# Rubric - Syllabus

“Essential” components are shown in gold, “important” components in silver, and “less-important” components are in white.

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| **Criterion** | **What the component looks like:** | **Ideas for where to look and examples of what to look for (not all need to be present):** |
| **Learning Goals & Objectives** | **Learning goals and objectives are not an “afterthought,” but are a central element of the course.** |
| 1. Explicitly or implicitly **stated learning goals (i.e. long-range, high-level goals) encompass the full range of Fink’s dimensions of significant learning** (i.e. knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, learninghow to learn). | * Learning goals are often found in the course description, especially affective goals.
* Implicit goals may appear in other sections of the syllabus (e.g., assessment, schedule, tips for student success).
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| 2. **Course-level learning objectives are clearly articulated and use specific action verbs** to describe in measurable terms what students will be able to do, value, or know at the end of the course. Like the goals they are derived from, the learning objectives map onto the full range of Fink’s taxonomy. | * Course-level learning objectives are in a prominent and easily identifiable location (i.e., labeled section).
* Learning objectives with non-quantifiable terms, such as “understand” and “know,” are avoided. For examples of strong verbs, see Appendix A: Verbs for Significant Learning.
* The syllabus considers the full range of Fink’s taxonomic dimensions (including the affective ones). It is not necessary that course objectives list affective dimensions, as long as there is evidence elsewhere in the syllabus that they are being considered.
* Typically, 5─8 course-level objectives are appropriate. More or fewer could be

problematic. |
| 3. **Learning objectives are appropriately pitched** to the course level, class size, position of the course within the curriculum, and characteristics of students taking the class. | * This is likely difficult to assess without knowledge of the discipline and curriculum.
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| **Criterion** | **What the component looks like:** | **Ideas for where to look and examples of what to look for (not all need to be present):** |
| **Assessment Activities** | **All major assessment activities positively support the learning objectives.** |
| 4. It is clear that the **objectives and assessments are aligned**. In other words, the major assessment activities map onto the full range of learning objectives and the degree of mapping correlates with the weighting of the assignment. | * Though a complete mapping may not be possible without input from the instructor, connections between the objectives and major assessments should exist (i.e., the each major assessment activity should map to one or more

learning objectives). |
| 5. The basic features of the **major *summative* assessment activities are clearly defined**. The assessment instructions provide students with a rationale and, whenever possible, with an authentic task. | * Course-level assessments are in a prominent and easily identifiable location (i.e. labeled section). Grading percentages may be included in assessment descriptions, but there should be a distinct section detailing grading (see component 8).
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|  |  | * Major assignments are described briefly (i.e., a paragraph or two). Though complete descriptions of assessment activities may not be part of the syllabus, they should be made available at the time the assessment activity is formally introduced.
* If not present, it is clear that rubrics or assessment criteria will be made available.
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| 6. There is **evidence of plans for frequent *formative* assessments with immediate feedback** from a variety of sources (e.g., self, peer, instructor, computer generated, community.) These low-stakes, formative assessments allow students to “practice” before high-stakes summative assessments. | * Examples of formative assessments might include use of clickers, informal writing assignments, group discussions or moderated discussion board, and ungraded or lightly- graded homework assignments.
* Source of feedback may not always be evident.
* While the syllabus might not describe all forms of formative assessments in detail, the syllabus makes clear that such activities will occur throughout the course. Evidence of formative assessment might depend on a fully articulated

schedule. |
| 7. The **assessments are adequately paced and scaffolded** (i.e., increasing in complexity) throughout the course, and at least one is scheduled early in the semester. | * There should be evidence in the assessment descriptions or in the schedule that complex assignments build slowly over the semester or are continually re-examined with the introduction of new material.
* Evidence of pace and scaffolding may depend on disciplinary knowledge.
* Without a fully articulated schedule, it may not be possible to fully determine the pace and

