

Osaka University Syllabus Development Handbook



Introduction

In recent years, university education has bolstered its focus on independent learning by its students. In conjunction with this, and with the progression of the globalization of university education, the importance of syllabi as a means to transmit educational information is heightening. We at Osaka University have also engaged in an uniform university-wide "syllabus format reform" from the perspective of securing global applicability with respect to the education that we provide, following an educational reform promotion committee in 2014. The overarching theme of this "new syllabus format" is "the promotion of self-directed learning by students", and in the format, to realize the formation of educational activities that are organized and coherent, learning objectives for each individual class based on the education objectives of their Degree Program is encouraged to be set. Moreover, emphasis is placed on independent study outside of class in order to substantiate the credit system, and a clear grade evaluation standard is demanded, etc. On this occasion, as reference for when syllabi are to be developed, we have published a handbook that thoroughly details examples of what should be filled out for each item as well as their distinguishing points, based on the items within Osaka University's unique syllabus format. In particular, with respect to "learning goals", which is the most important item in promoting independent learning by students, this handbook clearly details how to set "learning goals" for each course item, and also provides useful vocabulary examples for ease of understanding. Furthermore, regarding the creation of this handbook, we received generous assistance from Assistant Professor Makiko Oyama from Center for Education in Liberal Arts and Sciences. We would like to extend our sincerest thanks. Our hope is that this handbook will be utilized widely, and that the contents of our syllabi will be further enriched.

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December, 2015

Tadashi Kobayashi, Executive Vice President of Education Osaka University

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Regarding Osaka University Syllabus

Syllabus Development Checklist

Use this as a checklist when preparing syllabi.

Item	Check	Details	
(4) Course Objective		The subject of written objective is the students	
(P.06)		They are established based on the curriculum	
		The subject of written goals is the students	
		Goals can be evaluated	
(5) Learning Goals (P.07)		One goal contained per sentence	
		Conditions for evaluation are written concretely	
		Goal levels are appropriate	
(7) Course Schedule		The procedure towards cultivating understanding is appropriate	
(P.11)		An appropriate amount of contents has been set	
(8) Homework and		Said learning relates to activities within the classroom	
Assignment (P.12)		Said learning relates to learning goals	
		Learning goals and evaluation items are congruous with one another	
(11) Grading Policy		Evaluation methods are clearly stated	
(P.12)		Evaluation periods are clearly stated	
		Allocation of standards are clearly stated	
General		Objective, Learning Goals, Course Schedule, and Homework and Assignment are all consistent with one another	
uciiciai		The syllabus is written with the students' learning as its focal point	

1. What is a Syllabus?

Definition of a syllabus, and its current status

A syllabus has been defined as the following, by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Central Council for Education.

"A detailed course schedule for each course subject. In general, a syllabus is the base on which students will progress in preparatory learning for each of their course subjects, and indicates the title of the university course, the title of the primary educator, lecture objectives, class details for each session, grade evaluation methods/standards, clear instructions regarding preparatory studying, etc., required textbooks/reference literature, and class prerequisites. Furthermore, it will be a reference document for when students decide upon selection of their lectures, and will also be utilized to jointly adjust class details between educators, and for students to evaluate their classes, etc."

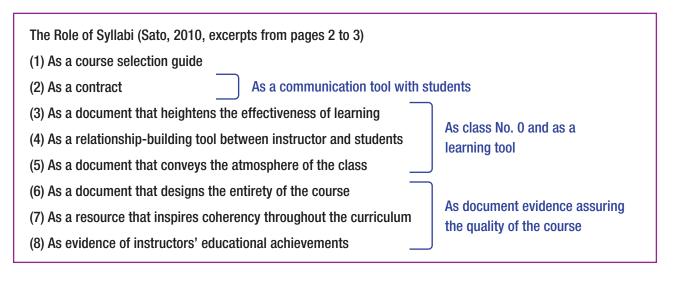
Central Education Council, "Towards the Educational Structuring of Undergraduate Programs" (2008)

A syllabus, as described above, refers to a "course schedule" that states detailed information regarding a course. Of the universities in Japan, 696 of them (approximately 96%) create syllabi for all of their courses, meaning that the vast majority of universities have syllabi (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2011). Many universities' syllabi include items such as "course objective, overviews, details, textbooks, standards for grade evaluations, class prerequisites", but recent years have heightened an interest in a method of learning where the students themselves are the focus. This has led to the slow increase of items relating to "students' learning". Osaka University is not an exception, and has reviewed its syllabus items in 2014 for all university course levels and made changes to focus on its students' learning.

