Reciprocal Responsibilities for Undergraduate Students and Instructors

Guidance for Implementation

In April 2023, Academic Senate endorsed the *Reciprocal Responsibilities for Undergraduate Students and Instructors*. These guidelines were developed with representatives from Student Government Association, Senate Standards Committee, and Senate Teaching and Learning Committee. These are a baseline set of guidelines and behaviors for courses. It is expected that these are the minimum of what is happening in <u>every</u> course at YSU. These guidelines extend to all instructors as appropriate, including full-time faculty, part-time faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and virtual assistants. Students and faculty commit to uphold this agreement to maintain a constructive teaching and learning environment. Students and faculty who feel these principles are not being upheld should consult their rights within the classroom environment. Students should refer to the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and the University Complaint Process. Faculty should refer to University Policies and the OEA Contract.

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QR codes are provided throughout this document to give quick access to key resources for those using a printed version; for the full document online including additional links, use the QR code to access an online version of The Reciprocal Responsibilities for Undergraduate Students and Instructors: Guidance for Implementation on the Institute for Teaching and Learning homepage.

Full Document

Reciprocal Responsibilities: Syllabus

Instructor guidelines are indicated on the left side of the page, with student guidelines on the right side of the page. Supporting language and resources are included below guidelines. Note, language included below guidelines is not required, but suggested by the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) to support implementation.

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
On the first day of classes, instructors commit to provide the syllabus (a draft, at minimum, including required texts/materials, tentative schedule), unless there are extenuating circumstances such as a late course assignment.	On the first day of classes, students should have the syllabus (a draft, at minimum, including required texts/materials, tentative schedule), unless there are extenuating circumstances such as a late course assignment.
By the 7th business day of the semester, instructors commit to provide a completed syllabus (3rd day for 7-week courses).	By the 7th business day of the semester, students should have a completed syllabus (3rd day for 7-week courses).

Implementation Resource – YSU Academic Calendar: The YSU Academic Calendar can be found online at: https://catalog.ysu.edu/calendar/

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to post their syllabi to Blackboard.	Students commit to read and comprehend their syllabi.

Implementation Resource – Posting your Syllabus in Blackboard: Having an online version of your syllabus allows students access to the clickable links in your document and have a centralized location for referring to the syllabus. ITL recommends you save your final syllabus as a PDF document. This ensures optimal viewing on mobile devices. After finalizing your syllabus, post your syllabus in your Blackboard course shell. The Instructional Design and Development Center (IDDC) can provide Blackboard support to faculty. Email iddc@ysu.edu or contact the IDDC main number at 330-941-3244.

How to Post Your Syllabus in Blackboard

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Material deviations from the syllabus must not harm the students. Updates to the syllabus must be posted and communicated to students in writing.	Students commit to stay informed about any changes to the syllabus by referring to any updated syllabus version.

Implementation Resource - Syllabus Changes: Occasionally, adjustments to the syllabus are warranted. In those cases, ensure that when changes are made, they are made to benefit the students, and provide an updated syllabus (including the revision date) to the class. Be sure to upload the updated version to Blackboard. While Section 19.2 of the OEA Agreement outlines instances of syllabus changes that may constitute an academic grievance, it specifically indicates that the problematic syllabus changes are those that are detrimental to the student or class.

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
The syllabus should contain elements in the YSU Common Syllabus.	Students commit to ask clarifying questions about the syllabus as soon as possible.

Impelementation Resource – Effective Syllabus Design: Your syllabus should be designed with your students in mind. Research points to several benefits of designing a "learner-centered syllabus," such as increased rapport between students and faculty, increased retention of course details, and increased student perception of effective teaching (Richmond, 2016). Academic Senate endorsed and the Institute for Teaching and Learned maintains a Common Syllabus Template webpage, which includes premade templates for a learner-centered syllabus. The page includes a recommended syllabus template, a required-items only template, and a link to request a Blackboard syllabus template. In addition, there are links to required university policies and student support services, enabling you to free up space in your syllabus by directing students to a webpage with the most up-to-date policies and resources.

Using the YSU Common Syllabus templates are optional, but the elements in the required template must be included. These ADA-compliant Microsoft Word templates were designed with your students in mind and utilize language and design that focuses on the learner. Templates are updated before the start of each semester. Staff in the Institute for Teaching and Learning is available to provide feedback and guidance on your syllabus, email ysuitl@ysu.edu or book a Syllabus Review consult online.

