



April 13, 2011

**To:** Gordon Emslie, Provost and VP of Academic Affairs  
Howard Bailey, VP for Student Affairs  
Michael Crowe, Director of Judicial Affairs

**Re:** University Senate Consultation on Policy

NUMBER: 1.4060  
DIVISION: Academic Affairs  
TITLE: Course Syllabi

This year, the Academic Quality Committee of the University Senate drafted a policy on course syllabi. At the February meeting of the University Senate, the Senate voted to recommend that the Provost seek continued approval of this policy. A revised version of the policy (see attached) was presented to the Senate Executive Committee on March 7, 2011 and to the Senate on March 17, 2010. The Senate voted to recommend approval of the revised policy.

Additional revisions pertaining to acceptable classroom behaviors and the consequences of unacceptable behavior were suggested by the Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Judicial Affairs. These revisions were presented to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) on April 4, 2011. The SEC voted unanimously **against** approving additional revisions to the policy.

Multiple concerns were voiced by the SEC about these revisions. The primary concern was that such additions were beyond the intention and scope of the policy. The goal of the policy was to provide a simple, clear statement that faculty should provide students with a syllabus and when that syllabus should be made available to students. Some revisions were made to ensure that the syllabus policy was consistent with the faculty handbook, but the policy is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all required statements for syllabi.

Another concern expressed by the SEC is that the list of required statements for syllabi is confusing and inconsistently communicated across academic units. For example, many faculty members believe there is a required "disabilities" statement for syllabi, but there are other statements that some faculty members regard as required and others do not. SEC members suggested that a separate repository or policy that explicates all required statements might be helpful. For example, the SEC suggested that it might be helpful if the Office of Judicial Affairs drafted a policy outlining their role and procedures in academic disciplinary issues (e.g., cases of plagiarism).

However the SEC members also expressed concern about the inclusion of a great number of such required statements when they are non-academic and when they can be (or already are) communicated to students in some other document. For example, the Student Handbook already has a statement about classroom conduct; so including this statement on every syllabus that a student receives in every class seems unnecessary. Moreover, the SEC expressed discomfort with the idea that faculty members might be required to monitor or enforce adherence to such a statement.

I hope it is clear that the SEC was not disapproving of the work of the Office of Judicial Affairs. Rather, there was a belief that course syllabi should focus, to the greatest extent possible, on academic concerns.

Thank you very much for your input and I hope this information is helpful.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kelly Madole". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first and last names clearly legible.

Kelly L. Madole, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology  
University Senate Chair



## **POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT**

NUMBER: 1.4060

DIVISION: Academic Affairs

TITLE: Course Syllabi

DATE: February 28, 2011

Authorized: Dr. Gordon Emslie, Provost and VPAA

### **I. Purpose and Scope**

Course syllabi serve an important role in providing students with information about the scope, objectives, and expectations of a course as well as providing basic schedule and instructor information. WKU supports the practice of making such information available in a timely and accessible manner.

### **II. Policy**

#### **A. Basic Information**

1. It is strongly encouraged that faculty members make basic information about their courses available to students online, on the university's official course registration website, at least one week prior to the start of the semester in which the course is to be taught.

This information should include:

- a. contact information for the instructor
- b. general course goals
- c. major topics to be covered in the course
- d. prerequisites, if any
- e. if applicable, the ways in which the course fulfills general education requirements

#### **B. Detailed Information**

1. A printed or printable syllabus containing more detailed information must be made available to students, in class and/or on the university's official course registration website, within one week of the start of the pertinent semester/term/summer session.

More detailed information should include the information listed in Section II.A.1 and the following, as appropriate:

- a. instructor's office hours
  - b. required materials (e.g., textbooks, calculators, readings, etc).
  - c. title and/or brief description of graded assignments
  - d. attendance policies
  - e. performance expectations
  - f. the factors to be considered in determining grades and the specific weight to be assigned to each of these factors.
2. It is recognized that syllabi may be modified due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., cancelled classes). In such cases a revised syllabus should be posted on the university's official course registration website as soon as practicable.

#### C. Other

1. Faculty will not be required to post information online that they believe violates their intellectual property and/or privacy rights.
2. For accreditation and similar purposes, copies of current course syllabi must be retained on the university's official course registration website.
3. A guide to an effective syllabus, produced by the WKU Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching, is available at <http://www.wku.edu/teaching/booklets/syllabusideas10.pdf>

### **III. Procedure**

Enforcement of this policy shall occur at the department level.