

Syllabus Guidelines

Bristol Campus

Fall 2025

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Overview

All faculty are required to have a syllabus for each course taught. These guidelines support faculty in designing syllabi that align with RWU's accrediting body, the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) and help to promote academic excellence, student success, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) at RWU.

Faculty shall upload course syllabi to RWU's Learning Management System, [Bridges](#), *ideally at least one week prior to the beginning of the semester and no later than the day before classes begin*. Posting the full syllabus provides students with a clear understanding the expectations for their courses and maximizes their opportunities for success during the semester.

Faculty shall submit a PDF version of their course syllabi to their deans within one week of the start of their class meetings.

Syllabus Naming Conventions

In preparation for our NECHE reaccreditation process, please use the following naming convention for your syllabi:

Year/semester.syllabus.courseprefix/number/section.lastname,firstname

Examples:

For fall courses:	25FA.syllabus.PSYCH100.02.Spritz,Becky.pdf
For spring courses:	26SP.syllabus.PSYCH240.01.Spritz,Becky.pdf
For spring courses:	26WI.syllabus.PSYCH279.01.Spritz,Becky.pdf
For summer courses:	26S1*.syllabus.PSYCH498.01.Spritz,Becky.pdf

(*noting if it is Summer session 1, 2, etc.)

Required Syllabus Components

A clear and well-structured syllabus helps students understand expectations, stay organized, and achieve their learning goals. The syllabus welcomes students and establishes course policies, processes, and content. It is also an opportunity to set the stage for a classroom culture in which students feel empowered and supported, and to begin to cultivate a productive faculty/student partnership. **At a minimum, all course syllabi shall include the essential elements described below:**

Syllabus Introductory Information

- Course code and title (e.g., PSYCH 100.01: Introduction to Psychology)
- Course type (lecture, studio, lab)
- Course description (catalog description plus additional elaboration, if desired)

- Prerequisites for the course (if any)
- Class meeting schedule and modality
- Credit hours
- Semester/Year
- Instructor's name, office room number, office telephone number, and email address
- Instructor's preferred method of contact, and expected timing of response
 - Sample syllabus language: *Please use Bridges email to communicate with me outside of class. I check Bridges daily M-F, so you can expect a response generally within 24 hours.*
- Instructor's office hours
 - Faculty must keep regularly-scheduled office hours each week during the semesters in which they teach
 - Office hours should be offered often enough and be of a reasonable length of time as to accommodate the number of students enrolled in each course taught and their schedules
 - Except in the case of fully online courses, office hours should not be held exclusively online
 - Additional suggestions regarding office hours:
 - Define the purpose, expectations, and benefits of attending office hours
 - Use welcoming language on your syllabus; Sample syllabus language: *I encourage you to make use of my office hours or to schedule an appointment to meet. Even if you do not have specific questions, I welcome the opportunity to get to know you better and to support you throughout your studies in this course.*
- Requirements of course and course assignments: papers, exams, attendance, discussion, participation, reviews, etc.
- Sample syllabus language related to the use of Bridges, if applicable: *You will need to access the course Bridges site on a regular basis throughout course in order to access important materials and announcements relevant to the course.*
- Policies on missed and late exams and assignments
- Other course policies/expectations

Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes/Goals/Competencies

Each course syllabus should provide a clear indication of what the students will learn from the course stated in the form of learning objectives, outcomes, or other similar goals. The goals objectives of each course should be aimed at ensuring course-level compliance with the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) Standards 4.2, 8.2, and 8.3 for the Academic Program which articulate, "The institution provides clear public statements about what students are expected to gain from their education, academically and, as appropriate to the institution's mission."¹

¹ The full passages from the NECHE Standards read:

General Education Courses: If you are teaching a course that fulfills one of our general education requirements, please indicate which and include the relevant general education outcome(s) as listed in the [RWU Course Catalog](#) among your course learning outcomes.