Common Syllabus

Reciprocal Responsibilities: Grades

Instructor guidelines are indicated on the left side of the page, with student guidelines on the right side of the page. Supporting language and resources are included below guidelines. Note, language included below guidelines is not required, but suggested by the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) to support implementation.

INSTRUCTOR

Instructors commit to communicate to each student a clear idea of their grade trajectory in the course by three weeks prior to the last day to withdraw (including, but not limited to, substantive feedback such as grades, points, verbal or written assessment).

STUDENT

Students commit to stay abreast of their grade trajectory and to communicate with an instructor before withdrawing from a class due to concern about their grade.

Implementation Resource – Defining Grade Trajectory: Grade trajectory is intended to provide students sufficient information about their standing in the course by two weeks before the final withdrawal date. This information allows them to make an informed decision about continuing in your course, changing their behavior to improve performance, or dropping the course. Grade trajectory information can be provided through enough graded work, or enough qualitative feedback, they may estimate a final grade based on past performance and/or understand what changes in performance need to be made for a desired final grade. "Enough graded work" likely means more than a homework grade or solely low-stakes assignments, and "enough qualitative feedback" likely means that you have provided both clear and specific feedback on current performance and whether you have concerns about their current performance enabling them to complete the course successfully.

Implementation Resource - Posting Grades: Posting grades and/or sharing verbal or written feedback ensures that students know where they stand in a course and, if needed, have the time to make corrections to their level of engagement, seek assistance with the course, and/or make the decision to withdraw from a course. For full-time faculty, the OEA contract requires that at minimum, "The faculty member must provide to each student at least one (1) written grade report on a class assignment (test, examination, essay, etc.) at least three (3) weeks before the deadline for student withdrawal from the course." Policies on the withdrawal process for students can be in the YSU Course Catalog. The YSU Academic Calendar can be found online at: https://catalog.ysu.edu/calendar/.

Course Catalog

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to give feedback and/or return graded materials as soon as possible (e.g., within two weeks during a regular semester term unless otherwise indicated).	Students commit to actively review grades and seek feedback about performance in a timely way (e.g., within one week after receiving feedback or graded material).

Implementation Resource – Setting Feedback Expectations: While students may desire to have grades back on submitted assignments immediately, this may not be a reasonable (or doable) turnaround time for you, particularly with assignments like papers or projects. However, we know from the literature that prompt feedback supports deeper learning as well as the ability to course-correct when performance is insufficient (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). It is important that you decide on and explicitly set expectations with students regarding when they can expect to see their assignments returned. You may also wish to explain why the intellectual labor of grading takes more than a few hours, such as the importance of providing thoughtful feedback. Note that while you can set one turnaround time (e.g., within two weeks), you could also consider differentiated return times depending on the type of assignment.

Implementation Resource – Syllabus Statement: An example syllabus grading statement could say something like: "*I believe quality feedback on your assignments provides the opportunity for you to learn and grow as a student; therefore, I require sufficient time to provide feedback to all my students. For homework assignments and weekly quizzes, I will return grades in about one week. For tests and paper assignments, you can expect to receive feedback and grades returned within two weeks.*"

Implementation Resource – Providing Meaningful Feedback: Beyond giving prompt feedback, ITL hosts online resources for giving regular and meaningful formative feedback to students.

Meaningful Feedback

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to post grades/assignment scores to Blackboard or equivalent learning management system.	Students commit to check for grades/assignment scores in the designated location, whether Blackboard or equivalent learning management system.

Implementation Resource – Why Post Grades? It is important that a student be able to monitor how they are doing in a course. Though some may say that students should be collecting their grades and tracking it themselves; however, unless this is an actual learning goal for the course it can act as an additional burden that takes student attention away from where you want it—on your course learning goals. In addition, you can make your life easier by posting grades in Blackboard, which will reduce the emails from students asking what

their grades are! The most consistent way for students to be able to access their grades is by posting them in Blackboard.

Implementation Resource – Creating Assignments and Tests in Blackboard: Adding assignments or tests in Blackboard can benefit you by reducing the papers you have to collect, and puts your grading tasks in one location – no more worrying about misplacing or losing a gradebook! If you have assignments that do not lend themselves to online collection, you can also manually add grades to a Blackboard gradebook. Through the Knowledge Base, YSU Cyberlearning and Information Technology Services provide multiple resources for using Blackboard for faculty. The Instructional Design and Development Center (IDDC) can also provide Blackboard support to faculty. Email iddc@ysu.edu or contact the IDDC main number at 330-941-3244.

