



**Robert Gillespie**  
**Academic Skills Centre**



# Ready Set Teach

Session 4.2

Syllabus Clinic: Designing for  
Connection, Clarity and Change

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Stream and Interim Associate Dean, Teaching & Learning

# Land Acknowledgement



Art by Christi Belcourt

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

# ACCESS CHECK

We encourage you to check, identify, and question your learning environment for any of the following and I welcome comments if there are elements that I can support to reduce barriers. Please let us know at any time.

- Technology
- In-person Space
- Resources
- Pace





# SESSION OUTLINE

- First Contact: Setting the Tone for your Course
  - Teacher-centered vs Student-centered
  - Backwards Design
- Course design
- Learning outcomes
- Building the syllabus
  - Policy in practice
  - Policy in Course Information System (CIS)



# Advice for Preparing Course Syllabi at UTM

Fall 2025

Office of the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean  
Updated July 2025



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Fall 2025 version is available online:  
<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/dean/utm-academic-policies-and-procedures>

# First Point of Interaction: Setting the Tone for Your Course

What questions do students want the syllabus to answer?

- What topics will be covered?
- How will those topics be taught?
- How is performance assessed?

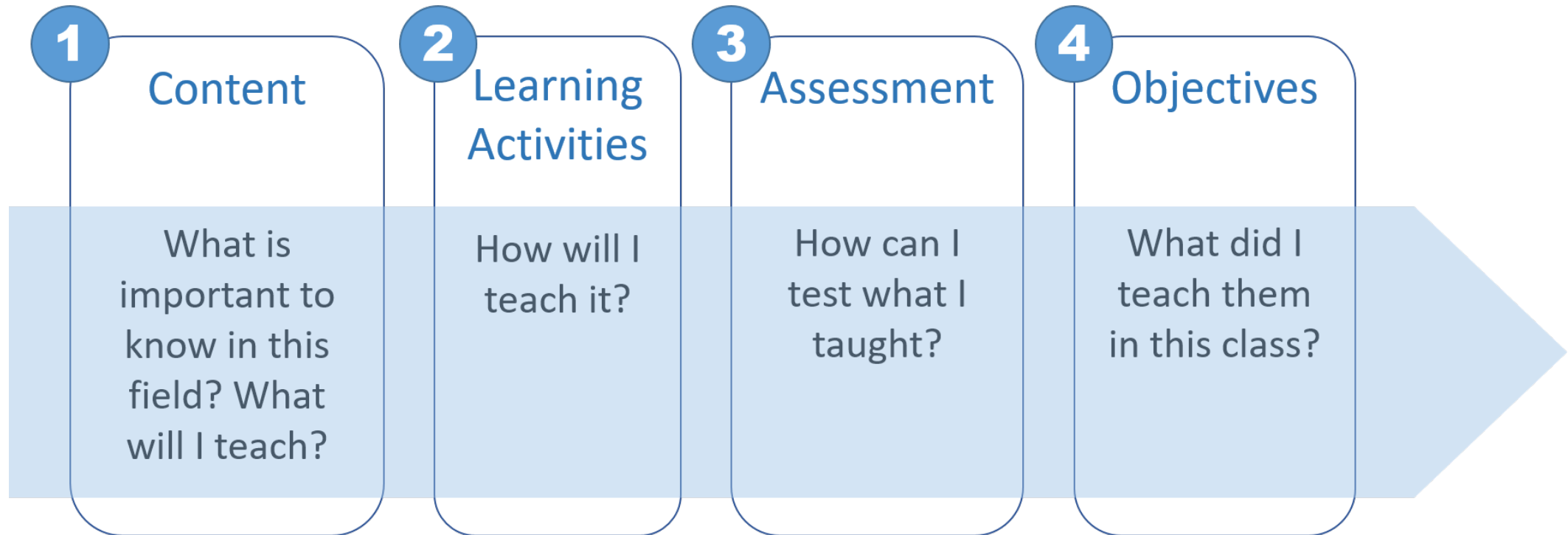
How do faculty use the syllabus?

