



## Creating Effective DE Syllabi



### Welcome

**Welcome to the module that focuses on creating effective syllabi for online instruction. This module will provide insight and best practices from both experienced online faculty and instructional designers.**

Although you may be quite experienced with teaching online and maintaining a good online course syllabus, it is suggested that you review the module below (Elements and Design of an Effective DE Syllabus) prior to taking the quiz. Completing the quiz successfully will indicate your completion of the module.

Don't forget to check the "Additional and Helpful Resources" folder, which contains a wealth of additional information related to online syllabus creation, as well as the full-length audio interviews provided by the Max Ray Joyner Award-winning faculty featured in this module.

### Goal

The goal of this module is to increase faculty awareness of the importance of a proper syllabus for online courses, so they are able to more easily communicate course needs, objectives, and requirements to students.

**After completion of the Creating Effective DE Syllabi module, faculty will be able to:**

- identify the essential elements of a well-rounded syllabus for an online course
- recognize the importance of clearly detailing means of communication in an online course within the syllabus
- recognize the differences when comparing syllabi to determine what elements help strengthen the usefulness of an on-line course syllabus
- gain insight from award-winning DE faculty on best practices that help strengthen the usefulness of an online course syllabus.



### Elements and Design of an Effective DE Syllabus

This learning module focuses on six elements to consider when developing a syllabus for on-line instruction:

- Organization and Design
- Contact Information
- Methods of Communication
- Assessment Methods
- Course Expectations
- Tentative Course Calendar.

A syllabus for an on-line course should over communicate items and/or issues that face-to-face course syllabi do not necessarily need to address.



### Creating Effective DE Syllabi Quiz

Click on the link above to take the quiz.



### [Supplemental Resources \(Optional\)](#)

This module contains helpful links to related resources, a list of best practices in DE syllabus creation, and much more on this topic.



## Elements and Design of an Effective DE Syllabus

When creating your syllabus, careful consideration should be given to the initial organization and design of the document. Listed below are elements and practices that are consistent with those found in a face-to-face course.

### Course Information

Course Number, Section Number
Title
Credit Hours
Term
Instructor Contact Information
Downloadable Syllabus (when applicable)
<p>Allowing a syllabus to be downloaded, instead of embedded within Blackboard, helps provide students with an off-line version of your syllabus. PDF formatted syllabi, for example, provide a solid printer-friendly documents, regardless of how you designed it. Anyone can open a PDF document with either built-in software on their computer or via the <a href="#">free Adobe Reader software</a>. Microsoft Word format is less flexible, as it relies on your students having the same fonts and (in some cases) same version of Word as you do. Newer versions of Microsoft Word can even "save as" Word documents as PDF documents without additional software. Lastly, PDF documents, unlike Word documents, are not editable by students, so there's no chance of a student accidentally deleting a portion of your syllabus.</p>
Course Description
Course Objectives
Assessment Methods
Grading Practices
Course Policies
Behavior and Ethics
Course Calendar or Important Dates
Proctoring Guidelines (when applicable)
Academic Integrity Policy
Honor Code
ADA Statement



## Contact Information

One of the key items that often gets overlooked or is not fully detailed in online course syllabi is proper information on how communication is handled in the course.

Since there is no face-to-face interaction or physical meetings with students, communication information should be top priority in detailing within a syllabus. Because of this (as mentioned earlier), it is critical that you try to over communicate as much as possible. Here are some suggestions on what to provide:

- **Provide students with your availability and in what capacity.**
  - When can students contact you?
  - How should students contact you?
    - **Example:** "You may call me during posted office hours; other times by e-mail."
  - Are you only accessible by e-mail or phone?
  - Do you allow online students to visit your physical office on campus?
  - Do you want to allow and/or limit when students can call you at off-campus locations (if at all)? If so, clearly state those limits.
- **Expectations for response time**
  - **Example:** "I will respond to e-mails and voicemails within 24-48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays)."
- **Additional contact information (if available).**
  - Skype address, IM address, etc.





## Methods of Communication

It's very important to list all methods of communication that will be utilized throughout the course.

**Have at least two methods of communication listed** (a primary and secondary method).

- Identify what type of communication will be used for different activities.
- Consider having a general Q&A/FAQ discussion forum. Students can ask general questions and instructor or other students may provide answers to the whole class.
  - **Result:** Reducing similar e-mails from multiple students.



