

Guidelines
Syllabus & Other Course Materials Rubric
NMSU Teaching Academy

As a form of self-review, you may want to apply this rubric yourself to your syllabus and other course materials. Your written response can be used to fulfill the requirements for “evidence from the instructor” in the “Evaluation of Teaching” page in Digital Measures.

You may also want to seek feedback from another professional by asking a peer to apply this rubric to your syllabus and other course materials. His or her written response can be used to fulfill the requirements for “evidence from other professionals” in the “Evaluation of Teaching” page in Digital Measures.

Applying this rubric or having it applied by another professional to your syllabus and other course materials are also excellent ways to get great ideas about teaching.

Instructions for Self-reviewer:

1. Read the rubric carefully before you begin reviewing your syllabus and other course materials.
2. For each criterion, you may want to indicate your aggregate impression on the scale provided.
3. Write at least a one page single-spaced response to yourself. Be sure to focus on elements of the document that are strong, as well as elements that could be improved.
4. Criteria in *italics* are more likely to appear in well-developed syllabi.

Instructions for Other Professional:

1. Read the rubric carefully before you begin reviewing the syllabus and other course materials.
2. For each criterion, you may want to indicate your aggregate impression on the scale provided.
3. Write at least a one page single-spaced response to your peer. Be sure to focus on elements of the document that are strong, as well as elements that could be improved.
4. Criteria in *italics* are more likely to appear in well-developed syllabi.

August 17, 2011

This rubric is updated regularly. Please use the latest form, which can be found at
teaching.nmsu.edu/resources/rubrics.

Syllabus & Other Course Materials Rubric*

	Emerging	Adequate	Excellent
The syllabus is well formatted			
Instructor Information: Name/email/phone/website/office hours and location			
Course information: Name/number/term/year/credit hours/meeting day(s) of week/times/location/prerequisites/course readings & technology requirements/access to electronic course materials			
Explains how this course fits into the overall program of study			
Explains how the major topics are organized			
<i>The syllabus communicates the challenge of the course</i>			
<i>The syllabus reflects the instructor's interest in the subject matter</i>			
<i>The instructor's teaching philosophy is clearly stated (why you do what you do)</i>			
Learning Objectives: Lists three to six measurable objectives that demonstrate what successful students will be able to DO as a result of taking this course: "At the end of this course, you will be able to [doing verb]..."			
Assignments and Tests:			
Description, due dates, and relationship to course objectives			
Directions are specific and clear			
<i>The course calendar tells what happens in class each day</i>			
<i>The course requires students to do an appropriate amount of reading and other assignments</i>			
<i>Due dates for the assignments are distributed well</i>			
<i>The date(s) are noted when the instructor will seek mid-term feedback from the students</i>			
<i>Measurable learning objectives are provided for each unit and each class period</i>			
<i>Samples (for major assignments and tests)</i>			
<i>Rubrics (for major assignments and tests)</i>			
<i>Students receive frequent and informative feedback</i>			
Course and Institutional Policies:			
Attendance, participation, punctuality, punctual assignments, extra credit, classroom management issues, academic honesty, laboratory safety, student with disabilities statement from http://www.nmsu.edu/~ssd/syllabus.html			
The course grading policy (percentages; scale) is stated clearly			
The tone of the syllabus furthers rapport and respect between instructor and students			
Course content: If you are in the same discipline as your peer:			
<i>The course portrays the current state of the field</i>			
<i>The course teaches the content and skills needed for subsequent courses</i>			
<i>The course moves beyond one school of thinking</i>			

* Compiled from the book, *Peer Review of Teaching* (2007) by Nancy Van Note Chism, as well as from the work of the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning at the University of Northern Colorado (<http://www.unco.edu/cetl/syllabus/index.html>) and the Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of Delaware (<http://cte.udel.edu/instructional-topics/designing-courses/designing-learning-centered-syllabus.html>).

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About Learning Objectives

The rubric has certain expectations regarding learning objectives that may require some explanation:

1. *Why do I need learning objectives?* Learning objectives describe what students should learn in your class and are the first step to gather your evidence of student learning. Without learning objectives, you can't begin to assess how well students have learned in your course because you haven't yet articulated what they are supposed to learn.
2. *Why do learning objectives look like?* Learning objectives focus on what the student can do rather than what the student knows because it is hard to measure what a student knows except by observing what the student does. For example, in history, instead of “*understanding* basic historical events and people,” a teacher probably wants students to be able to “*recognize* basic events and people” [on a multiple-choice test], or “*describe* basic historical events and people” [on a short-answer test], or “*argue* as an historian does regarding basic historical events and people” [on an essay test]. This last objective requires the instructor to unpack the objective further and answer the question, “How does an historian argue?” The answer might include (Walvoord 1998):
 - a. Take a position on a debatable historical issue
 - b. Use historical data as evidence for the position
 - c. Raise and answer counter arguments
3. *Why are learning objectives suggested for every unit and even for every day of the class?* Having daily learning objectives focuses the day and gives the learner a target. Daily learning objectives also help teachers stay away from one form of instruction all hour, such as lecture, because students need to be able to *do* something at the end of the hour and it isn't usually know how to listen to a lecture. A daily learning objective helps teachers plan time to help the students learn how to do whatever students are supposed to be able to do at the end of the hour such as solve a problem, design a lab experiment, or write a persuasive essay.

If you are new to learning objectives, you might want to attend the learning objectives workshop at the Teaching Academy on August 31 and September 1, 2011, from 3-4:30. Registration is available at <http://teaching.nmsu.edu>. After the event the workshop will also be made available on MediaSite at <http://mediasite.nmsu.edu>. Once there, select Teaching Academy, the name of the event, *Assessment Made Simple: Step One-Writing Measurable Learning Objectives*.

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