

# Texas A&M University

## Minimum Syllabus Requirements

The Texas A&M University Faculty Senate is responsible for “[p]erforming due diligence in creating or amending courses and programs according to the standards set by the institution, the system, the state, the regional accrediting body, other accrediting agencies, when relevant; and the federal government” ([TAMU SAP 11.99.99.M0.01, Section 5.4.3](#)). In this role, the Faculty Senate directs the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) and Graduate Council (GC) to monitor curricular proposals for consistency in adhering to minimum syllabus requirements ([TAMU SAP 11.99.99.M0.01, Section 5.3.4](#)).

This document describes the university standard for minimum syllabus requirements. Texas A&M University faculty members are expected to adhere to these standards when creating syllabi for their courses. In addition, the UCC / GC will approve a syllabus attached to a Curricular Approval Request System (CARS) curricular request if the syllabus meets the minimum syllabus requirements outlined below. Similarly, the Core Curriculum Committee and W & C Course Advisory Committee will expect that syllabi accompanying requests for CORE, ICD, CD, W, and/or C approval will meet the requirements outlined in this document.

### Public Posting of Syllabus to Howdy

The State of Texas requires that all instructors of undergraduate courses post the course syllabus online no later than 1 week after the first class day (see [House Bill 2504](#) and [Texas Education Code 51.974](#)). Faculty must post the syllabus for their undergraduate courses in the Howdy web portal (see [complete and easy-to-follow instructions](#) for uploading the course syllabus).

### Electronic Syllabus Accessibility

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. This includes access to electronic and information resources. Faculty members are responsible for ensuring their electronic syllabus meets accessible document standards. (See [TAMU SAP 29.01.04.M0.02](#).)

“Accessible documents enable assistive technology software such as screen readers and magnifiers to be more effective. Ensuring that your documents are made in an accessible manner provides everyone with an equal opportunity to access information.” (See [Creating Documents](#) on the Division of Information Technology, *IT Accessibility* website.)

Faculty should implement the following guidelines to make their electronic course syllabus accessible.

- **Heading Structure**
  - Structure syllabus content in a hierarchical manner by using headings. Do not simply change the font size and style. Instead, use the “heading style” feature of your word processor to add headings to your document (c.f., [“Add a Heading,” Microsoft Office Support](#) website).

- Use “Heading 1” as the page title or the main content heading. In general, you should only have a single “Heading 1” in a document.
  - Use “Heading 2” as a major section heading. Use “Heading 3” as a sub heading within “Heading 2” and so on for each subsequent sub level.
  - Do not skip heading levels. You should not go from “Heading 3” to “Heading 5.”
- ☐ **Alternative Text for Images**
- Add alternative text for all images contained in the syllabus document.
  - Use a succinct, accurate, and equivalent description of the image content or function.
- ☐ **Hyperlinks**
- Add descriptive link text that does not rely on the surrounding text.
  - Keep the number of words in the link text to a minimum.
  - Display the hyperlink as underlined text that stands out from the surrounding text.
  - Avoid using link text that is ambiguous or dependent upon context (e.g., “click here”).
- ☐ **Bullet and Numbered Lists**
- Use the list or numbered item feature of your word processor when creating lists rather than formatting the list only with tabs and indents.
  - Use numbered lists for a set of items presented in a sequence.
  - Use bullet lists for a set of items that do not require a sequence.

Many word processing applications have accessibility checkers similar to spelling checkers. Consider using an accessibility checker to ensure your syllabus is accessible. (See “[Microsoft Word: Creating Accessible Documents](#),” *Web Accessibility in Mind* website.)

## Creating Accessible Microsoft Word Documents

The Accessible Electronic Document Community of Practice (AED CoP) provides a training video series for how to ensure your Microsoft Word document is accessible. The series includes 14 modules and requires about 1.25 hours to complete. (See “[How to Make an Accessible Document in Microsoft Word](#),” *Section508.gov* website.)

## Creating Accessible Adobe Acrobat (PDF) Documents

Faculty can generate accessible PDFs from accessible Microsoft Word documents by enabling the “Document structure tags for accessibility” option when saving the file as a PDF. (See “[Create Accessible PDFs](#),” *Microsoft Office Support* website and “[PDF Accessibility](#),” *Web Accessibility in Mind* website.)

## Course Information

A major purpose of the course syllabus is to inform students about the course, the expected deliverables, and associated grading requirements. This section outlines what information about the course must be included in each course syllabus.

- ❑ **Catalog, Schedule, and Credit Hours**
  - Include course number, course title (must match Catalog), term (e.g., Spring 20##), meeting times, and meeting location.
  - Include the number of credit hours if the course is a variable credit hour course.
- ❑ **Instructor Details**
  - Include name, office telephone, email, office hours, and office location.
- ❑ **Course Description**
  - Provide a course description that closely follows the catalog description for the course.
- ❑ **Course Prerequisites**
  - Include a list of course prerequisites (must match Catalog). If no prerequisites, state “None.”
- ❑ **Special Course Designation**
  - Specify if the course has one (or more) of the following special course designations: core curriculum (CORE), international and cultural diversity (ICD), cultural discourse (CD), writing intensive (W), communication intensive (C), cross-listed, or stacked.
  - Include other information as required for the special course designation (e.g., a W course syllabus must specify the student must pass the writing components to earn a grade in the course, a CORE course must include information about the foundational component area to which it belongs, a stacked course must clearly indicate additional work for graduate students, etc.)
- ❑ **Learning Outcomes**
  - List one or more learning outcomes for the course.