- To plan for their course
- To establish expectations about how students will interact with course material

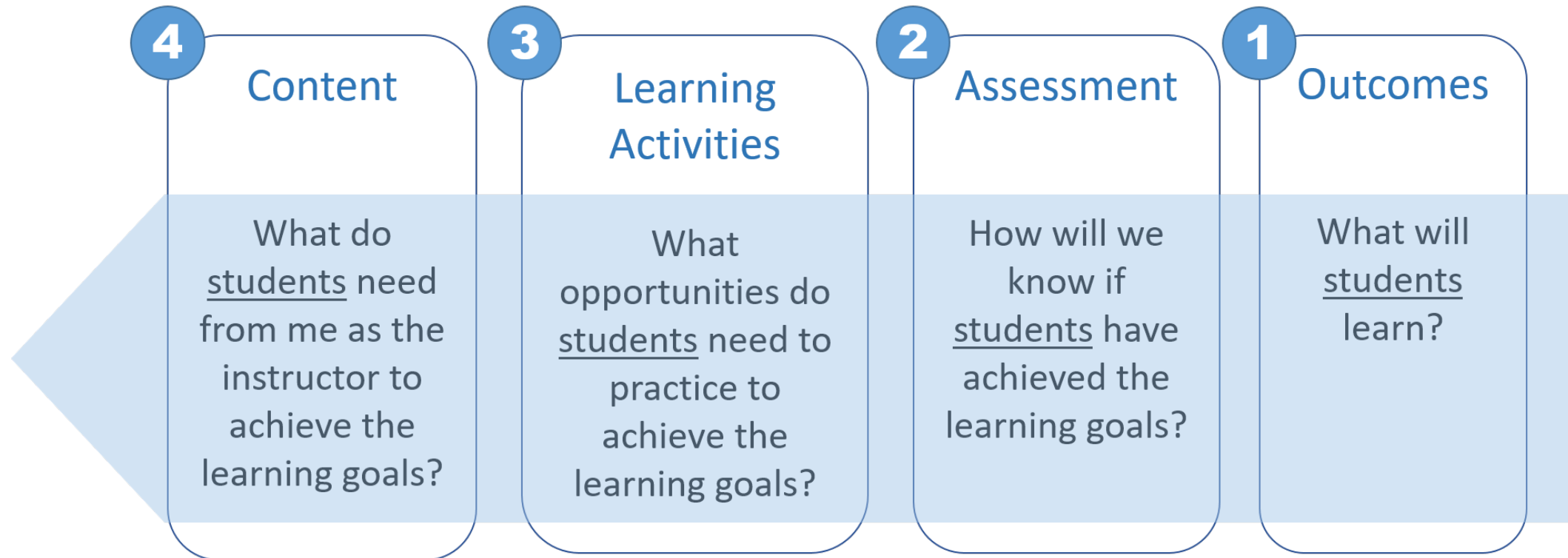
[Wagner et al., 2023.](#)



