The principal purpose of a syllabus is to inform students in a formal and timely way of the nature and content of the course, expectations, policies and procedures that will apply, and the logistics involved in participating in the course.

In addition to being informative, a syllabus is also a promise that is both explicit in what it states will be part of the course, and implicit in what it infers will not be part of the course. The syllabus needs to be consistent with the latest approved curriculum action/course outline of record, and everything done or required in the class at any time throughout the term, should be in agreement with what the syllabus states or does not state.

Each course syllabus should include student learning outcomes (SLOs) that describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities students can expect to attain during the course. The syllabus provides basic information about the course content, activities and assignments planned for the term, which should correlate with the expected learning. It should identify what will be taught and what should be learned by the end of the course. A well-organized syllabus sends students the message that the instructor is organized, cares about student learning, and will create effective learning experiences. Faculty also benefit from a well-constructed syllabus. If students are given clear and explicit information about expectations for the course and the consequences of failing to adhere to course procedures, faculty will be spared the problems with student grievances that can arise when faculty alter their courses mid-term to solve problems “on the fly” and appear arbitrary and capricious to students.