Sample syllabus language:

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

- X
- Y
- Z

This course also meets the learning outcomes for the [name of domain] domain.

A student in a [name of domain] course:

[list outcomes for particular domain]

Standard 4.2 “The institution publishes the learning goals and requirements for each program. Such goals include the knowledge, intellectual and academic skills, competencies, and methods of inquiry to be acquired. In addition, if relevant to the program, goals include creative abilities and values to be developed and specific career-preparation practices to be mastered.”

Standard 8.2 “The institution provides clear public statements about what students are expected to gain from their education, academically and, as appropriate to the institution’s mission, along other dimensions (e.g., civic engagement, religious formation, global awareness). Goals for students’ education reflect the institution’s mission, the level and range of degrees and certificates offered, and the general expectations of the larger academic community.”

Standard 8.3 “Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution’s academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff.”

Schedule of Class Meetings, Reading Day, and Final Exams

Syllabi shall include a sequential list or table of all class meetings with topics, activities, readings, and descriptions of material to be covered for each class.

Class Cancellation Policies

If faculty experience an emergency or illness that results in the need to cancel class, they should notify their students via the Announcements and/or Email tools from their course Bridges site. As per the RWUFA contract, faculty should notify their deans in writing of any course cancellations or class absences.

Note that faculty cancelling class should *not* plan to teach remotely unless prior arrangements have been made with the dean. Students should not be expected to attend class remotely without advanced notice.

Reading Day and Final Exams

Reading Day is intended for student preparation for finals, and should not be scheduled for final exams, make-up course meetings, class presentations, or other required activities or assignments.

In planning your course schedule, please note that, in general, faculty should not schedule final exams outside of their scheduled timeframes and are strongly encouraged to utilize final exam periods for the completion of final projects. Adhering to the final exam period provides students with the best opportunity for success in completing their final projects and coursework and is essential to our adherence to the contact hours required for each course, according to our standards for NECHE².

Readings and Course Materials

Faculty should provide as much detail as possible regarding course readings and materials. Faculty are encouraged to add information regarding their readings and course materials as part of the Instructional Materials and Resources tabs in their Bridges/Learning Management (LMS) course site.

The use of Open Educational Resources (OER) and other low-cost materials is highly encouraged, as it provides the most equitable opportunities for our students' success.

To help students most easily access the materials for the course, please include the following information in your syllabi:

- Books with complete citations (author/editor, title, date, edition publisher, journal, ISBN, etc.): <http://rwu.libguides.com/citingsources>.
- Articles or other reading materials with relevant information on print, electronic, or course reserve access.

² Final exam times are also counted in the total number of contact hours required by NECHE and the recently adopted Department of Education guidelines on measuring credit hours.

- Other required course materials such as:
 - Those from Open Educational Resources (OER)
 - Any required materials such as access codes for virtual labs such as My Math Lab, My Stats Lab, or other publisher resource site
 - Where to find and purchase materials/licenses/access codes, approximate costs, and when they will be needed.

RWU's contract with Follett mandates that materials purchased through the bookstore are not referenced to outside publishers or vendors. This does not impact your use of Open Educational Resources (OER).

Student Accessibility Services

All course syllabi *MUST* include a statement to ensure university compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This is necessary regardless of whether there is an identified student in a class or at the institution.

Please copy this statement directly into your syllabus:

The university commits to providing reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students with disabilities who need accommodations to fully participate in this class are urged to contact Student Accessibility Services, as soon as possible, to explore the arrangements needed to be made to assure access. Student Accessibility Services is located on the first floor of the University Library and is open Monday through Friday from 8:00AM to 5:00PM. They can be reached at sas@rwu.edu and 401-254-3841.

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) works with students, faculty, and administrators at RWU to ensure inclusiveness in all aspects of the student's experience. Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to use the support services available to them as students who do take advantage of support are more likely to be academically successful. RWU works with eligible students to support their individual needs and academic accommodations through Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in the Center for Student Success (CSAS).

