Extension courses to be readily identifiable by their syllabi.

We have created the accompanying syllabus template giving careful consideration to the minimum course information that all syllabi must contain as well as to the readability and usability of the document itself. In addition, we have chosen the font, line and character spacing, capitalizations, and other visual elements for effective readability and clarity, and we have chosen a set of specific elements of information to be included in every syllabus regardless of the format, scheduling, content, or target audience of the course it represents.

This document serves as a guide to using the syllabus template correctly and in a manner that meets Extension’s need to provide course information to a variety of audiences including potential students, human resources managers in corporations (for potential corporate training opportunities), potential educational partners, and UCI campus administrators.

When using the template, please do not change the font, line spacing, character spacing, sequence of the sections, or any other visual element. Also, please do not change anything appearing in black or blue font. Once you have edited the sections that appear in red font, be sure to change the font color of those sections to black.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE TEMPLATE

Below, we present guidance for each section of the syllabus. Note that you must replace text appearing in red in the template with specific information about your course. Generally, items in black font are standard and cannot be changed. We will note exceptions, below.

Course Title, Department, Units, and Quarter/Year

Course titles, department names, catalog numbers (such as X414.25), the number of units a course carries, and the quarter during which the course is being offered are determined by the appropriate academic department. Please contact your program representative if you do not know what to enter in these areas. If you are preparing a completely new course, you can give it a title
and suggest an appropriate number of units, but your planning department has final jurisdiction over this information.

Please note that we are on the quarter system, which means that units are actually quarter units, in which 10 hours of classroom time (or the equivalent amount of content covered in an online course) is equivalent to 1.0 quarter units.

**Class Meeting Information**

This section provides students with complete information about accessing the course including the starting and ending dates along with the dates and times of classroom meetings or scheduled online sessions (such as WebEx).

**Instructor Information**

Students often choose specific courses because they are attracted by the instructor's experience, knowledge, and reputation. Hence it is important not only to provide the instructor's name and contact information, but also a concise yet thorough instructor biography.

**Course Description**

This is the official, Extension-approved course description as it appears in the course catalog and on the Extension website. If you wish to change the description, please contact your academic department to discuss the changes. We count on instructors to stay “up-to-date” on their course topics, which includes letting our academic planning staff know when changes are needed.

**Prerequisites**

This section lists specific courses that students must complete and/or provides a description of knowledge students must have prior to enrolling. For existing courses please coordinate this information with your program representative before making any changes.

**Course Sequencing**

Your course may be part of a series of courses that students must complete in a defined order. Your program representative can provide information about this. You might say something like, “This is the second course in a series of five courses covering Human Relations fundamentals.” You can also show how your course relates to other courses using a block diagram or other visual layout.
**Course Objectives**

Do not delete or change the phrase, “At the end of this course, students will be able to:” All learning objectives must form a logical ending to this sentence. Learning objectives must be action-oriented, measurable, and specific. Here are several examples:

*Upon completing this course, students will be able to:*

**Example 1:** Describe the role that the FCC plays in regulating communications in the United States. *(This is specific and measurable though it might be improved by saying something about the depth of knowledge that students must demonstrate if asked to write such a description.)*

**Example 2:** Write short computer programs using Java that access a relational database. *(This also could be a bit more specific, but it is definitely measurable and action-oriented.)*

**Example 3:** Identify projects as being amenable to either the waterfall development approach or to agile development. *(This is action-oriented and probably connected to course assignments in which students must look at a set of projects and apply certain criteria in determining the appropriate development approach.)*

Here is an example of an unacceptable learning objective:

*Understand the principles of financial planning.*

Remember, learning objectives complete the sentence “Upon completing this course, students will be able to...” We avoid the word “understand” because it is too vague and does not lead to an observable or measurable outcome unless the instructor defines additional specific requirements. How do you know that someone understands something? A person may understand financial planning to certain extent – at a very high level, perhaps. However, a certified personal financial planner understands that topic at a much deeper level – sufficiently deep to provide consulting services. Learning objectives must attempt to define the appropriate audience for the course, or at least give an idea of how the instructor will assess student performance.