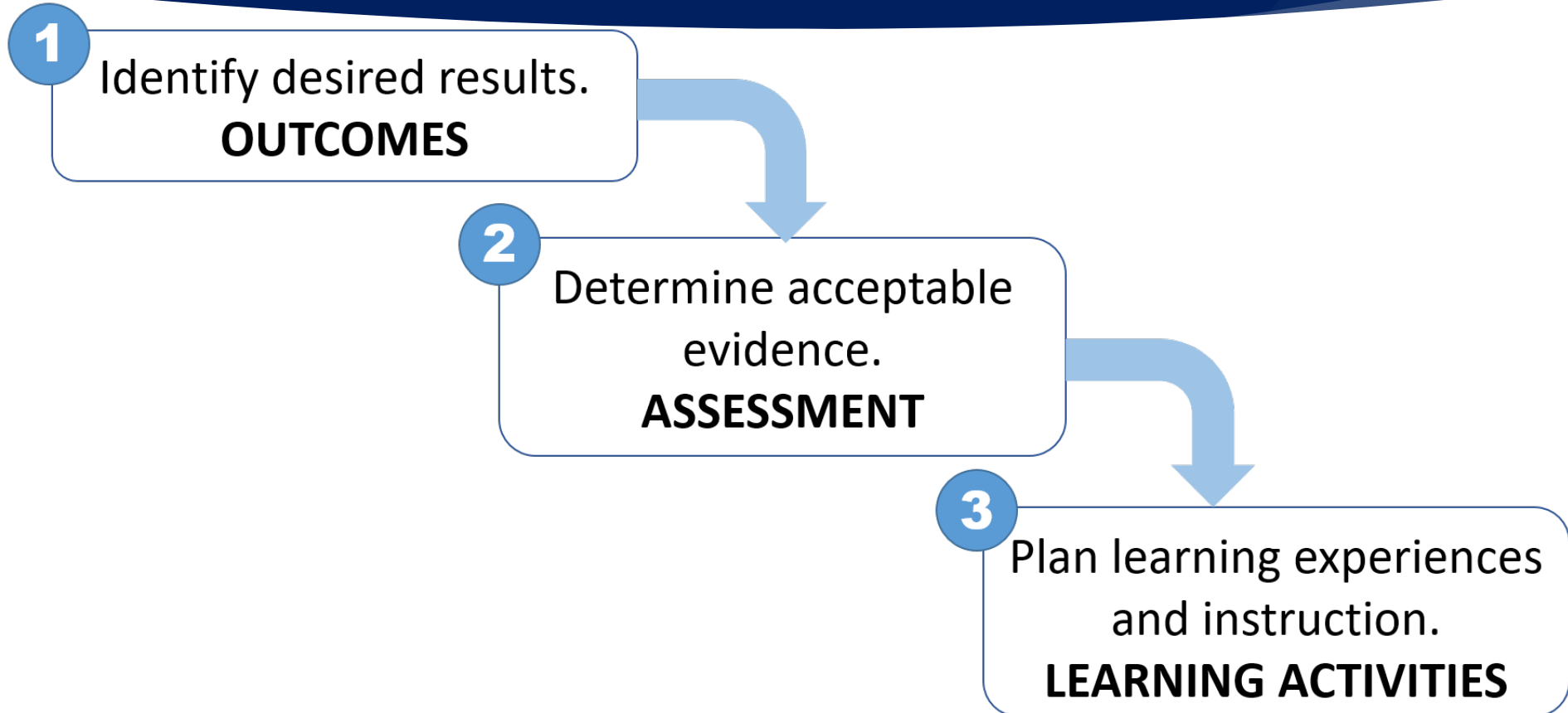
# Teacher-Centered Course Design



# Student-Centered Course Design



# Stages of Backward Design



# Alignment

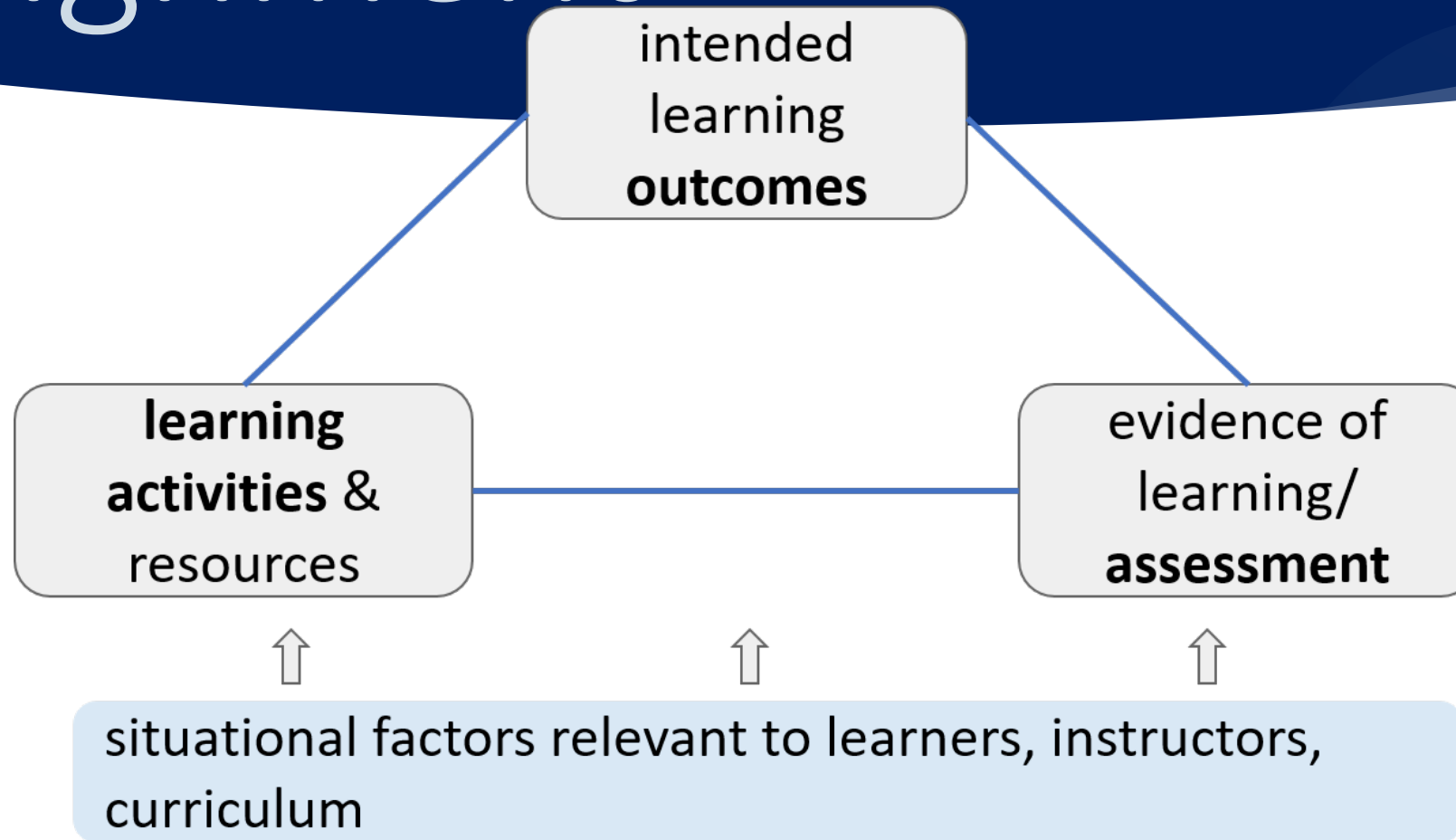


Figure adapted from Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

# Beyond the Biography: Tell students about the pedagogical plan you have designed for them



















Alongside the typical “biographical” data about yourself and your course, consider including elements that have been shown to create more meaningful learning experiences

- Multiple contact methods for students to reach instructors, TAs, and be clear regarding the modality of that contact
- How will those topics be taught?
  - “Chunk” your content into modules

[Wagner et al., 2023.](#)