**Consider alternative communication methods.** Web conferencing tools and social media (Twitter, Skype, etc.) are **possible** alternatives to e-mail and phone calls that may provide additional conveniences to students trying to reach you. If you often use Skype and want to communicate with students via Skype, provide your Skpye user name on the syllabus (if you choose to do this create a professional Skype account for this purpose). If you are unsure of what social media your students use, consider using a short Blackboard survey to find out what tools your students use most, then consider whether to use those in the online class.



**Be consistent.** Don't change the methods of communication mid-way through the semester.

- **Example:** students have been communicating via Discussion Board and during the middle of the semester the instructor changes method to the Virtual Classroom.

**State acceptable etiquette for communicating** (i.e. what is acceptable, acceptable verbiage, etc.).

**Have a back-up plan** and convey this to your students at the beginning of the course.

- **Examples:** an alternative e-mail address you provide to your students (free Google e-mail account, etc.) or an alternative web site for the course in the event of a sustained Blackboard outage.



## Assessment Methods

Clearly defining all topics related to assessing student's progress in the syllabus is imperative. Some items that should be addressed include:

### Assignments

- How should assignments be submitted (e.g., via the Assignment Tool in Blackboard)?
- "Will late assignments be accepted?"

### Assessments

- What type of Assessments will be utilized?
- How will issues with Assessments be handled?
  - **Example:** If a student exceeds the allotted time for taking an exam, will there be a penalty such as point reduction?



## Expectations

While these are often common elements in a traditional face-to-face course syllabus, it's important to reiterate the need for these items to be clearly stated in a DE course syllabus. In fact, since these policies cannot be explained further in a classroom, additional detail may be needed to fully explain what you require in the class. The following items and expectation should be clearly stated:



### Grading Practices and Policies

- What are the grading practices and policies?
- What criteria are the grades based on?

### Course Policies

- Definition of Plagiarism (which instructor will apply).
  - To avoid possible issues pertaining to plagiarism instructor's may wish to utilize the SafeAssign tool and/or other plagiarism detecting software. To learn more about utilizing SafeAssign, within the Blackboard learning platform, [click here](#).
- If proctoring is expected for exams, expectations and information (i.e. UNC Proctoring Portal, ECU Proctoring Center, etc.) should be provided.



## Course Calendar

All course syllabi should include a tentative Course Calendar with due dates, assessment dates, & exam dates. This is tentative and can always be adjusted, but this will provide students with a basic idea of topics and due dates.



## Compare and Contrast

In this section, fictitious examples of on-line syllabi are compared and illustrated to show why certain designs and organizational methods should be encouraged or avoided. Portions of Dr. Jones and Dr. Smith's syllabus are extracted and comparison are drawn between the two. A full version each syllabus is available for viewing at the conclusion of this section.



## Instructor Information

**WDGT 1000**  
**Section 602**  
Syllabus, Fall 2011

Instructor: Dr. Tom Smith  
Office location: Creighton Building, Room 107  
Office hours: Tuesdays only, 1-4 PM  
Office phone: 252-737-WDGT  
E-mail: [tomsmith@ecu.edu](mailto:tomsmith@ecu.edu) (e-mail answered within 24 business hours)

Dr. Smith (above) and Dr. Jones (below) have both provided sufficient instructor information. However, Dr. Jones has added additional details for office hours, which may assist in avoiding student confusion and frustration. Dr. Jones has also provided an alternate contact method for students to utilize when primary method is unavailable. When utilizing alternate and/or secondary methods of communication, make sure to notify students as to when it is appropriate to utilize this method of communication (i.e. if campus e-mail is out, you may wish to send me a message via Skype).

**WDGT 1000**  
**Section 601-Distance Education Section**  
\*On-Line Delivery\*  
Syllabus, Fall 2011

Instructor: Dr. Frank Jones  
Office location: Creighton Building, Room 104  
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays from 3-5 PM or by appointment. Schedule an appointment (through e-mail) prior to your visit, phone call, or virtual visit, even during posted office hours (this will ensure that I will not be meeting with another student)  
Office phone: 252-328-WDGT  
E-mail: [frankjones@ecu.edu](mailto:frankjones@ecu.edu) (e-mail answered within 24 business hours)  
Skype: frankjones1000



## Communication

**Contacting Your Instructor:**

Please e-mail me if you have questions.

In this section the instructors address how communication will be handle in the course. Dr. Smith (above) simply states that students should e-mail him. Where as Dr. Jones (below) addresses communication by separating the topic into in 3 areas: Course Communication, Contacting Your Instructor, and Contacting Classmates. This provides students with a better understanding of how course communication will be handled, what to expect, and what is and is not acceptable.