Then, how can we apply the syllabus to promote students' learning? Syllabi have traditionally been used by students to choose their courses. However, there are other numerous uses for syllabi.

The role of syllabi

Sato (2010) raises the following 8 points as roles of syllabi.



The syllabus has various other roles aside from (1) a course selection guide. For example, as indicated by (2) many universities in North America utilize syllabi as a contract, whose contents are mutually agreed upon between the instructor and the student. In the context of Japanese universities, the word "contract" may feel somewhat out of place, but detailed explanation in the beginning of a course regarding the contents of the class syllabus is expected to improve students' initiatives towards class undertakings. Furthermore, through roles (3) to (5), the syllabus can be designated as Class No. 0 (a preliminary class), or a piece of learning material that heightens effective learning. By providing detailed explanations regarding the course on the syllabus before proceeding with the first class, it is possible to indicate the positioning of relevant course within the 4 year curriculum, as well as the overall learning flow of the course. By giving such information to students before the start of course, students will be able to formulate their own direction of learning. Additionally, as described by (6) to (8), syllabi that include details of teaching and learning activities can be utilized as evidence for the quality assurance of the education being provided, as well as the educational achievements of the instructors themselves. In this way, upon understanding all the various roles that a syllabus can take on, one should strive to design a course that promotes self-directed learning.

2. Osaka University Syllabus

Osaka University's syllabus includes the following entry items. Starting from the 2015 syllabus, new items have been added in order to focus the syllabus on students' learning (items in **red**).

Osaka University syllabus items

Basic information	Detailed information (entered by instructors)
Course code	(1) Course Title*
Numbering code*	(2) Language of Instruction
Semester	(3) Mode of Teaching and Learning
Day and Period	(4) Course Objective
Course Title	(5) Learning Goals
Course Title (in English)	(6) Requirement/Prerequisite*
Eligibility*	(7) Course Schedule
Instructor	(8) Homework and Assignment
Capacity*	(9) Textbooks*
Credits	(10) Reference*
Year	(11) Grading Policy
	(12) Other Remarks*
	(13) Special Note*

Items that have been newly added are those that are deeply involved in students' learning. When syllabi are developed with these items adequately stated, one can hope to promote self-directed learning from students.

3. Points to Note When Filling Out a Syllabus

This section will indicate what should be written for each item, when filling out a syllabus. In particular, refer to the segments in red, which are items that have been newly added.

Basic information

Items to fill out for basic information are set in advance, and do not need to be input anew. If any changes arise, contact a member of educational affairs for the course department. Furthermore, by introducing a numbering code and assigning a number to courses, the staged nature of curriculums can be indicated and students will be able to complete their classes systematically.

Detailed information

In principle, items to be filled out for the detailed information section will be entered by the instructor in charge of courses. Starred items (*) are optional items, but fill them in as much as possible.

(1) Course Title

These are frequently decided upon in advance, but for cases where the instructor themselves will set the lecture topics, set concrete subjects that adheres to course details as much as possible.

(2) Language of Instruction

Fill in what language of instruction will be conducted in. Select from "Japanese", "English", "Japanese/English", and "Other" depending on the target students and learning goals. In particular, when conducting classes in a language other than Japanese, make sure that you select the language of instruction will be conducted in.

(3) Mode of Teaching and Learning

Select the corresponding "Mode of Teaching and Learning" from the choices of "lecture", "seminar", "experiment", "laboratory subject", "practical subject", and "other", depending on the characteristics of the course. On KOAN, selections will be displayed in a pull-down menu.

(4) Course Objective

In this section, the significance of the course is stated. One can consider it the answer to when students ask, "Why should I take this course?" Consider and state the relevant course's position within its academic discipline, and the diploma policy set forth in the degree program. Because students are the ones who will be completing these classes, make sure that the subject of these "objectives" is the students themselves. By setting these objectives and providing an overview, it becomes possible to confirm whether the course objectives and course pedagogy satisfy one another.