**MAINSTREAM**  
WEEKLY  
CHECKLIST

	MODULE 1: (week of) Sep 11	MODULE 2: Sep 18	MODULE 3: Sep 25	MODULE 4: Oct 2	MODULE 5: Oct 9	MODULE 6: READING WEEK: Oct 16	MODULE 7: Oct 23	MODULE 7: Oct 30	MODULE 8: Nov 6	MODULE 9: Nov 13	MODULE 10: Nov 20	MODULE 11: Nov 27	MODULE 12: Dec 4
Module topics 	 Intro to BIO202 & Physio	 Gas exchange	 Transport of gases	 Ion & Water balance	 Reading week!	 Term Test 1	 Digestion & energy	 Locomotion	 Electrical signals	 Sensory systems	 Internal balance	 Term Test 2	 Environment
Lecture assessments 	Explore Quercus & Chapter 1 Quiz* AL1 Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Chapter 2 Quiz* AL2 Worksheet Course Expectations <input type="checkbox"/>	Chapter 3 Quiz* AL4 Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Chapter 4 Quiz* AL4 Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Rest What will you do for YOU? <input type="checkbox"/>	Review & Term Test 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Chapter 5 Quiz* AL5 Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Chapter 6 Quiz* AL6 Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Chapter 7 Quiz* AL7 Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Chapter 7 Quiz* AL7 Worksheet Expectations Follow-up <input type="checkbox"/>	Chapter 8 Quiz* AL8 Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Review & Term Test 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Practice Final Exam Quiz AL9 Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>
Labs and tutorial content 	No labs or tutorials <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wool hool Done!	Lab 1A: Oxygen dissociation <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutorial 1A: Intro & Methods Lab 1B: Oxygen dissociation <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 2A: Metabolic rate Tutorial 1B: Intro & Methods <input type="checkbox"/>	No labs or tutorials <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutorial 2A: Results & Disc. Lab 2B: Metabolic rate <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 3A: Respiration Tutorial 2B: Results & Disc. <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutorial 3A: Self-assessment of Lab1 Lab 3B: Respiration <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 4A: Digestion Tutorial 3B: Self-assessment of Lab1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutorial 4A: Peer Review of Lab 1 Report Lab 4B: Digestion <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 5A: Action potential Tutorial 4B: Peer Review of Lab 1 Report <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutorial 5A: Peer Review of Lab 1 Report Lab 5B: Action potential <input type="checkbox"/>	No labs or tutorials Tutorial 5B: Peer Review of Lab 1 Report <input type="checkbox"/>
Lab assessments 	No assessments due <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-lab Quiz 1A*; Lab 1A Data Analysis Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-lab Quiz 1B*; Lab 1B Data Analysis Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-lab Quiz 2A*; Lab 2A Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	No assessments due <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-lab Quiz 2B*; Lab 2B Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-lab Quiz 3A*; Lab 3A Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-lab Quiz 3B*; Lab 3B Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-lab Quiz 4A*; Lab 4A Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-lab Quiz 4B*; Lab 4B Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Module 9 Quiz; Active Lecture 9 Worksheet; Tutorial 4 Worksheet; Science Communication <input type="checkbox"/>
Tutorial assessments 	No assessments due <input type="checkbox"/>	No assessments due <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutorial 1A Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutorial 1B Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	No assessments due <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutorial 2A Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Tutorial 2B Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 1A Draft* Tutorial 3A Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 1B Draft* Tutorial 3B Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 1A Peer Review Tutorial 4A Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 1B Peer Review Tutorial 4B Worksheet <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 1A Final Report* & Science Communication <input type="checkbox"/>	Lab 1B Final Report* & Science Communication <input type="checkbox"/>

# Beyond the Biography: Policy and Practice

- Contact hours must match the [Academic Calendar](#) and [Timetable Builder](#)



## Course Information System

### Step 1: Administrative Details

\* Indicates a required field

### Step 6: Course Schedule & Outline

Rich Text Area

\* Indicates a required field

Please use the area below to enter your course schedule information. You can choose to use the table formatting provided by the Syllabus Builder or format your own course schedule. If you have a course schedule made in an external tool such as Word or Excel, you can copy and paste that content into the field.

Do you want to include a week-by-week outline? \*


- Yes  
 No

Week	Description
Week 1 Date	In this field, we recommend providing any details about the topic for the lecture, tutorials, and any required or recommended readings. This field can also be used to provide due dates for assessments.
Week 2 Date	



# Beyond the Biography: Policy and Practice

- @utoronto.ca email (instructors).  
@mail.utoronto.ca (students and some instructors)



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## Course Information System

### Step 2: Contact Information

\* Indicates a required field

At least one contact is required if you are using the syllabus built in the Course Information System.