Evaluation Criteria/Grading Method

Faculty shall outline in their syllabus their evaluation criteria and specify any alternate grading methods (i.e., contract grading, standards-based grading, un-grading, etc.).

Recommended Syllabus Language (from the University Catalog): *Students need to make themselves aware of the specific grading policies for any course that take. Please note that some majors require grades higher than passing (D-) to progress in the program.*

The university's grading scheme is as follows:

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
A	93 - 100
A-	90 - 92.9
B+	87 - 89.9
B	83 - 86.9
B-	80 - 82.9
C+	77 - 79.9
C	73 - 76.9
C-	70 - 72.9
D+	67 - 69.9
D	63 - 66.9
D-	60 - 62.9
F	< 60

NOTE: Faculty members using a grading scale that differs from the one above must clearly specify their grading policy in the course syllabus.

Academic Integrity and Intellectual Property

All RWU students commit themselves to the university's policies regarding academic integrity: <https://www.rwu.edu/academics/academic-affairs/academic-standards>.

Including this link provides students with clear expectations regarding academic integrity and the process of what occurs if the student breaches the university's academic integrity policy by cheating, plagiarism, etc.

If you plan on using the Turnitin anti-plagiarism software with your assignments, you may also consider including this **sample syllabus language**: *Turnitin Anti-Plagiarism: Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to VeriCite for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in RWU's Turnitin reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers at the institution. The institutional repository remains the property of the institution and is not shared.*

Statements regarding the use of AI software:

Note that the university does not have a policy regarding students' use of AI software such as ChatGPT; however, faculty should specify any expectations or restrictions on students' use of these tools in the syllabus.

Optional Text to Protect Faculty Intellectual Property:

Faculty may also choose to include statements regarding the intellectual property of the course.

Sample syllabus language: *Please note that course materials distributed by an instructor are the intellectual property of the instructor and may not be shared or distributed without permission.*

Tutoring Opportunities

The Tutoring Center, which is comprised of the Math, Science, Writing, Language, SECCM, Architecture, and Business Centers is located on the second floor of the Main Library. You can walk in and see a peer tutor; appointments for faculty tutors are encouraged. All tutoring is free. You are encouraged to visit the Center to ask questions, whether it's about course-specific tutoring, specialized study groups, or how to get the most out of tutoring. In addition, the Writing Center offers a second option for tutoring: an email tutoring system called WritingHelp (<https://rwu.edu/go/writinghelp> or go to rwu.edu and enter "WritingHelp" in the search bar). The WritingHelp email system is not in-person tutoring; for in-person help, please come into the Writing Center.

The Tutoring Center provides services Monday – Thursday 9am – 8pm; Friday 9am – 3pm; Sunday 5pm – 8pm. For more information and tutor schedules, please go to <https://rwu.edu/go/tutoring> or go to rwu.edu and enter "Tutoring" in the search bar.

Title IX Policies

Faculty should communicate to students the federal government's [Clery Act](#) and [Title IX policies](#), which prohibit sexual harassment and violence, as well as sex discrimination. RWU's commitment to upholding the university's non-violence, non-discrimination policies are outlined in the [RWU Title IX Sex Discrimination & Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Students who experience sexual harassment, sexual violence, or sex discrimination are encouraged to report them to faculty and staff. Reports may also be submitted through the [online reporting form](#). Please note that federal Title IX regulations require that some RWU employees are designated as [Officials with Authority \(see Appendix A\)](#) and must report such disclosures to the campus Title IX Coordinator, Jennifer Stanley (jstanley@rwu.edu).

In addition, Title IX protections ensure equal access for pregnancy and related conditions. Please see the [RWU Title IX Pregnancy And Related Conditions Student Policy](#) for details.