Knowledge Base:
Blackboard for Faculty

Reciprocal Responsibilities: Communication

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INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to indicate their preferred method of communication on the syllabus.	Students commit to adhere to instructors' preferred methods of communication.

Implementation Resource – Set Communication Preferences: Your syllabus should be designed with your students in mind and provide clear guidance on how students should contact you. If you utilize the YSU Common Syllabus Templates, you'll see a place where you can put your *Preferred Contact Method*. Common contact methods include YSU Email address, campus phone number, or Blackboard message. Consider including your preferred contact method as well in your email signature or on your voice mail recording.

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to maintain a professional demeanor when interacting with students (e.g., using preferred names/titles, communicate about missing scheduled meetings).	Students commit to maintain a professional demeanor when interacting with instructors (e.g., use preferred names/titles, communicate about missing scheduled meetings).

Adding Pronunciation

Implementation Resource – Preferred Titles and Pronouns: Consider adding a line to your introduction in your syllabus about how you want students to address you, and then asking students to share with you how they would like to be addressed. You can create a short quiz in Blackboard to gather preferred name or use index cards in class. Blackboard also offers tools for instructors and students to add and record pronunciation to a Blackboard profile.

Pronoun Guidance

The Common Syllabus Templates also include a place for you to indicate your preferred pronouns, along with a link to pronoun use in the classroom. Including gender pronouns in your introduction, syllabus and email signature not only helps students know how to refer to you, but it also sets an inclusive tone that makes it safer for students to share their pronouns. (Ex: "I'm Dr. Smith and I use the pronouns she, her, and hers. Using the right pronoun, like using someone's correct name, is a way to show respect.")

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to respond to student electronic communication within two business days.	Students commit to respond to instructor electronic communication within two business days.

Implementation Resource – Streamlining Electronic Communication: Faculty-student contact outside the classroom is one of the most important factor that increases a student's sense of belonging, critical to student retention (Bowen, 2012). Following many of the tips above, like posting the course syllabus to Blackboard or sharing your expected turnaround for feedback, should reduce the amount of student emails you receive. Additionally, beyond responding to student emails in a timely manner, you can make yourself accessible through an effective use of *Student Support Hours* (office hours). *Student Support Hours* are an easy means to fostering rich relationships with students, and a prime opportunity to answer student questions and for additional learning experiences. Learn more about how you can be approachable to students outside the classroom.

Considerations for Office Hours

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to communicate course information to students in clear and consistent locations.	Students commit to seek information in the course syllabus, announcements, etc. prior to contacting the instructor with questions.

Implementation Resource – Communicating Course Information: In addition to utilizing the YSU Common Syllabus Templates, here are some other ways you can be clear and organized in communicating information to your students:

1. Use a course calendar that lists readings, assignments, and activities by day.
2. Regular refer to your course calendar.
3. Link your course activities to course learning outcomes.
4. Clearly preview and review past and future course content.
5. Use weekly announcements as previews.

For more information on designing a clear and organized course structure, learn about the Backward Design Model and how it encourages and supports student learning in your courses.

Backward Design Model

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to connect students with help (i.e., early alert system) where necessary to support student success.	Students commit to use resources and seek help recommended to them by their instructor to support their success (e.g., Writing Center, IT Service Desk).

Implementation Resource – Supporting Student Success: Let students know that you want them to succeed in your course. Define what "success" means for the specific course and your expectations for them as students enrolled in the course. Include any expectations you may have for participation and/or engagement with the course and course content. Encourage students to attend your "Student Support Hours" to answer any course questions they may have. Explain to them that you are committed to using the Faculty Alert System to support their success in your course.

Faculty Alert System

Implementation Resource – Sample Syllabus Statement: Consider including the following language from the Common Syllabus Templates.

- *Understanding Early Alerts*: In all your classes, your professors can create a "flag" related to your performance in a class. Professors may indicate that you are having difficulty understanding course record, and they are NOT used in any way as a penalty against you. The alerts are used to help you find a solution that is realistic and helps you succeed.
- *How to Get Help*: YSU is committed to your success. As a student you have access to several resources that may be instrumental in helping you succeed in this course and others. Please do not hesitate to utilize any of these free support services to support your academic success, physical and mental health, and help you navigate your time as a YSU student.

Student Resources

Reciprocal Responsibilities: Technology

Instructor guidelines are indicated on the left side of the page, with student guidelines on the right side of the page. Supporting language and resources are included below guidelines. Note, language included below guidelines is not required, but suggested by the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) to support implementation.