The contact information will be included on your syllabus so that students know who to contact regarding the course. All fields will be shown on the syllabus except for any optional fields left blank.

Course Website

[+ Add a Contact](#) ▾

Define Contact Label \*

Title

Name \*

Email \*



# Beyond the Biography: Policy and Practice

- Check for conflicts with religious/vacation/university closed dates
- [Important Dates – Office of the Registrar](#)
- [EDIO: link to multifaith e-calendar](#)



# Learning Outcomes: The Building Blocks of our Pedagogical Practice

A statement that describes the knowledge or skills that instructors expect students to learn, develop, or achieve proficiency by the end of their learning experience (Suskie, 2009).

- written from the student's perspective
- describe what they will be able to know, do or value after successfully completing their learning experience

Keep coming back to the Learning Outcomes throughout the course, and attach them to learning activities.



# Learning Outcomes: The Building Blocks of our Pedagogical Practice

For students:

- provide clarity around the instructor's expectations &
- how they will demonstrate their learning


For instructors:

- help point to appropriate methods of assessment
- prompt consideration of how success in a course will be evaluated



# Learning Outcomes: Policy and Practice

- What should students be able to do or accomplish by the end of the course?





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## Course Information System

### Step 3: General Course Information

\* Indicates a required field

Rich Text Area  
Information in this step is used to make students aware of the expectations for the course and any requirements that must be met to participate in the course. All fields will be shown on the syllabus except those marked as "Hidden from Syllabus" and optional fields left blank. All pre-populated information in this section has been drawn from your divisional calendar and approved through the divisional curriculum governance process. To request the modification of this information, please contact your academic unit.

Course Description	Ecology, evolution, form, function, diversity, and conservation of birds. Practical sessions focus on observation and assessment of local avian populations using field ornithology techniques and approaches.
Additional Notes	<p><b>B</b> <i>I</i> <u>U</u> Paragraph </p> <p><i>I</i> &lt;&gt;</p> <p>E.g: As part of the course, students will build on their knowledge from the previous course and learn to apply the techniques within the context of a cumulative capstone project. This course involves meetings with clients, taking part in regular stand-ups and project management techniques.</p> <p>P 0 WORDS POWERED BY TINY</p>
Course Learning Outcomes *	<p><b>B</b> <i>I</i> <u>U</u> Paragraph </p> <p><i>I</i> &lt;&gt;</p> <p>E.g: By the end of the course, students will be able to produce professional quality writing and effectively communicate the results of their research findings and analyses to fellow classmates in an oral presentation.</p>



# Assessment: “Testing” our Learning Outcomes

Some key pedagogical considerations in assessment design for your courses.

- Multiple Methods of assessment (quantity)
  - formative and summative (quality)
- Scaffolded assessments
- Collaborative/Group work



# Assessments: Policy and Practice

- 15% for H courses, 25% for Y courses, returned by last class before the drop deadline
- No tests, or recent assignments, more than 25% in last 2 weeks
- Discuss with your chair if the “at least 33%” exam policy for first-year classes should be followed
- Must include how tests will be made up and how students notify instructor of missed test
- Must include assignment deadlines, how to submit if late, and late penalty and missed assessment policies
- Registrar's policy on missed exams on syllabus



# Assessment: Policy

## Step 5: Marking Scheme

Please adhere to the following

- ❗ Total must add up to 100%
- ✅ No term test or combination of term tests worth more than 25% can be due in the last 2 weeks of class
- ✅ No one assessment (e.g. test/assignment/exam) should have a value of more than 80% of the overall total course mark
- ✅ Combination of class participation should never exceed 20% of the total course mark and should involve participation rather than mere attendance
- ✅ The final exam should count between one-third and two-thirds of the final mark. In any course where there is a final examination, the Chair/Director may allow a reduction in the value of the examination from one-third of the final mark to no less than one-quarter of the final mark