degree of scaffolding. |
| 8. Grading or **student evaluation information is included in the syllabus but clearly separated from information about assessment of learning** (with the possible exception of the weight or percentage of the assessment in the overall course grade). Importantly, **the grading scheme aligns with the learning objectives and****supporting assessments.** | * The grading scheme should clearly reflect the importance of each learning objective. For example, if learning to write in the discipline is a key learning objective, writing assignments should dominate the grading scheme.
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| **Criterion** | **What the component looks like:** | **Ideas for where to look and examples of what to look for (not all need to be present):** |
| **Schedule** | **The course schedule is a learning tool that guides students through the learning environment.** |
| 9. **Syllabus offers fully articulated and logically sequenced course schedule**, listing topics/readings/questions in chronological order along with assignment due dates. Thus structured, the schedule allows for flexibility where appropriate. A schedule is necessary in order to fully evaluate the syllabus. A missing schedule may lead to low scores on components6 and 7. | * The schedule is not merely a list of content topics. It contains enough information (e.g., topics, context, questions, dates) to guide students through the course. It also clearly indicates when additional information will be provided at a later date.
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| **Criterion** | **What the component looks like:** | **Ideas for where to look and examples of what to look for (not all need to be present):** |
| **Overall Learning Environment: Promise, Tone, Inclusivity** | **The learning environment is supportive and invites students to engage in and take ownership of their****own learning.** |
| 10.**The tone of the document is positive, respectful, inviting,** and directly addresses the student as a competent, engaged learner. | * The positive, respectful, inviting tone is conveyed throughout the document.
* Personal pronouns (e.g., you, we, us) are used, rather than “the students,” “the course,” or

“they.”* The focus of the document is on learning and possibilities and not policies and punishments.
* The syllabus contains a “promise” that will be fulfilled through mutual effort by instructor and students if the learning goals and objectives are met. Evidence for “promise” could include the following: language that emphasizes collaborative spirit; verbs that focus on what students and instructors do, not what the course, or some other abstract entity, does; clear statement of connections between course

content and paths to answering “big questions.” |
| 11.The syllabus signposts a **learning environment that fosters positive motivation**, one that promotes a learning orientation rather than a performance one. The document **describes the potential value of the course in the learner’s current and post-course life** (cognitive, personal, social, civic, and/or professional) in a clear and dynamic way. It clearly communicates **that content is used primarily as a vehicle for learning**, to understand core principles in the discipline and promote critical thinking and other significant learning objectives. | * The course description makes clear that students will have opportunities to *wonder* and connect it in meaningful ways to things potentially important to them. The instructor encourages students to “discover” value in the course by giving them choices along the way, such as choices in project topics, reading assignments, grading schemes.
* Various course components—description, objectives, schedule—frame the content through compelling, beautiful questions or big ideas.
* The instructor uses information from pre-course questionnaires, background checks, pre-course exams, etc., to tailor the learning environment. In other words, he/she considers students’ backgrounds in designing course activities and assignments and takes steps to reach out to students who might struggle in class.
* The student is left in control of his/her learning. For example, mastery-based grading mechanisms (e.g., criterion-referenced, task- based, and absolute grading schemes) are used rather than performance ones (e.g., grading curves and other relative or group-referenced grading schemes).
* The instructor also provides resources or instruction related to becoming a lifelong learner, either in general or in ways specific to the discipline.
* The syllabus de-emphasizes course policies by positioning them late in the syllabus or in a

separate document and connecting them to |

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|  |  | clear pedagogical purposes. The syllabus frames policies in positive ways, as opposed to lists of “do nots.” |
| 12.Syllabus clearly **communicates high expectations and projects confidence that students can meet them** through hard work. | * The learning objectives, assessments, activities, and grading scheme all indicate a high level of academic rigor (e.g. objectives that promote high-order thinking and skills development, challenging assignments, appropriate amounts of reading/writing).
* The syllabus communicates that the instructor cares about students and believes each student can succeed. The syllabus communicates these beliefs by offering tips and strategies for how to meet and exceed expectations, through review sessions, appropriate office hours, additional

background material, etc. |
| 13.The **syllabus is well organized and easy to navigate**. It is clear that **students will need to continually interact with the document** and the resources it provides throughout the course. | * The document is readable, meaning the organization is clear, whether it contains major section headings or not, and ordered in a way that re-enforces the focus on learning.
* The document clearly requires students to interact with it frequently to get reading

assignments and other information. |