



## CONSTRUCTING YOUR SYLLABUS CCSA REQUIREMENTS and RECOMMENDATIONS

The syllabus for a CCSA course is a key document for several reasons. Once a course proposal has been accepted and recruitment for the class begins, faculty are asked to provide as complete a draft syllabus as they can, even though it is months before the class will be taught. This is because the syllabus is the basis on which Western Kentucky University establishes what kind of credit the class should have. Also, students seeking credit for the class on their own campuses rely on the course syllabus as the key document for department chairs to review before awarding campus-specific credit. And students often rely on the syllabus for the detailed information they need to determine whether the class is right for them. For these reasons, CCSA asks faculty whose courses have been approved for recruiting to provide a first edition of a syllabus which adheres to the following guidelines. If your class obtains the minimum participation level and is accepted for inclusion in a CCSA program, you will have an opportunity to update your draft syllabus prior to its distribution in its final form to participants.

Before listing specific required parts of the syllabus, here are some general points about CCSA syllabi.

- If you wish to offer your class for more than one level of credit (for example, upper division and graduate), your syllabus must include distinctive requirements for the two levels in such areas as course goals, assignments and grading standards. You might choose to do this by submitting two different syllabi.
- If you wish to offer your class for Honors credit, please see section on Honors classes at the end of this document.
- CCSA adheres to the general rule found on most campuses that for every credit hour there should be approximately 15 contact hours. If your home campus has expectations regarding contact hours on a student abroad course, CCSA defers to the home campus on this matter. The nature of a study abroad class allows for a wide variety of ways for this contact time to be achieved. Please refer to Part 2 of the [Teaching with CCSA Guide](#) for ideas on how to meet your contact hour requirement.
- Since your CCSA class is likely to include students from different institutions in the consortium, avoid including campus-specific references in your syllabus (such as links to your school's honor code or disabilities office). Please keep all statements in a generic context.

Below is a list of components that CCSA asks you to include in your syllabus:

- **A Course Heading** at the top of the first page including the course title, the site and dates of the CCSA program in which your class will be taught, and your name, title, and institutional affiliation. Please also include your contact information for the period before the CCSA program begins – and, if different, for the period after the CCSA program ends.
- **An optional but recommended autobiographical paragraph** introducing yourself, including your professional background, prior experiences traveling, studying or doing research overseas, and why you are looking forward to teaching your CCSA class. This is helpful for students from CCSA institutions other than your own who will benefit from gaining a more personal sense of who you are.
- **A Course Description and Goals (aka Student Learning Outcomes).** The course description should match the one used in the CCSA catalog for your program. While you may not be required at your institution to include Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) in your syllabi, their widespread use is such that when department chairs at Western Kentucky University and other institutions are determining the kind of credit your class should be assigned, they are likely to expect SLOs to guide their decisions.
- **A Breakdown of Course Requirements.** This can take various forms but the expectation is that you will include short descriptions of all of the required course activities and assignments, with a percentage attached to each one indicative of how that item counts toward the final grade. The following list addresses specific aspects of some course components:
  - **Attendance/Participation: Attendance** is mandatory in all CCSA classes for all class activities, and this should be stated unequivocally in the syllabus, along with your policy on what penalties accrue from unexcused absences. You might also include a statement about the responsibility of participants to seek your prior approval for any absences that might be excused (e.g. for legitimate ill health, not hangovers).



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**Participation** includes not just attending class but also having a positive involvement in all class activities (such as contributing to class discussion intelligently and responding creatively to field trip experiences). Students who are reserved should not be penalized as long as they are seen to be engaged in the class dynamic at some level. Assessment of participation is inevitably subjective, but since participation is highly valued in experiential learning, it is expected that CCSA instructors assign it between 10 and 15% of the final grade. It is highly recommended that students be provided with some kind of rubric for how participation is to be assessed.

- **Journals** are almost universally used in study abroad classes as the most effective way for students to demonstrate their processing of course themes and experiences as they occur. CCSA recommends that up to 35% of the final grade be assigned to journaling. It is recommended that you require students turn in some journal entries early on in the program, so that your feedback can alert them to deficiencies in their journals while there is still time for them to journal more effectively and hence avoid a final journal grade that disappoints both them and you.
- **Pre-departure assignments.** The on-site portion of most CCSA courses is two weeks in length. Therefore, CCSA recommends that in order to maximize the on-site learning experience faculty consider including some kind of required reading or research by the date at which the program begins. You may insure that students complete the preliminary activity by requiring some written work upon arrival on-site or scheduling a quiz on the material for the first class. In the syllabus, faculty should clearly designate course work that is due at the program's onset with its weight toward the final grade. In short term programs, pre-departure assignments are normally worth between 10% and 30% of the final grade. CCSA recommends that faculty teaching in programs of more than two weeks duration also consider including a pre-departure assignment, though it would normally be assigned a lower percentage of the final grade than is the case for short-term programs.
- **Final exams and post-program assignments.** All CCSA classes should have some kind of final activity appropriate to the program they are taught in. In longer term programs of more than two weeks' duration, all coursework must be completed and graded by the end of the program, and hence there is no option for post-program assignments. Instead, CCSA expects such classes to have a final exam or paper/project worth at least 20% of the final grade. CCSA programs of two weeks or less duration normally do not have final exams, but instead they must include a final project or paper worth at least 25% of the final grade due some weeks after the conclusion of the on-site program. Grade submission deadlines are posted for each short-term program. It is vital that you set and communicate to your students in your syllabus a due date for final projects that will allow you sufficient time to grade the work and submit final grades by the deadline. It is recommended that you require your students to send their projects to you either by some form of registered mail or return receipt email; even for students on your home campus, some mechanism for ensuring proof of delivery and receipt is a good idea. A clear statement regarding the consequences of late submissions is also highly recommended.