## Course Information System

### Step 5: Marking Scheme

\* Indicates a required field

Do you plan on using Crowdmark for your tests/quizzes/assignments during the term? \*

- Yes
- No

Assessment Title	Percent (%)	Date(s)	Type	Details
Marking Scheme Total (%)	0			

### Marking Scheme Notes

Marking Scheme Notes to Students

**B** *I* U Paragraph

0 WORDS POWERED BY

Late and Missed Assessment Submissions Policy \*

# Accessibility and Inclusion: Building Learning Communities

## Tips for Creating a Welcome Video

- 3-5 minutes
- Use a program (Zoom, Snagit) that incorporates captions
- Highlight one (1) academic policy that is particularly important for your course
- Explain what a week in your course will typically look like for your students
- Leave the "mistakes" in



# Accessibility and Inclusion: Building Learning Communities

Sample Welcome Activity to Help Frame Your Lecture Content from  
Mairi Cowan, Department of Historical Studies



Welcome to the Week 3 Synchronous Discussion for HIS230! We'll start at 11:10. Before class begins, annotate this screen to point out something interesting in this image.

The Hours of Joanna of Castile,  
c. 1500, created in Flanders,  
BL Add MS 18852



# Accessibility: Policy

- Add Religious accommodations, Accommodations, Equity & human rights, and Student rights statements on the syllabus

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## Step 7: Policies & Statements

\* Indicates a required field

The policies and statements available in this section are provided as a convenience to you when creating your syllabus. These can be personalized and saved to suit the context of your course. CIS stores the most up-to-date versions of all policies and statements

**Recommended Policies & Statements** [Collapse](#)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Academic Integrity <b>Required</b>	<a href="#">View</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious Accommodations <b>Required</b>	<a href="#">View</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Declaration of Temporary Absence <b>Required</b>	<a href="#">View</a>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Re-grading Term Work <b>Required</b>	<a href="#">View</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Plagiarism Detection Tool <b>Required If Using</b>	<a href="#">View</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Missed Final Examinations <b>Required If Using</b>	<a href="#">View</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Accommodations for Students with Disabilities	<a href="#">View</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Code of Student Conduct	<a href="#">Personalize</a> <a href="#">View</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Equity and Academic Rights	<a href="#">View &amp; Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Rights	<a href="#">View &amp; Edit</a> <a href="#">Delete</a>

# Academic Integrity: How do we ensure students are learning?

Be clear with your students about how you expect them to enact the values of academic integrity in your class (Eaton, 2021)

- Scaffold scholarly practice
- Set clear assignment expectations
- Create meaningful learning communities



# Academic Integrity: Policy and Practice

- Academic Integrity statement is included in the syllabus

The screenshot shows the 'Course Information System' interface for the University of Toronto. The page title is 'Step 7: Policies & Statements Academic Integrity'. A red box highlights the 'Academic Integrity' checkbox, which is checked and labeled 'Required'. Other options include 'Religious Accommodations', 'Declaration of Temporary Absence', 'Re-grading Term Work', 'Plagiarism Detection Tool', 'Missed Final Examinations', 'Accommodations for Students with Disabilities', and 'Code of Student Conduct'. A 'Statement' section on the right contains text about the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters and links to the 'Code of Student Conduct' and 'Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters'. A 'Personalize' button is visible at the bottom right.

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## Course Information System

### Step 7: Policies & Statements Academic Integrity

\* Indicates a required field

The policies and statements available in this section are personalized and saved to suit the context of your course.

#### Recommended Policies & Statements

- Academic Integrity **Required**
- Religious Accommodations **Required**
- Declaration of Temporary Absence **Required**
- Re-grading Term Work **Required**
- Plagiarism Detection Tool **Required If Using**
- Missed Final Examinations **Required If Using**
- Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
- Code of Student Conduct

#### Statement

Note to instructors: This statement is required. Below is a paragraph to add to your syllabus. The University of Toronto requires students to complete assignments on their own, without any outside assistance, unless otherwise specified.