The following are verbs with comprehensive meanings that can be used when describing objectives. Set appropriate objectives that correspond to the target grade level and domain.

Verbs to be used when describing the objective (comprehensive verbs)

(Japan Society for Medical Education, 2006)

Learn / Acquire / Understand / Create / Position / Acknowledge the value of / Come to know / Comprehend, etc.

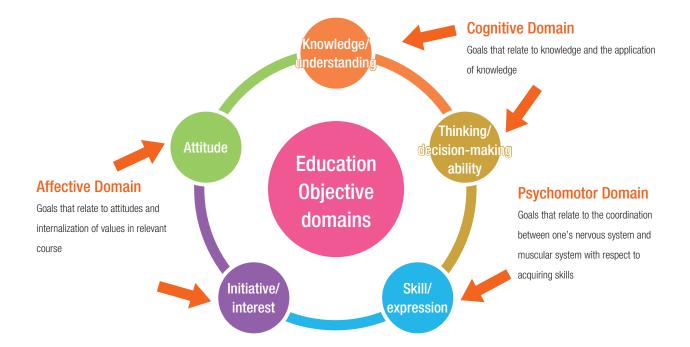
Examples of written the objective

(Instructor) "Provides an explanation regarding OO. Provides an outline."
 Problem point: Because the subject is the instructor, the statement is an overview explanation instead of the objective.

(Students) "Gain an understanding regarding \bigcirc in order to do $\times \times$, and will be able to make accurate determinations about $\triangle \triangle$."

(5) Learning Goals

Learning goals refers to the leaning outcomes that a student will acquire by the time of their course completion. This is a very important item in order to promote students' independent learning through utilizing the syllabus. Also with respect to this item, the subject achieving these goals are the students, so be sure to fill this item out with the students as the subject. The type and level of the abilities that should be acquired through these courses are varied depending on the field and grade level. Firstly, Education objective can be indicated in the below diagram by the three fields of "Cognitive Domain", "Psychomotor Domain", and "Affective Domain", as well as their levels (Kajita, 1983). The significance and weight of these three domains change with respect to the characteristics of the academic field, so there is no need for each course to include goals from all of these domains. Learning goals should be set from each domain depending on the academic field and the students' learning status.



Examples of verbs to use when setting learning goals

These are examples of verbs to be used when filling out learning goals. With respect to the Cognitive Domain, the further down the list goes, the higher the learning level becomes. Choose appropriate verbs for each upon consideration of grade level and curriculums.

Cognitive Domain	Psychomotor Domain	Affective Domain
Learning level (low)	Measure	Cooperate
Enumerate		
State	Implement	Consider
Deduce		
Describe	Imitate	Participate
Explain		Communicate
Classify	Attain proficiency	
Compare	Turk	Debate
Contrast	Touch	
Categorize	Conduct	Inquire
Distinguish		Indicate
Relate	Research	indiotto
Predict		Show
Concretely describe	Manipulate	
Conclude		Help
Specify	Enter	Feel
Formulate		Feel
Generalize	Prepare	Do
Point out	Porform ourgons	
Select	Perform surgery	Consult
Utilize	Inspect visually auscultate	Qualificate
Apply		Contribute
Adopt, etc.	Inspect physically	Respond
Learning level (high)	Sound out, etc.	Answer, etc.

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(Japan Society for Medical Education, 2006)

Points to note when filling out learning goals

Then, how exactly should one write a syllabus? The 4 points to note when filling out leaning goals are shown below.

Write about matters that are able to be observed and evaluated

Learning goals must be able to be observed, as well as evaluated. For example, take the goal "able to deeply appreciate \bigcirc O." It can be said that making an objective measurement of whether or not a student is "deeply appreciating" something is impossible. In this case, it becomes important to write what the student has understood and become able to do as a result of their appreciation. For example, indicate concrete examples, such as "can provide an explanation about the overview of \bigcirc O."

