College of Arts & Sciences
Syllabus Guidelines
July 2013

1. Purpose of this document

This document summarizes College guidelines regarding course syllabi and instructors' office hours. It is intended (1) to help the College and its academic programs prepare for activities associated with SACS reaccreditation and (2) to help faculty design course syllabi that clearly present course requirements. As the College prepares for SACS reaccreditation, we aim for our academic programs, and our courses, to have clearly-stated learning objectives that can provide a basis for assessment of student learning. Clearly written syllabi can also reduce the number of grade appeals that instructors and departments must deal with.

2. Recommendations regarding syllabus distribution and retention

Ideally, a draft version of the course syllabus, or a representative syllabus from a previous semester's offering of the course, should be made available to prospective and enrolled students before the first day of the semester. (This could be accomplished by posting such a document on the instructor's web page or on a department/school web site, or by making such a document available in the department/school office for students to consult.)

Ideally, the syllabus for a course should be made available to all enrolled students, and posted on the course's Blackboard site, at the beginning of the semester.

Ideally, copies of course syllabi should be retained by the offering department or school for a period of three years.

3. Recommendations regarding instructors' office hours

The instructor of record for each course should ideally hold at least one regularly scheduled, on-campus, hour-long office hour per week for any course that is not delivered entirely online. Instructors teaching three or more courses in a term need only hold two regularly scheduled, on-campus, hour-long office hours per week. (For on-campus Mini-Term courses, the instructor of record will ideally hold at least two one-hour office hour blocks per week; they should be on two different days of the week.)

4. Key elements of the course syllabus

The following items are key elements of a course syllabus:

A. Semester and year of the course (e.g. Fall 2013).

B. Course subject and number (e.g. Chemistry 120). If several sections of the course, taught by multiple instructors of record, are offered in a single semester, include the section number or CRN as well.

C. Course title (for variable-title courses, give the current semester's title).

D. Name, office location, contact information (office or department telephone, e-mail address) and office hours for instructor of record.

E. Names, offices, contact information, and office hours for any teaching assistants, if this information is available before the first day of class. If this information is not available before the first day of class, the syllabus should explain how and when this information will be provided.

F. Required textbooks and/or course packets.

G. Required instructional technology (e.g. calculator, clicker, access code for online homework system).

H. Brief description of the course.

I. Central learning objectives for the course (for SACS purposes).

J. Degree-level learning objectives that the course supports (for SACS purposes). Degree-level learning objectives are typically listed in an academic unit's SACS assessment plan. Not every course offered by a unit will necessarily support the unit's degree-level learning objectives; courses that primarily serve the University's General Education program, for instance, may not support a unit's degree-level learning objectives.

K. Outline of the semester, including an approximate calendar that lists major topics and assignments. The semester outline might also include a schedule of reading assignments. If a single in-class activity (exam, presentation, etc.) or an out-of-class assignment (term paper, etc.) constitutes 10% or more of the final course grade, indicate the week during which the activity or assignment is likely to occur. (Replace "week" with "day" for Mini-Term courses.)

L. List of any required events that take place outside of the course's normal weekly meeting times (such as evening exams, field trips, etc.) — note that the online timetable should also state that events outside of the course's normal weekly meeting times may be required of students. The online timetable might also indicate the general nature of these events (e.g. "two day-long Saturday field trips" or "three Wednesday evening exams").

M. List of all *categories* of activities and assignments that will contribute to a student's final course grade. If category weights are used to determine a student's final grade, list the approximate weights for each assignment category (e.g. homework is worth 15%, three mid-term exams are worth 15% each, end-of-semester paper is worth 10%, final exam is worth 30%).

N. Course grading policy. This might take the form of either a table converting percentile or numerical grades to letter grades; equally acceptable is a statement that final course letter grades will be computed using an instructor-specified scale that will be determined at the end of the course. What is important is that students understand the procedure by which the instructor will assign end-of-semester letter grades. (Note that instructors have no obligation to use all of the grades listed in the Catalog.)

O. If attendance contributes to a student's final course grade, an explanation of how absences will reduce a student's attendance grade.

P. If participation contributes to a student's final course grade, an explanation of what type of in-class participation is expected.

Q. Instructor's policy regarding make-ups for in-class activities (exams, etc.).

R. Instructor's policy regarding acceptance of late out-of-class assignments (term papers, etc.) along with a statement of any penalty assessed on late assignments.

S. Date and time of final exam (if any), with a reference to the final exam policy listed in the catalog.

T. Reference to academic honesty statement and disability statement (attaching the Campus Syllabus provided by the Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center will accomplish this).

5. Other suggested syllabus content

It may be useful to include this information in a course syllabus as well:

A. A statement that any electronic announcements will be (1) sent via e-mail to students' official UTK e-mail addresses and (2) posted on Blackboard, with a reminder that students are responsible for monitoring their UTK e-mail account and the course Blackboard site.

B. Instructions to students regarding e-mail communication with instructor of record (e.g. "Please put CHEM 120 in the subject line of any e-mail message that you send me").

C. A statement regarding the instructor's expectations for civil behavior in class.

D. The instructor's recommendations for student success.

E. For writing-emphasis courses, a statement that the course is writing-emphasis and an explanation of the writing assignments that qualify the course as writing-emphasis.

F. For service-learning courses, an explanation of the service-learning component, including a statement whether the service-learning component is required or optional.

G. A statement explaining how minor revisions to the syllabus will be announced to students (e.g. instructor will send an e-mail message announcing that a revised syllabus has been posted to Blackboard).

6. History of this document

The first draft of this document was sent to department heads and school directors in December 2012, with a request for heads and directors to solicit comments from faculty members and return those comments to the College office in January 2013. In February 2013, a compilation of the comments received by the College office was sent to department heads and school directors, along with copies of the syllabus policies in force at the Universities of Arizona, Florida, Georgia, and Minnesota. A revised version of this document was sent to department heads and school directors in April 2013 for further review. The proposed guidelines were also sent to the Dean's Student Advisory Council, the College Curriculum Committee, and the Dean's Faculty Advisory Council for review and comment.

The current document incorporates several suggestions made by faculty (through department heads and school directors), by members of the College Curriculum Committee, and by members of the Dean's Faculty Advisory Council.