You should also clearly articulate whether Generative AI tools are permitted aids when completing assignments in your course. If you choose to have students engage with Generative AI platforms for any part of the course, you must be explicit as to when use is permitted and when it will be considered an unauthorized aid. AI use will be different for every course, it is essential to communicate its role in your course to students as much as possible, rather than merely through mentioning it in your syllabus. The Office of the Vice Provost, University of Toronto, has created recommended statements; they are located on their [ChatGPT and Generative AI in the Classroom](#) page.

The Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters states that:

The University and its members have a responsibility to ensure that a climate that might encourage, or enable, cheating, misrepresentation, or unfairness is not tolerated. To this end, all must acknowledge the advantages of technology and other advantages by fraud or misrepresentation, or seeking to disadvantage others by disruptive behaviour, as is any dishonesty or unfairness in dealing with the work or record of a student.

It is your responsibility as a student at the University of Toronto to familiarize yourself with, and adhere to, the Code of Student Conduct and the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. This means, first and foremost, that you should read them carefully.

[Code of Student Conduct](#) and the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) are available from the University of Toronto website.

Personalize 

# Generative AI: Policy

- Embed options for syllabi statements

- ✓ Can use Generative AI tools    ⚠ Can use Generative AI in certain instances or specific ways    ✗ Cannot use Generative AI

## Items of Note for 2025/2026



### Generative AI

Microsoft Copilot continues to be available to all students, faculty, and staff. In addition, this year, the University of Toronto has partnered with OpenAI to offer [ChatGPT Edu](#) – a version of ChatGPT tailored for higher education. This version of ChatGPT is available at an annual cost through U of T's software procurement system and is specifically designed for educational use, ensuring our community can explore the potential of AI within a secure, private environment.

For academic integrity purposes, it is important that each instructor include language into their syllabus to explicitly inform students whether generative AI tools are permitted aids (or not) and inform students about Gen AI in general. [Here](#) are some sample syllabus statements and FAQs about generative AI in the classroom.

Please note that generative AI tools (like any external tool) cannot be made mandatory for student use; instructors should consult the [U of T Guidelines for Tools Beyond Quercus](#) and consider information

Office of the Vice-Principal, Academic and Dean, University of Toronto Mississauga

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Connect with an [Educational Developer](#) to help you decide which level of AI integration (or not) is best for your course(s).

STUDENTS

FACULTY

RESEARCH

TOOLS & TRAINING

GUIDELINES

AI TASK FORCE

## Toward an AI-ready university

The University of Toronto is an institution dedicated to the development of human potential. We recognize AI's transformative capabilities and associated risks for our institution and society which compels a thoughtful approach to this class of technologies.

In Spring 2024, U of T established an AI Task Force to develop a comprehensive vision and strategy for responding to the emergence of generative artificial intelligence.

[Discover U of T's human-centred approach to AI adoption](#)

## [Toward an AI-ready University](#)



# References

- Eaton, S. E. (2021). *Plagiarism in higher education: Tackling tough topics in academic integrity*. Libraries Unlimited.
- Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences : an integrated approach to designing college courses* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass.
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- Stanford Teaching Commons. (n.d.). *Teacher-centered vs. Student-centered course design*. Stanford University. [Teacher-centered vs. Student-centered course design | Teaching Commons](#)
- UTM Teaching and Learning Resource Hub (n.d.) Video Course Tour. University of Toronto Mississauga. [Video Course Tour: Teaching and Learning Resource Hub](#)
- Wagner, J. L., Smith, K. J., Johnson, C., Hilaire, M. L., & Medina, M. S. (2023). Best Practices in Syllabus Design. *American journal of pharmaceutical education*, 87(3), ajpe8995. <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe8995>.
- Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (Expanded 2nd ed.). Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.





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# Thank You!

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UTM Course Information  
(CIS) Onboarding