Furthermore, there is a demand for leaning goals to be written as specifically as possible. For example, in a class like " $\bigcirc \bigtriangleup$ " Theory, consider having set the goal of "can explain the basics of $\bigcirc \bigtriangleup$ theory." In this case, the standard of the word "basic" is unclear. By providing a further specified definition of what it means to have a "basic" understanding, one can hope for students to attend classes with a concrete goal in mind.

Indicate 1 goal per sentence

It is not beneficial to have multiple goals in one sentence. For example, take "can analyze the phenomena behind $\times \times$, as well as explain $\triangle \triangle$." Within this description, there are 2 parallel goals of "analyzing the $\times \times$ phenomenon" and "explaining $\triangle \triangle$." In this case, it might occur that students have analyzed the $\times \times$ phenomenon but was not able to sufficiently explain $\triangle \triangle$. Excluding cases where the 2 goals are tied intimately to one another, if 2 goals can be evaluated separately, students will be able to have a heightened understanding if each goal is expressed separately in their own sentences.

Clearly state evaluation conditions and standards

With respect to relevant courses, in order to make clear exactly how much understanding should be cultivated, indicate conditions that will be evaluated as specifically as possible. For example, they should be written like "can perform $\triangle \times$ calculations with a calculator", or "can provide at least 3 specific examples". Set these goals with respect to the students' grade level and their proficiency level.

• Difficulty should be set at a level that is realistic but still challenging

Setting difficult levels is deeply tied to motivation towards learning. If the goals are set too high, students will give up before they even attempt learning. On the other hand, if the goals are set too low, students will not feel a sense of accomplishment and lose initiative. Upon knowing the relevant subject's position within the entire curriculum, consider the major field of study, abilities, and grade level of the relevant students when setting goals to be accomplished.

Clarifying learning goals not only promotes independent learning for students, but also provides merits for instructors. By setting clear learning goals, instructors will more accurately be able to understand their students' learning status. Checks can be conducted in the interim stage of courses to see whether or not learning is being accomplished, and in the case that students have not cultivated proper understanding, reflecting upon the reason for this will lead to improvement in class details and pedagogies. On the other hand, by clarifying learning goals, there are those that express the criticism that flexibility and dynamism may be lost, and ultimately limit the range of learning that is available. Of course, the most desirable outcome is that the student will be able to engage in progressive learning that goes above and beyond the stipulated goals. In order to realize this, advanced developmental tasks as well as high-level reference literature should be listed in the syllabus so that students can aim for further heights after accomplishing the baseline goals that have been set forth for course completion.

In higher education, it is not uncommon that an omnibus-format class is offered wherein one class is conducted by multiple instructors. The benefits of this format are that students get a wide range of learning by being exposed to various approaches by various instructors regarding one subject. However, if instructors have not formed a solid consensus between one another, students may complete the class without gaining systematic understanding. When conducting classes in an omnibus format, it is necessary for instructors to thoroughly discuss learning goals.

Examples of learning goals

* "Have students master the basics of higher education theory"
 Problem points: -The range set forth by "higher education theory" is too broad
 -The standard for "basic" and "master" are too vague
 -The subject is the instructor

"(Students will be able to) explain 3 accounts that occurred particularly in the 1990s during the historical transition of higher education theory in Japan"

* "Students will gain an understanding of matters necessary to learning at a university, and will acquire the basic skills to utilize said understanding for research"
 Problem points: -There are 2 goals stated
 -The standards for "necessary matters" and "basic skills" are too vague

- (Students will be able to) create a report using 2 examples of "learning strategies" that are necessary to leaning in universities
 - (Students will be able to) provide explanations for 3 characteristics of the qualitative research method

(6) Requirement/Prerequisite

State the necessary skills and completion conditions for taking course by using titles of specific courses. Indicate these after thorough discussion within each department.

