



Understanding the NYSED Requirements for Syllabi

Purpose

This document serves to inform instructors' efforts to write syllabi that incorporate best-practices for ensuring student success *and* honor the requirements for syllabi established by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). This document further strives to clarify several key requirements, highlight common issues, and provide a *NYSED syllabus checklist* for ensuring that your syllabus includes the requisite critical information about your course. This document is part of [CTI's repository of resources](#) to support instructors' efforts to craft clear and helpful syllabi.

Note: This document is **not** intended to be a comprehensive guide to developing and submitting new academic programs to the NYSED. For more guidance on that process, please consult with your department chair or dean and the [NYSED Program Registration Guidance Documents](#).

Context

Cornell's legal authority to grant educational credentials is granted to us through New York State and is managed through the NYSED. It is critical to consult [NYSED's curriculum expectations](#) when preparing new academic programs for submission and approval.

The NYSED also routinely scrutinizes syllabi to ensure that our course documents honor the NYS requirements. Accordingly, ensuring that our syllabi include the NYSED required elements will help us avoid delays during the program approval process. Furthermore, consistently meeting the NYSED requirements strengthens Cornell's relationship with the State and ensures the sound operational status of both our individual programs and the broader institution.

Common Syllabus Issues

Consider the following issues commonly cited by the NYSED and the sample feedback offered:

1. Syllabi must document expectations with regard to the NYS definition of a credit hour.

In documenting meeting times and course expectations, syllabi must demonstrate that credit hours assigned to courses meet the requirements of CR 50.1(o), which states that each *credit hour* “requires at least 15 hours (of 50 minutes each) of instruction and at least 30 hours of supplementary assignments.”

Thus, a 3-credit course meets three times a week for 50-minutes for each of the 15 weeks of the semester for a total of (150 minutes a week) x (15 weeks) = 2250 minutes of instruction a semester. Similarly, a 4-credit course meets for 3000 minutes of instruction.

Instructional time in the classroom includes regularly scheduled instruction, as well as scheduled exams (e.g., evening prelims). Vacation periods and canceled meeting sessions *cannot* be counted in the instructional time calculation.

Syllabi that do not reflect NYS definition of a credit hour will raise red flags and can prevent or delay the approval of new or changed programs.

For additional guidance in calculating a credit hour, refer to [Cornell's Credit Hour policy](#) (an 8-page PDF that includes guidance about labs, studios, independent study, and so forth) or contact the Office of the University Registrar.

Examples of commentary from NYSED regarding the credit hour received on recent program proposals submitted by Cornell:

- The syllabus for [CLASS] indicates that the course meets four times, for two hours per meeting, over the period of one week. Although this would exceed the amount of time required for instructional time, it does not appear that students are required to do any work outside of class as the syllabus states, "Students are evaluated entirely based on participation in small group discussions." Assuming 60-minute hours, the four meetings would total of 480 minutes. However, a 0.5-credit course should require a total of 1,125 minutes to cover both the instructional and supplementary time requirement. Please explain how this course meets the semester hour definition.
- Throughout the proposal document, [CLASS] is identified as a 5-credit course. However, the syllabus identifies it is a 4.5-credit course. In addition, the first page of the syllabus indicates that this course meets for a total of 40 times (1.5 hour per class). However, the schedule on the last page of the syllabus appears to identify 44 classes. Please clarify. The Department is trying to determine whether this course meets the semester hour definition.

2. Syllabi must include student learning outcomes/course learning objectives.

Syllabi must include a brief description of what students are expected to know or do upon completing the course and should be clear, observable, and measurable. Avoid terms such as *know*, *understand*, *learn*, and *appreciate* (which are considered not specific enough to be measurable) in favor of verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy of Verbs (a canonical source for people who study learning). Please see CTI's [resources on defining learning outcomes](#) for more information.

3. Courses offered in different varieties must differentiate expectations.

3a. The syllabi for classes offered at *undergraduate and graduate levels* simultaneously (e.g., 3000-level and 5000-level) must articulate different requirements for undergraduate and graduate credit (e.g., additional requirements at the graduate level). An example of comments from NYSED regarding different course levels:

[The institution may provide separate syllabi or one syllabus...] One syllabus is fine as long as it clearly articulates the expectations for students who will be earning undergraduate credit vs graduate credit for the course.

3b. The syllabi for classes offered for different amounts of credit must clarify the expectations for earning different amounts of credits. An example of comments from NYSED regarding different credit awards:

The [new program] proposal indicates that students in the 2-year program complete [CLASS] for 2 credits in Fall 2, whereas students in the 1-year program will complete the course for 1 credit in Winter 1. The syllabus was provided for the 2-credit version of this course, but not for the 1-credit version of this course. Please provide.

Syllabus NYSED Checklist

All the following elements need to appear on a syllabus that honors the NYSED requirements for syllabi:

- ☐ **Course:** Subject, Catalog Number, and Title
- ☐ **Credits allocated:** e.g., “3-credits”
- ☐ **Prerequisites**
- ☐ **Time and place:** Meeting times (NYSED uses this information in calculating credit hour compliance), location
- ☐ **Instructor(s):** name, office hours, and contact information
- ☐ **Course description:** Insert the course description that appears in the “Courses of Study.” Expand this section to include your course objectives, goals/purpose, rationale, and scope.
- ☐ **Course learning outcomes/objectives**
- ☐ **Assignments:** All required assignments must be listed.
- ☐ **Method of assessing student achievement:** This includes the basis of final grade determination and methods (possibly including rubrics) for assessing student achievement at the course and project level.
- ☐ **Basis of grade determination:** This will likely include some mention of your grading scale (e.g., 97-100 A+, 93-97 A, 90-92 A-, etc.) Please consult the Cornell [University Grading System](#) as needed.
- ☐ **Bibliographic and other course materials/resources**
- ☐ **Other course policies related to integrity of credit:** This includes policies, including academic integrity, and expectations that affect student grades (e.g., attendance policies, late assignment policies, opportunities to revise work, etc.).

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