Syllabus Updates in Practice, Policy, and Personality

While we may dutifully update our syllabi with each semester's new dates, a history of specific instances and mindsets can linger without careful review. At the OU Teaching and Learning Symposium in May, David Clark shared such a moment of discovering a regrettably worded policy in his syllabus (2 minute clip), one that hadn't reflected his practice for years. Especially after years of drastic change, read through and update syllabi to reflect your practice, institutional policies, and your personality.

Start with the OU Template for Timely Updates

Every year the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning updates the recommended OU syllabus template in collaboration with other offices on campus, found on Syllabus Resources. Some recent updates include:

- General accessibility and flexibility considerations learned from COVID-19
- Course Format: Updated instructional codes (i.e., for courses taught partially or fully online)
- Updates to the Early Alert process
- Virtual Office hours
- Emphasis on learning outcomes key to accreditation
- Using OU bookstore
- Academic Integrity; ChatGPT language, instructor consequences based on academic conduct outcome

Customize Based on Practice and Context

Departments and units have specific requirements and resources. Work to make a department-specific template based on the recommended OU template to ensure students have clarity and consistency in their course roadmap.

Also consider whether your syllabus fully reflects new practices you have implemented, such as how students use technology or policies like participation and timely submissions. For example, as I began to write more about making the most of mobile learning options, I considered Mobile-Mindful Syllabus practices such as

recommended apps to complement course work. Introduce [Syllabus Resources](#). If you have focused more on being an inclusive instructor, explore the module [Your Syllabus as a Tool to Promote Promote Student Equity, Belonging, and Growth](#). More considerations can be found on our [Syllabus Resources](#) page.

Personalize

Building student-instructor rapport can have an incredible impact on student motivation to participate and succeed in your course. Counter strictly contract-like syllabus language by referring to students directly (i.e., "you" rather than "the student).

- Add photos representing course concepts in personalized ways.
- Share information about yourself that shows your credentials, passion, perspective, and overall humanity. In anywhere from two sentences to a paragraph, you can give students a holistic picture of yourself, plus clarify how you would like to be addressed since honorific conventions differ. See CETL associate director [Christina Moore's Professor Information section](#) as an example.
- Share your [teaching in 10 words](#) or another format, then share more from there. See CETL faculty director [Sarah Hosch's Course Values & Teaching Philosophy](#) as an example.

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