Examples of Requirement/Prerequisite

"Must have high-school level knowledge in Japanese history"

"Completion of English I is desirable"

"Ideally should also take International Relations Theory"

"Must have completed Biology I as a prerequisite"

(7) Course Schedule

The course is basically comprised of multiple course. In this section, fill out the details that will be touched upon in each course. By specifically detailing the themes that will be handled, students will be able to understand the flow of the courses and be able to prepare systematically. The key when scheduling a course is the amount and order of the details to be covered. The amount to be set should not be overwhelming, and should be able to be proceeded with in a reasonable manner. Furthermore, review the schedule again to make sure that it's been ordered in a way that makes it easy for the student to fulfill their goals. For example, there are situations where entering a course schedule is difficult because one will not be receiving information regarding their students (their grade level, number of students, etc.) until right before classes. Furthermore, even if the target grade level and student number were the same as the previous year, a change in students yields a change in academic level and class atmosphere, etc., meaning that no one year will ever be the same as another. Because of this, instructors tend to shy away from entering a detailed course schedule into the syllabus. However, students at the course enrollment stage will have to make a learning schedule that suits them by making estimations regarding relationships between the courses they will take, as well as allotting time for out of classroom learning. In order to do so, it is important to indicate the details and amount (converted to learning time) of in-class and out of class learning material. In the event that there are changes to the schedule, modify/edit the syllabus at a later date and receive approval from the students.

For omnibus-format courses in particular, a thorough course schedule is necessary. As stated above, because omnibus-format courses are conducted with multiple instructors, course content may have the potential to become scattered. It is important to create course schedule through the consensus of all instructors involved, and by indicating concrete details of each class, students will be able to study while being aware of the learning that will occur throughout the entirety of the course during their studies.

(8) Homework and Assignment

The average number of course completion credits in the first semester of a student's first year in Osaka University is 27. Converting this into the "45 hours of learning per credit" set forth in the university's established standards, this comes out to around 81 hours per week, or about 11.57 mandatory hours per day of learning, including weekends. A student in Osaka University student engages in approximately 30 hours of learning per week (hours spent in class + out of classroom learning), which is largely similar to university students around the world. However, when comparing 1st to 3rd year out of classroom learning hours in particular with those of overseas university students, students in Osaka University's learning time is 3.12 hours less (2014 investigation by SERU: Student Experience in the Research University).

In order to promote students' learning, in conjunction with considering the class completion status and to achieve learning goals in one course, it is necessary to carefully design out of classroom learning. In certain cases, it is fine to introduce new methods of teaching into the classes, such as flipped classroom. In this section, clarify the position of out of classroom learning pertaining to the class as class preparation or review, etc., and then fill out specifics regarding the title of publications and which pages should be read, etc.

(9) Textbooks

Write down the textbooks or reference that will be used. For publications that need to be purchased, indicate that it must be purchased as well as detailed information about the publication. If there are copies in the library, notify students about it so that the publication may be more readily available to them.

(10) Reference

Indicate literature that will relate to material that is discussed during course. Without limiting it to print publications, literature can also be links to websites or references to theses. In this section, indicate literature that will not only be used directly in classes, but also related literature in order to encourage further developmental learning for students.

(11) Grading Policy

In the grading policy section, write down how students' learning will be measured as a result of the courses. Concretely speaking, enter information on how determinations will be made regarding whether or not learning goals were accomplished. Enter grading measurement methods (example: midterm exams, final exams, reports, essays, projects, etc.) and distribution of percentages (example: tests- 60%, reports- 20%, comment sheet for each session- 20%, etc.). By clarifying which grading measure occurs at what intervals (example: midterm exam (date and time), small report (each session)), students will be able to adjust their schedules, etc. independently, and will also come to be able to prepare for them. The grading policy standards section is one that students focus on most heavily. By describing each grading policy in the beginning of the course, one can avoid misunderstandings and future issues, and students will be able to learn with a clear goal in mind.

2) SERU conducts student experience research, and has 33 participants (as of January, 2015) who are leading global universities, including California's Berkeley University. Osaka University has been participating in this research since 2013.

3) Flipped classrooms as a way to promote out of classroom learning

Flipped classroom refers to a class structure that reverses the traditional explanatory-format teaching in classrooms with practice-based learning conducted at home. In a traditional classroom setting, students gain knowledge through lectures, and further their learning by engaging in review work outside of the classroom. In the flipped classroom format, however, students gain preparatory knowledge outside of the classroom through videos, etc., and apply that knowledge in the classroom for their learning by engaging in group activities or discussions. The flipped classroom format is effective in cases where there is a lot of material to be covered in classes and it is difficult for students to gain a deep understanding of the material, as well as cases where it is difficult to secure enough time for debates. When implementing the flipped classroom format, out of classroom learning may become the foundation for these classes. By giving specific details of what sort of learning will be required outside of the classroom for each class session, students will be able to prepare themselves for the flipped classroom format (Oyama, printing).