Here are some other components of syllabi which CCSA asks you to include:

- **A grading scale and grading basis.** Because different faculty and schools have different grading scales, it is important to communicate clearly to your students the grading scale you will be using.
- **A list of required reading.** Include guidance on how students are expected to acquire readings (e.g. through a link to your campus bookstore or an on-line source). If you plan to post readings on line, give some indication of how you expect students to access them.
- **A list of supplies.** This includes all items that faculty expect students to acquire before departure or on site that are essential for completing course assignments. This might be as simple as notebooks for journal-writing but can get quite technical for certain kinds of classes (e.g. electronic devices, photo equipment, or painting supplies). CCSA needs to authorize your supplies list if the estimated cost exceeds \$125.



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- **A statement about additional costs.** CCSA makes every effort to pay for costs associated with class entries to museums, historic sites, theatrical performances, etc. through the general program fee paid by all CCSA participants. But in many cases, classes with ambitious field trip plans involve expenditures that exceed the CCSA budget for class activities. Once their classes have gained the minimum enrollment and are approved as a “go,” CCSA Program Coordinator Robin Byerly reviews with faculty the individual expenditure budget for their class to determine if there will be additional costs to students that they should be prepared to pay on site. Therefore, CCSA recommends that you include in your syllabus a statement to the effect that “while the CCSA program fee will cover much of the incidental expenditures for required course activities on field trips, it is possible that additional costs will accrue to participants. Therefore, participants need to budget \$100 for such extra class-oriented expenditures.” This statement also covers you if you discover once on-site that there are valuable activities you didn’t know about before the program began and which you want your students to experience, even if it involves an extra expense.
- **A statement about academic honesty.** To minimize student grade appeals, it is a good idea to define what you mean by academic dishonesty and what penalties will be assessed for instances of it. Do not refer to your own school’s honor code or officials.
- **A statement about physical expectations.** Since most study abroad classes include field trips and other activities which may involve a lot more walking and standing than American students may be used to, a fair warning of estimated daily walking (e.g. 3-4 miles) and other physical challenges is helpful. Also, you might want to emphasize the importance of bringing along at least two pairs of comfortable, broken-in walking shoes and discourage use of flip-flops and high heels.
- **A statement about students with disabilities.** CCSA recommends that you include the following statement: “Students with disabilities or special needs must contact the instructor and the CCSA office at least a month in advance of the program’s beginning so that accommodations can be made, to the extent possible in a study abroad setting. Students seeking such accommodation must provide CCSA with a copy of the letter on file with their own Office of Disability Services, outlining what services they receive on their home campus.”
- **A day-by-day schedule.** Faculty are not expected to develop this in great detail in the draft syllabus submitted as part of the course proposal form. But in the final form of the syllabus, students will benefit from having a daily itinerary of class activities, including class meetings, scheduled field trips, due dates for readings and papers, and test or quiz dates. To get an idea of teaching and class activity times for your program, use the link at the program proposal website. It lists general activities that all participants are expected to attend (such as orientations) and also class activity times.

Faculty may wish to include more information than is stipulated in this document, but please take care to include all of the above requirements in your draft syllabus.

### Section for Faculty Requesting Honors Status for Their CCSA Class

If your campus provides a means to offer Honors credit, please describe this in your syllabus along with how you will differentiate the Honors section from the standard UG course.

If your campus doesn’t offer Honors sections of your standard undergraduate classes, you may use WKU’s guide. WKU designates Honors sections as Honors Enriched and Embedded Courses (HEECs) that are described at this link: <https://www.wku.edu/honors/faculty/resources.php>.

- i. If you choose to propose an Honors section, you must differentiate it from a non-Honors class through “additional assignments, more sophisticated assignments, more sophisticated course material, oral presentations, different methods of grading, special trips or activities, group work, or even special meetings with the professor outside of the scheduled class times (such as scheduled discussion



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groups).” While this definition may fit any well-designed study abroad class, you still need to differentiate the Honors section.

- ii. An example may be to add an extended assignment that your students complete “after” the on-site portion of your course. This could follow the “bring it home” concept in which students actively compare something they learned in the foreign location with their home town or home campus. Examples include public transportation or infrastructure, access to public services, and food. These are things your students may research or discuss with people on the local level to compare with people they met in the international location. The methods may vary, but interviews or physical documents (photos) may be ways for your students to research the differences (and similarities) that they then present to the entire class. There are hundreds of ways for your students to complete the assignments, but you need to differentiate the Honors section from the non-Honors section in your syllabi.
- iii. CCSA will create an Honor section for students who need a WKU transcript.