**Course Material**

Here, list any course materials (beyond lectures and online content) that student will need to use in order to pass the course. Materials include textbooks, websites, handouts, uploaded documents, case study articles, etc. If your course contains a required textbook, be sure to communicate this to your program representative so that this information can be included on the registration website.
Course Outline

This section should include a weekly breakdown of the learning objectives/topics covered, the activities/assignments that will assess students’ understanding of those objectives, and methods of instruction used to deliver content and facilitate discussions (ex. prerecorded lectures, WebEx sessions, discussion forums, etc.). Some instructors may choose to insert their course plan into this portion of the syllabus as an organizing structure. The outline must allow an intelligent reviewer to determine that:

1. The course has sufficient content to justify the number of quarter units assigned. (1.0 quarter unit is equivalent to ten hours of classroom time or equivalent online content.)
2. The course’s content, activities, and assessments adequately address the desired outcomes of the course, as set forth by the course description and course objectives.

Evaluation and Grading

The upper part of this section lists tasks on which you intend to evaluate student performance. It is generally better to list categories of items rather than individual assignments in order to keep the table uncluttered. On the right side, you can list the relative weighting that each item contributes toward the total grade. Please express this as a percentage, not as points. Here is an example:

**Evaluation of Student Performance Weighted as Percentages of the Total Grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly homework assignments</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class project</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Needless to say, the percentages must add up to 100! Some instructors like to assign points for participation, such as speaking up in class with meaningful comments or participating in an online discussion forum. Please note that Extension policy places the following limits on “participation” credit:

- On-ground course: Maximum of 15% of the total grade
- Online course: Maximum of 30% of the total grade

The maximum value is greater for online courses because online discussion forums are more visible and it is easier for instructors to track and evaluate participation. In addition, instructors
can set criteria for earning credit, such as stating that forum posts must be substantive and must contribute to the entire class’s learning experience.

**Grading Scale**

The grading scale is fixed. UNEX courses are not graded on any type of “curve” so the course letter grade you assign must be determined by using one of the tables below. It is important to use numerical scales for evaluating all gradable assignments and learning activities, and to assign a final letter grade only at the end of a course. There are two options for assigning letter grades: “letter-only (without plusses/minuses)” and “letter with plusses/minuses.” Please select one grading scale and delete the other.

**Please note that you must choose one scale, show the appropriate table in your course syllabus, and then assign letter grades at the end of the course according to the scale you chose.** If you tell students that you will not be assigning plusses and minuses, then you must not do so when submitting final grades.

For example, if you choose the scale *Without Plusses/Minuses* and a student earns a total score of 91.3 percent, she earns an “A.” On the other hand, if you initially specified that you will be adding plusses and minuses, then that same student would receive an A-. Also please note that an “A+” does not confer more grade points than an "A" for the purpose of calculating a student’s grade point average.

**Grading Criteria and Expectations**

It’s also a good idea to include some information about expectations and grading criteria for each category listed in the student performance table. If, for example, you will be awarding participation points for students’ contributions to the discussion forum, you should provide students with some basic participation guidelines. This can be as simple as:

“Each week will contain an opportunity for you to engage your classmates in discussion. Participation in these discussion forums is required and counts as 25% of your final grade. To receive full participation points, you will need to post a substantive response to the prompt by 11:59pm PST on the Thursday of each week and provide critical feedback to at least 2 of your peers by 11:59pm PST on the Sunday of each week. Although I am not looking for you to meet a specific word count, I am looking for well thought-out and interesting contributions to the conversation. Simply posting a link to a resource or letting your classmate know that he/she did a “Great job!” will not result in full participation points.”

Some instructors will even provide rubrics and/or samples of student work for large assignments, such as an electronic portfolio, case study write up, or group presentation.
Code of Conduct, Netiquette, Academic Honesty Policy, Disability Services

These sections consist of standard text and must not be altered. If a syllabus is being used for a classroom-based course that is a syllabus is being used for a corporate training course, the section on disability services does not need to be included.