**Course Communication:**

This course will utilize numerous methods of communication. These methods will include:

- Discussion Board in Blackboard:
  - A general Q&A discussion that will allow students to ask course related questions and topics, where other students and/or instructor may comment or answer. Use this forum for asking relevant questions about the course, posting information that others students may wish to utilize, or other pertinent course related topics. When using this forum you must:
    - Use a relevant subject line, such as "Chapter 1, Study Question 2".
    - Be respectful of other classmate's posts.
  - Course topics posted by instructor. Your responses to these post must be submitted within 3 days of instructors post, be limited to 50 words or less, and use proper grammar with correct spelling.
- Centra webinar sessions. For these sessions you will be required to be on-time, use in class etiquette (turn off cell phone, be attentive, and ask questions only at appropriate times).
- Blog tool in Blackboard.
- Wiki tool in Blackboard.

**Contacting Your Instructor:**

In this course I will provide three different methods for communicating with me. These methods of communication will include e-mail, office phone, and Skype. My expectation is that these methods of communication should only be used for one-on-one personal matters. Examples of such personal matters include absence from webinar sessions, grade related inquiries, and course performance issues. When contacting instructor directly, use the following guidelines:

- When e-mailing instructor always start the subject line with "WDGT1000" (e-mails will be replied to within 24 business hours, so don't send another e-mail 2 hours later asking if I received your e-mail).
- If you wish to have a conversation with me in person, phone, or Skype, during posted office hours, you should schedule an appointment via e-mail prior.

**Contacting Classmates:**

There will be times throughout this course that you may be required to contact classmates directly. When communicating with classmates directly, whether via Discussion Board, Group Work, or E-mail, always:

- Be polite.
- Be sensitive of cultural, ethical, or personal differences.
- Harassment of any type will NOT be tolerated.

*Note: If you feel that another classmate has not followed these rules please e-mail me immediately.*



## Assessments & Assignments

**Assessment Methods:**

## Assignments:

- Syllabus Quiz
- 4 case studies that will be 2-3 pages in length.
- Weekly discussion board posts.
- 10 page paper.
- Midterm and Final Exams

**Quizzes and Tests:**

There will be 10 Chapter quizzes.

There will also be a mid-term and a final exam.

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All assignments are due by due date. Please bring your completed assignments to class on due date. Assignment due dates, quiz and exams dates when be posted in Announcement section of this course when needed.

In this section of the syllabus each instructor describes how students will be assessed for this course. As you will notice, both instructors assess students using the same methods. However, Dr. Smith (above) offers very limited information concerning the assessments and even instructs students to bring their completed assignments to class. This is a common oversight when modifying an existing face-to-face syllabus to a DE course. In comparison Dr. Jones (below) clearly states policies pertaining to assignment submission, plagiarism, and parameters for test taking. These policies make clear the consequences for not adhering to these policies.

**Assessment Methods:**

## Assignments:

- Syllabus Quiz
- 4 case studies that will be 2-3 pages in length.
- Weekly discussion board posts.
- 10 page paper.
- Midterm and Final Exams

All written assignments should be submitted using the assignment tool in Blackboard. No assignments submitted through e-mail will be accepted. **NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

**Quizzes and Tests:**

There will be 10 Chapter quizzes. These quizzes will be online and will be made available from Thursday morning at 9am until Saturday evening at 11pm.

There will also be a mid-term and a final exam. The final exam will be comprehensive.

Please note: All quizzes and exams will be timed. For every minute you exceed the allotted time there will be a one point penalty. For example: if you exceed the time limit by 8 minutes, you will be deducted 8 points.

If you encounter issues such as being disconnected, please e-mail me immediately.

All assignments are due by posted due date. As mentioned prior NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

All written assignments must cite sources as appropriate. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If plagiarism is suspected, a meeting will be scheduled between myself and the student to review the incident. If it is proven that plagiarism has occurred, deduction from final grade or further disciplinary action may be warranted.

All exams will require students to acquire a proctor. To obtain a proctor you may use the ECU Proctoring Center or sign-up with a proctor through the UNC system proctoring portal <http://services.northcarolina.edu/>.

**DE Modules DE Faculty Development Modules**

Creating Effective  
DE Syllabi

Elements and Design of an Effective DE Syllabus  
**Compare and Contrast**

Edit Mode is:  **OFF**



## Course Expectations

**Course Expectations****Grading policy:**

Grades will be based on test scores, written assignments, and discussion board posts.