Grading targets and methods

Goal domain	Grading method	Grading target	Characteristics	Tools
Knowledge [Cognitive Domain]	Objective exams	 Multiple choice Question and answer format Fill in the blank format 	 Securing fairness Can present many questions in a limited amount of time Feedback can be provided easily Easy to determine whether answer is right or wrong Place too much emphasis on score Be mindful of relevance 	 OMR sheet Existing textbooks and workbooks
Technical [Psychomotor] Domain	Performance grading	Practical examInterview	 Can grasp a wide range of students' understanding (authentic) Can consciously connect pre-existing 	• Rubric • LMS • e-portfolio
Attitude [Affective Domain]	Performance grading	 Report Essay Portfolio Concept map Problem-posing Discussion 	knowledge with lifestyle knowledgeDifficult to determine if the answer is right or wrongBe mindful of validity	

(12) Other Remarks

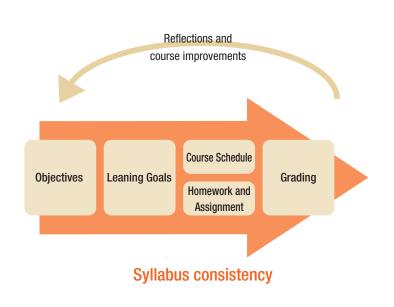
Enter a message for the students here. Make sure that the message entered is positive and from the perspective of promoting students' learning upon entering the course. Furthermore, additional information that talks about the appeal of the course will heighten students' initiative towards learning.

(13) Special Note

In the event that there are special items that should be noted by students, or there are any notifications (regarding note-taking, seating arrangements, communication methods with students) upon taking the course, write them here.

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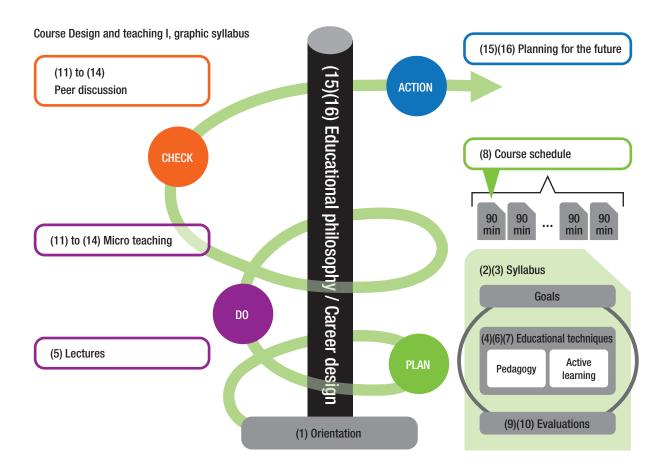
With the above, this handbook has introduced points to note when filling out a syllabus. Make sure to keep consistency in mind with regard to the objectives and learning goals, course schedule, and grading policies. At first glance, it seems extremely difficult to fill in so many items on the syllabus. However, once a detailed syllabus has been created, not only can it promote independent learning in students, but also has the benefit of allowing for continuous course improvements through instructors' own reflection. Using the previous year's syllabus and course design as a reference standard, it is possible to make comparisons between past learning status and present learning status of students.

