

Setting Policies for Civility in Your Syllabus

Setting policies addressing course conduct, including them in your syllabus, and reviewing the policies with your students—as part of your online orientation—are key to establishing expectations for civility. Be sure to check with your institution about any required language you may need to include.

When developing your expectations, take time to recall situations that have disrupted your online course and write expectations designed to proactively address those situations. Areas to address include, but are not limited to, academic honesty, appropriate participation in live sessions, and showing respect for other students and diverse viewpoints in discussion forums.

Include a statement regarding what your students can expect from you. An example follows:

- What you can expect from me: I will be present in the course and maintain a civil learning environment for all. I will respect you and your opinions.

Examples of Behavior Expectations for Online Courses

- You are expected to do your own work. Cheating, plagiarism, and any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in (include consequences).
- Meaningful and constructive dialogue is encouraged in this course and requires a willingness to listen, a tolerance for different points of view, and mutual respect from all participants.
- Attendance at live sessions is a necessary part of this course; therefore, (include specific requirements and any impact on grades).

Sample Syllabus Language

General Statement: This syllabus contains the policies and expectations that have been established for this course. These policies and expectations are intended to create a productive learning atmosphere for all students. Please bring any concerns you may have to my attention.

To create and preserve a course atmosphere that optimizes teaching and learning, all students share the responsibility of creating a positive learning environment. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that does not disrupt teaching or learning, and they are expected to follow these standards:

Course discussions should be civilized and respectful to everyone and relevant to the topic we are discussing. Discussion forums are meant to allow for a variety of viewpoints. This can only happen if we respect one another and our differences.

I will begin online live sessions promptly at the designated time and students are expected to be on time to these sessions. In addition, class will end at the designated time. Please refrain from engaging in other tasks during the online session as it is disruptive to me and to others around you.