Assignment point values:

- 4 case studies that will be 2-3 pages in length. (20%)
- Weekly discussion board posts. (20%)
- 10 page paper. (20%)
- Midterm and Final Exams (40%)

Grading Scale:

- A=90-100
- B=80-89
- C=70-79
- D=60-69
- F=0-59

[Again Dr. Jones \(below\) communicates in a more thorough manner, conveying the expectations of this course.](#)

**Course Expectations****Grading policy:**

Grades will be based on test scores, written assignments, and discussion board posts. Written assignments and discussion board posts will be judged on relevance and comprehension of subject matter along with grammatical correctness and clarity.

When submitting posts to the discussion board slang, abbreviations, misspellings, and/or grammatical errors will be cause for point deduction.

Assignment point values:

- Syllabus Quiz (No grade given, this may be considered when tallying final grades. Meaning that if you are 1 point from an A, I will consider your participation on this quiz at that time)
- 4 case studies that will be 2-3 pages in length. (20%)
- Weekly discussion board posts. (20%)
- 10 page paper. (20%)
- Midterm and Final Exams (40%)

Grading Scale:

- A=90-100
- B=80-89
- C=70-79
- D=60-69
- F=0-59



## Course Calendar

We can not compare between the two instructors in this section because Dr. Smith does not include a tentative Course Calendar in his syllabus.

### Course Calendar:

Week One: Widget Discussion Board One, Syllabus Quiz

Week Two: Widget Discussion Board Two, Quiz One

Week Three: Widget Discussion Board Three, Quiz Two

Week Four: Widget Discussion Board Four, Case Study One

Week Five: Widget Discussion Board Five, Quiz Three

Week Six: Widget Discussion Board Six, Case Study Two

Week Seven: Widget Discussion Board Seven, Quiz Four

Week Eight: Widget Discussion Board Eight, Quiz Five

Week Nine: Widget Discussion Board Nine, **Midterm Exam**

Week Ten: Widget Discussion Board Ten, Case Study 3

Week Eleven: Widget Discussion Board Eleven, Quiz Six

Week Twelve: Widget Discussion Board Twelve, Quiz Seven

Week Thirteen: Widget Discussion Board Thirteen, Quiz Eight, Case Study Four

Week Fourteen: Widget Discussion Board Fourteen, Quiz Nine

Week Fifteen: Widget Discussion Board Fifteen, Quiz Ten, 10 Page Paper

### Final Exam



## Full Syllabus Comparison

Attached Files [WDGT1000\(smith\).doc](#) (71 KB) [WDGT1000\(jones\).doc](#) (87 KB)

Open the attachments to compare Dr. Smith and Dr. Jones full syllabus.

**WDGT 1000**  
**Section 602**  
Syllabus, Fall 2011

Instructor: Dr. Tom Smith  
Office location: Creighton Building, Room 107  
Office hours: Tuesdays only, 1-4 PM  
Office phone: 252-737-WDGT  
E-mail: [tomsmith@ecu.edu](mailto:tomsmith@ecu.edu) (e-mail answered within 24 business hours)

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**Course Description:**

WDGT 1000 is a course designed to introduce the history and functionality of widgets. Students will learn how to identify a variety of widgets, along with procedures on how to design, build, test, and destroy widgets as needed.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Gain a comprehensive knowledge of the history and evolution of Widgets.
2. Understanding of how Widgets are built.
3. Knowledge of distribution methods for different Widget models.
4. Recognition of marketing and sales methods for Widgets.

**Textbook:**

*Introduction and Assembly of Widgets in the Modern World*, 24<sup>th</sup> Edition

Textbook can be purchased on-line at ECU's Student Store:  
<http://www.ecu.edu/studentstores/>

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**Contacting Your Instructor:**

Please e-mail me if you have questions.

**Assessment Methods:**

Assignments:

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**Course Policies:**

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.Plagiarism will not be tolerated.

ADA Compliance: East Carolina University seeks to fully comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a covered disability must go to the Department of Support Services located in Brewster A-114 to verify the disability before any accommodations can occur. The telephone number is 252-328-6799.

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Week Thirteen: Widget Discussion Board Thirteen, Quiz Eight, Case Study Four

Week Fourteen: Widget Discussion Board Fourteen, Quiz Nine

Week Fifteen: Widget Discussion Board Fifteen, Quiz Ten, 10 Page Paper

**Final Exam**