



How to Read a Syllabus – Important Tips

MCEC 2020

Your course syllabus has a wealth of information that you need to successfully navigate the academic term. First, begin by reading the Course Information, Course Description and Instructor Information. These sections provide essential information, such as the official course meeting time and your instructor's name and office location. This is vital information because there may be several sections of a course and some may be taught by different instructors. Most importantly, you will find the instructor's contact information and Office Hours. During Office Hours, you can arrange to meet with your instructor, even remotely. You should record this information on your calendar or organizer for future reference.

Now, give attention to the **Required Textbooks and Other Materials**. This section provides a list of materials that you will need to be successful in the course. This may include one or more textbooks, access codes (for secure online course content), special software and other equipment that you may need to complete assignments. Even if you don't immediately understand why you may need these materials, it is wise to secure them now. Otherwise, you may not be able to obtain them when you need them for an assignment.

Once you have your course information and materials, review the **Accessibility Statement**, especially if you have the need for special accommodations, including those for exceptional learners and for vision- or hearing-impaired students. This section typically includes contact information if you need additional support. You should record the information on your calendar or organizer for future reference.

The next sections on your syllabus are very important, beginning with the **Course Competencies**. These competencies, or skills, are an indication of the skill and knowledge required to complete the course. Similarly, the **Course Outline of Topics** will provide a general outline of content-related topics that will be considered in the course. Finally, you should give careful and thorough attention to the **Grading Scale** and the means of calculating the final grades in the course. Before submitting the first assignment for grading, you should already know what percentage of your grade is attached to the different categories of assignments in a course. Then, you should give absolute priority to the assignments that have the most weight. Do not neglect your other assignments, but be certain that you are not failing to complete those that factor more strongly in your final grade.

The remainder of your syllabus will contain information that may be more specific to your course or campus. They include course policies, including in-person and online attendance rules, as well as rules regarding late work, academic dishonesty, assignment submission, and the instructor's preferred means of communication. These are all important reminders and should govern your engagement in the course.

The final section of your syllabus contains other information that might be of use to students enrolled in the course, or in the school. You should review this information, and make notes of relevant details on your calendar or in your organizer, for future reference.

Now that you have read and understood your syllabus, take a moment and designate time for this course in your calendar or on your organizer. Setting aside time now to study and complete course assignments will prepare you for success throughout the term.