Recommended syllabus language:

Roger Williams University fosters a campus free of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence, as outlined in the [RWU Title IX Sex Discrimination & Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures](#). The [RWU Title IX Pregnancy And Related Conditions Student Policy](#) supplements these protections by extending to students who are pregnant and/or with related pregnancy circumstances.

If you experience an incident of sexual misconduct, harassment, or discrimination, you are encouraged to report it to the RWU Title IX Coordinator, Jennifer Stanley (jstanley@rwu.edu), or another faculty or staff. Please note that, under Title IX regulations, some RWU employees are designated as [Officials with Authority \(see Appendix A\)](#) and must report such disclosures to the campus Title IX Coordinator.

If you would like to report a situation confidentially, the following resources are available for you:

- [RWU Counseling Center](#) – 401-254-3124
- [RWU Health Services](#) – 401-254-3156
- [RWU Public Safety](#) (emergency) – 401-254-3333 or 4357 (HELP) from a campus phone

Additional information regarding your rights and resources are available on the [RWU Title IX website](#)

Chosen Name Policy

Recommended syllabus language:

Roger Williams University recognizes that some members of the campus community choose to identify themselves by a first name other than their legal first name. The university provides students and employees with an opportunity to use a Chosen Name wherever possible throughout university business and education.

Individuals may request the use of a Chosen Name online via [RogerCentral](#). A student's Chosen Name should then repopulate through many university systems and will replace their legal name in some regards such as class rosters.

For instructors:

The university requires the use of legal names in some instances such as official transcripts, financial aid documents, etc.

Students who request a Chosen Name can also have their Student ID and Email Display Name changed as well. Additional instructions and information about RWU's Chosen Name Policy can be found [here](#). Should students have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the Registrar's Office or our Assistant Director of Queer & Trans Initiatives - Henley Ballou (hballou@rwu.edu).

Intercultural Center and the Queer and Trans Advocacy Center

The Intercultural Center (IC) celebrates and supports the diverse identities and experiences of RWU students through high-impact, identity-affirming programs. By fostering community, developing student leadership, and creating opportunities for personal and academic growth, the IC empowers students to thrive during their time at RWU and beyond.

Within the IC, the Queer and Trans Advocacy Center (QTRAC) serves as a vibrant hub for LGBTQIA+ student and employee engagement, advocacy, and enrichment. QTRAC partners with offices across campus to cultivate a more inclusive and affirming environment by advancing equitable policies, offering institutional guidance, and providing resources that uplift queer and trans communities.

If you have questions or would like to connect, please reach out to Michael R. Walsh, Ed.S., Director for Student Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, at (401) 254-3766 or mwalsh@rwu.edu.

Mental Health and Wellness

Recommended syllabus language:

If you are feeling stressed, worried, or down during the semester, or if you notice signs of emotional distress in someone else, here are some campus resources:

- [Office of Student and Family Assistance](#) -- 401-254-3042
- [The RWU Counseling Center](#) – 401-254-3124
- [RWU Public Safety](#) (emergency) -- 401-254-3333 or 4357 (HELP) from a campus phone

*If you or someone you know needs to talk to someone right now, text or call **988** or **chat 988lifeline.org** for a free, confidential conversation with a trained counselor 24/7.*

You can also call the Counseling Center at 401-254-3124 after hours, following the prompts to be immediately connected to a professional who can provide crisis intervention. If you are off-campus in the Bristol area, call East Bay Center (available 24/7/365) at 401-246-0700.

Additional resources are available on the [RWU Counseling Center website](#).

Spiritual Life

Faculty should provide equitable opportunities for students missing classes, exams, and other requirements for religious holidays and holy days. Faculty should consider the impact of religious holy days on class attendance and assignments, and should consider holy days when scheduling assignments, exams, and project deadlines. Please refer to [RWU's 2025-2026 Religious Days of Observance Calendar](#) for a list of holy days observed by many students, faculty, and staff members in our community. The list, while representative of our campus, is not exhaustive. Please direct suggestions for additions to the list of religious days of observances to the Office of Student Life, rwustudentlife@rwu.edu.