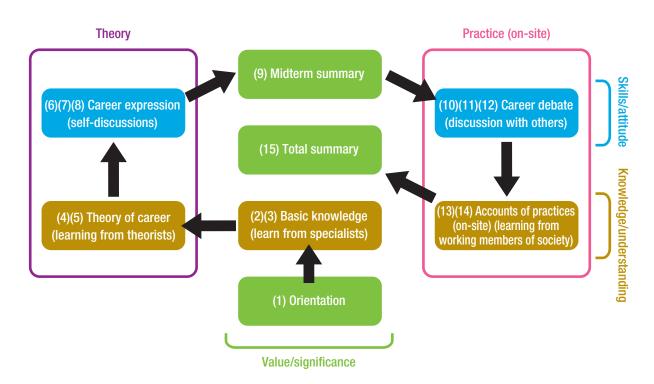


4. Examples of Syllabus Applications

How exactly can syllabi be applied? Traditionally, syllabi were regarded by students simply as references to facilitate course selection during the course registration stage, and many of them most likely barely ever looked back upon them after classes started. However, by applying the syllabus within the class itself, it can become a learning tool that guides students to deep learning. For example, syllabi may be distributed on the first day of course, and students may be requested to bring their syllabus to every session. Then, by referring to the syllabus at the beginning to every session to check where the course currently is, students will become conscious of the entire scope of their learning instead of regarding the class as just another block. Furthermore, it becomes possible to connect task significance with the entire scope of the course. This makes students' learning in the classroom something significant. Additionally, it has been said that students, by informing themselves of concepts to be learned prior to course, can deepen the quality of their learning thereafter (initial organizer) (Ausubel & Robinson, 1969/1984). From this, one can say that there is significance in indicating these concepts. Please utilize syllabi as a communication tool between instructors and students, or as a teaching tool in the classroom. The syllabus that will be handed out during class should be created to contain richer information (information about the instructor, detailed grading standards, etc.) than the one provided before the start of course. Furthermore, it is fine to add visual elements (graphic syllabus) aside from writing in order to make the structure of sessions more visually apparent.

Example of a graphic syllabus





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(Written by: Makiko Oyama, Center for Education in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Teaching and Learning Support Division)

5. Useful FAQ When Creating Syllabi

Course schedule are subject to change, so I do not want to give too much detail.

A1 Course schedule may be edited depending on the students' learning status or class progress. Make sure to notify students each time edits will be made to the schedule, then redistribute the syllabus after revisions and edits have been made. (Related p.11)

Q2 I want to utilize a syllabus in my classes, but there is not enough space in KOAN to enter my information. What should I do?

A2 Using the syllabus you registered on KOAN as the foundation, distribute a further detailed syllabus with additional information to your students at the beginning of class. A syllabus that is rich in information will not only be a course selection guide for students, but also teaching material that is useful for learning. (Related p.14)

Q3 I don't know how to operate KOAN when entering information into my syllabus.

A3 Open KOAN → Manual (For instructors) from the My Handai menu. There are explanations for each function. You can go to the syllabus operations explanation website by clicking on the following link. https://koan.osaka-u.ac.jp/portal/manual/inst-ructor/man/j/shira.htm

Q4 Can I edit my syllabus anytime?

A4 Because the syllabus serves as a contract between instructors and students, edits must be carefully made. In particular, edits to grading policy should be avoided. Regarding course schedule, make changes after getting approval from your students. On the system, changes to the syllabus can be made from May to August for the first semester, and November to February for the second semester. (Related p.11)

Q5 I want to know more about syllabi and teaching and learning.

A5 Center for Education in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Teaching and Learning Support Division holds various seminars and workshops regarding teaching and learning. Refer to the website for more details. (http://tlsc.osaka-u.ac.jp/)

Seminar for syllabus creation & application

Center for Education in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Teaching and Learning Support Division holds periodic seminars where instructors can learn, in further detail, about syllabus creation and application. At these seminars, instructors bring their own syllabi and will make improvements during that time. Feel free to participate anytime. For more details, refer to the Teaching and Learning Support Division's website.

- Creation methods for syllabi that promote independent learning
- Course design workshop (Training camp format: 2 days, attendance-type: 3 days, attendance-type in English: 4 days)
- The contents of this handbook can also be learned in video format (10 minutes). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEAJj4HE0kM

[Contact for questions regarding syllabus application/training courses]

Center for Education in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Teaching and Learning Support Division tlsc@celas.osaka-u.ac.jp

Regarding Osaka University Syllabus

Contact the Strategic Planning Office, Institute for Academic Initiatives (Scontact_q@iai.osaka-u.ac.jp) or Education Planning Division, Department of Education Development for questions regarding Osaka University's syllabus format or distribution of this handbook, etc.

Osaka University, Syllabus Development Handbook

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Osaka University Educational Reform Promotion Committee

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1-1 Yamadaoka, Suita, Osaka 565-0871 Japan