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to make policies clear regarding use of technology, cell phones, participation, etc. in the classroom.	Students commit to follow course policies regarding use of technology, cell phones, participation, etc. in the classroom.

Implementation Resource – Communicating Technology Policies: Rather than approaching technology with a policing approach, consider a student-centered technology statement in your syllabus.

Maybe this technology statement resonates with the environment you want to create in your classroom:

- *Technology can support student learning, but it can also become a distraction. Research indicates that multitasking (e.g., surfing the Web, texting, or using social networks during lectures) has a negative impact on learning. Because I value you and your classmates' attention and learning, I have the following policy regarding technology in class: laptops may be used for class-related activities only; please close any other apps or tabs not related to the course. You looking at non-course information steals the attention of both you and your classmates. Please keep your cell phones in your bag and on silent; if you have an urgent or emergency issue that requires you to use your phone, please step out of class so as not to disrupt others. If I decide that these technology guidelines are not being followed responsibly, I reserve the right to revise the current technology policy at any point during the term.*

Or maybe you want to keep a statement more general:

- *Technology is encouraged for course-related activities. You are preparing to be a professional, please use technology in an appropriate manner. Do your best to limit non-essential technology use. If non-essential technology use becomes a problem, it will be addressed by the instructor.*

Find out more on developing student-centered technology (and other) [course policies](#).

Developing Course Policies

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors commit to provide resources or links to resources to assist students with expected technology competencies, including learning management systems.	Students commit to become proficient in expected class technology and seek additional assistance in a timely manner if needed.

Implementation Resource – Communicating Needed Technology Skills: In your syllabus, it is important to establish the type(s) of technology students will need to be able to fully participate in the course. You may also consider sharing a link to the IT Service Desk, where students can get 24/7 phone support for first-level technical issues, visit the walk-up counter in Kilcawley Center, or find help to self-help documents for Blackboard and other campus technology .

IT Service Desk

Consider the following sample language for your syllabus:

- *Technology: To successfully complete this course, you will need access to a computer with internet and Microsoft Office Suite (available free). I will be utilizing Blackboard regularly for this course. It is free to use with your YSU login here. Please let me know the first day of class if you do not have the appropriate access to technology and/or anticipate having trouble navigating Blackboard. We will work together to make sure technology is not a barrier to your success in this course.*
- *Blackboard: Please be sure to login to Blackboard at least weekly during the duration of the course. Blackboard will be regularly used to share important course information.*

INSTRUCTOR	STUDENT
Instructors will adhere to University Policy regarding audio and video recording in the classroom.	Students will adhere to University Policy regarding audio and video recording in the classroom.

Student Code

Implementation Resource – Student Guidance: Refer to Article III, Section 21 of the Student Code of Conduct for guidance on recording.

Principles of Good Practice in Teaching

Moving Beyond the Reciprocal Responsibilities

With the endorsement of the TEACH Principles of Good Practice in Teaching framework in 2022 by the Academic Senate, the Institute for Teaching and Learning curated resources around each of the five values of the TEACH framework. Visit any of the links below for related resources, best practices, and examples.

Transparent: The teacher…

- Provides and follows the course syllabus
- Clearly defines grading and attendance policies
- Posts syllabus and grades
- Offers a clear and organized course structure (calendar, consistent expectations)
- Sets expectations for returning student work
- Connects course activities and learning goals
- Explains what success looks like (e.g., gives examples, rubrics)

Evidence-Based: The teacher…

- Uses a variety of student-centered strategies
- Designs instruction to help students see connections to prior understanding
- Helps students apply metacognition to their learning

Aspirational: The teacher…

- Participates in professional development related to teaching and learning
- Stays current in their field of study and its pedagogies
- Reflects on and continuously improves own teaching and materials
- Engages in course/dept. assessment of student learning
- Stays up to date on YSU teaching/classroom policies

Communicative: The teacher…

- Is available during scheduled student support (office) hours
- Effectively presents information, and checks for and responds to student understanding
- Is approachable to students outside the classroom
- Gives regular and meaningful formative feedback
- Is an active listener and open to diverse viewpoints

TEACH Resources

Humane: The teacher…

- Recognizes students' lives impact their role as learners
- Relates subject matter to life outside the classroom
- Inspires and motivates students to learn
- Is encouraging, supportive, and approachable
- Believes that all students can succeed
- Is welcoming and accommodating to all students