Recommended syllabus language (from the University Catalog):

Roger Williams University welcomes and values people and their perspectives and respects the interests of all members of our community and acknowledges that sometimes absences may be necessary due to religious observances. RWU recognizes the breadth of religious observance among students, faculty, and staff, and the potential for conflict with scheduled components of the academic experience. Students are expected to review their syllabi and notify faculty as far in advance as possible of potential conflicts between course requirements and religious observances. In such an event, the instructor will provide reasonable accommodations that do not unduly disadvantage the student.

Classroom Research and Laboratory Protocols

Classroom Practices and Research Involving Human Subjects

For instructors: Under federal law, universities must ensure the protection of human participants from harm and enact measures to rectify unethical research practices and harm to human subjects because of participation in research. The RWU IRB provides oversight on the ethical aspects of research involving human participants affiliated with faculty, staff, and students at Roger Williams University.

All RWU employees and students engaged in research with human subjects, including classroom-based studies involving human participants, must receive IRB approval prior to initiating their research study and abide by the policies and procedures of the IRB. Details about applications and policies can be found at: <https://www.rwu.edu/who-we-are/administration-and-governance/committees-governance/hsrb>.

Policies and Procedures on Lab Health and Safety

For instructors: Any health and safety requirements relevant to a particular course should be clearly communicated to students in writing as part of their course syllabus. Faculty should delineate in their syllabi health and safety protocols, particularly any specific to their laboratory experiences. As noted above, more extensive laboratory health and safety manuals may also be uploaded to Bridges as separate documents as “Additional Academic Policies.”

Emergency Situations and Contacts/Notifications

RWU utilizes an RWU Alert system which serves as the university’s primary communications tool for alerting campus community members to urgent situations. When activated, the system sends phone, email, and text messages regarding incidents that could affect their safety. The university also hosts an emergency siren warning system that broadcasts alarms and voice instructions when activated. In the case of a fire alarm, individuals should proceed outside of the building. All buildings include instructions on what to do in the event of each type of emergency.

Additional information regarding what to do in the event of a campus emergency can be found here: <https://www.rwu.edu/undergraduate/student-life/about-student-life/policies-guidelines/emergency-procedures>

Campus emergency contact information is located on the website here: <https://www.rwu.edu/undergraduate/current-students/emergency-info>

The numbers for campus emergency contacts are:

Emergency:	401-254-HELP (4357)
Public Safety:	401-254-3611
Health Services:	401-254-3156
Environmental Health & Safety:	401-254-3611 or 401-254-4357
Facilities:	401-254-3136
Counseling Center:	401-254-3124

Appendix A: Additional Resources for Designing an Inclusive Syllabus

- In Chapter 3 of their book [Inclusive Teaching: Strategies for Promoting Equity in the College Classroom](#), Hogan & Sathy (2022) provide example statements for designing an inclusive syllabus (p. 58-60) and a checklist for reflecting on your syllabus and course design (p.82-84). The checklist for the syllabus includes (quoted directly from p. 82-83 of the text):
 - Check the overall tone of your syllabus and aim for a supportive and warm tone.
 - Read the syllabus as if you were a student and use student-centered language that is invitational.
 - Avoid capitals for emphasis.
 - Use first-person statements in your syllabus (“I,” “you,” and “we”), rather than third-person statements such as “students shall.”
 - Present an inclusion statement along with incorporating your inclusive practices in different aspects of course activities.
 - Include specific statements about accessibility, affordability, and student success.
 - List trainings you have done that relate to specific underrepresented groups.
 - Highlight content and authors that relate to your commitment to diversity and inclusion.
 - Ask a colleague to read over your syllabus to check for the above.
 - Review your syllabus periodically to keep it current.
- [Equity-Minded Syllabus Review Guide by Southern California University](#) contains a general overview of “Equity-Mindedness” and helpful checklists.