A learning outcome is a statement regarding what the student will know or be able to do upon successfully completing the course. It must be both observable and measurable. The outcomes may include competencies developed in the course. Additional assistance with learning outcomes is available through the [Center for Teaching Excellence](#) and the [Office of Institutional Assessment](#).

- ❑ **Textbook and/or Resource Materials**
  - Specify the textbook and other resource materials that are required, recommended, and/or optional for the course. If no textbook or other resource materials, state “None.”

The syllabus should not promote any one vendor of course materials to the students. Instead, the syllabus should encourage students to acquire the “required and recommended” course material from vendors that provide the best value and amenities for their selection.

- ❑ **Grading Policy**
  - Define a grading scale for the assignment of a letter grade (A through F) or the criteria for assigning S/U grades as appropriate.
  - Describe the graded items for the course.
  - Indicate weights as applicable for grade items included in calculating the course grade (e.g., exams, laboratory assignments, field student work, projects, papers, homework, class attendance, participation, and other graded activities).

**Graded Class Participation** – If class participation constitutes more than 10% of grade, the syllabus should explicitly define and outline how the participation grade is determined based on a well-defined rubric (see [Student Rule 10](#)).

**Graded Attendance** – If attendance is a graded item, the syllabus should state how the faculty member will collect and evaluate attendance.

**Grades for Stacked Course** – If the course is a stacked course that uses a single, combined syllabus for the undergraduate and graduate courses, the syllabus must clearly specify additional work required for graduate students. (See [Policy for Stacked Courses.](#))

**Grading Policy Changes** – Faculty must provide grading policies to students by the first class period. As such, faculty cannot change the course grading policy after the second class session. (See [Student Rule 10.](#))

#### **Late Work Policy**

- Indicate whether or not the faculty member will accept late work.
- Identify any associated penalty if the faculty member accepts late work for evaluation.

The late work policy should define what constitutes late work (e.g., submitting a deliverable after the established deadline). Work submitted by a student as makeup work for an excused absence is not considered late work and is exempted from the late work policy. (See [Student Rule 7.](#))

#### **Course Schedule**

- Include a list of topics, calendar of activities, major assignment dates, and exam dates.

The course schedule must include lab hours in the calendar of activities. The course schedule must include dates of major exams and assignments. Dates for exams and assignments should not be changed without written notification to all students in the course (notice via email or learning management system is acceptable).

**Traditionally Delivered Course** – The calendar must include the number of weeks that correspond to the traditionally delivered course semester (e.g., Fall/Spring = 15 weeks; Summer = 5 or 10 weeks as appropriate).

**Non-Traditionally Delivered Course** – The weeks on the calendar of activities for a non-traditional syllabus will vary according to need. Faculty members in departmental units will determine whether the contact hours for a non-traditional course are appropriate for and equivalent to a traditional course. (See [University Rule 11.03.99.M1.](#))

#### **Optional Course Information Items**

Consider adding the following additional information items to the course syllabus when appropriate.

- **Technology Support** – Provide appropriate technical support information to inform students who to contact if they encounter technical difficulties (e.g., direct technical questions to the course teaching assistant; contact the vendor; etc.). Technical support information should include information such as who to contact, how to contact that resource, hours of availability, etc.
- **Learning Resources** – Provide information regarding available learning resources such as supplemental instruction or tutoring when appropriate (e.g., information about the University Writing Center for a W/C designated course or related LinkedIn Learning modules appropriate for the course topic). The [Study Hub website](#) lists many on-campus learning resources to support students in achieving academic excellence.

## University Policies

Another major purpose of the course syllabus is to inform students about university policies related to coursework. This section outlines the university level policies that must be included in each course syllabus. The wording of these policies is established by the Faculty Senate.

**NOTE:** Faculty members should not change the written statements. A faculty member may add separate paragraphs if additional information is needed.

### ☐ Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

### ☐ Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

### ☐ Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at <https://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>.

**NOTE:** Faculty associated with the main campus in College Station should use this Academic Integrity Statement and Policy. Faculty not on the main campus should use the appropriate language and location at their site.

## □ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit <https://disability.tamu.edu>. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

**NOTE:** Faculty associated with the main campus in College Station should use this Americans with Disabilities Act Policy statement. Faculty not on the main campus should use the appropriate language and location at their site.

## □ Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's [Title IX webpage](#).

**NOTE:** Faculty associated with the main campus in College Station should use this Title IX and Statement on Limits of Liability. Faculty not on the main campus should use the appropriate language and location at their site.

## □ Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.

## College and Department Policies

College and departmental units may establish their own policies and minimum syllabus requirements. As long as these policies and requirements do not contradict the university level requirements, colleges and departments can add them in this section.

## Helpful Links for Syllabus Construction

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Center for Teaching Excellence](#)
- [Checklist of C Course Requirements](#)
- [Checklist of W Course Requirements](#)
- [Faculty E-Handbook](#)
- [Final Exam Schedule](#)
- [Office for Academic Innovation](#)
- [Online Course Catalog](#)
- [Religious Observances](#)
- [Student Rules](#)
- [University Rule 11.03.99.M1](#)
- [Zoom](#)

*Approved by Faculty Senate (FS.26.15), July 14, 2008  
Approved by President, August 6, 2008*

*Approved by Faculty Senate (FS.26.86), February 9, 2009  
Approved by President, April 7, 2009*

*Approved by Faculty Senate (FS.30.024), July 9, 2012  
Approved by President, August 2, 2012*

*Approved by Faculty Senate (FS.31.88), October 14, 2013  
Approved by President, November 20, 2013*

*Approved by Faculty Senate, July 13, 2020  
Approved by President, July 17, 2020*

*Pending Approval by Faculty Senate, November 9, 2020  
Pending Approval by President, November, 2020*