



MICRO CASE STUDIES

An Innovation to Increase the Use of Syllabus: Visual Syllabus

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The information included in the course syllabus is crucial for my students to successfully complete the relevant course. At the beginning of each semester, I share the course syllabus with my students through SIS and LMS. However, it seems that my students are not referring to the syllabus enough and are struggling to understand the requirements and content of the course. This situation leads to problems for my students, such as not fulfilling the requirements of the course and missing assignments. When my students do not understand the syllabus well enough or do not refer to the syllabus in a course-related situation, I face many problems as the instructor, such as answering questions in the syllabus, explaining things, and managing missed submission deadlines.

What can I do to increase students' use of the syllabus and to ensure that they understand the information in the syllabus?



Approach to Solve the Problem

At the request of our instructor, the instructional design consultant has reviewed the syllabus for the relevant course. It was observed that the syllabus consists of long and detailed texts and the information about the course was not easily accessible. The instructional design consultant offered a solution to the instructor about using visual syllabus in addition to conventional syllabus to enhance the learning experience for students.

Design and Research Process

At the request of five instructors, visual syllabi for the relevant courses have been collaboratively designed by the instructional design consultant and the multimedia and interaction designer. The questionnaires have been prepared to gather the thoughts and experiences of both instructors and students who use visual syllabi. Following the Ethics Committee approval obtained from our university, the questionnaires have been directed to the relevant individuals. Our research study is ongoing.

Solution Suggestions -1

“Why Should I Prefer to Use Visual Syllabus?”

Most studies in the literature reveal that conventional syllabi consisting of pages of text intimidate students and students often do not read them. At this point, there are studies showing that syllabi using a flowchart, diagram or visuals showing the organizational structure of the course are preferred by students over conventional syllabi (Kaur, 2021; Taves, 2023).

Six Reasons to Use Visual Syllabus

- 1** Visual syllabus that is aesthetically rich and visually appealing capture students' attention and motivate them more compared to traditional text-oriented course syllabi (Biktimirov & Nilson, 2003).
- 2** It provides students with clearer information about course requirements and expectations, reducing student anxiety (Kaur, 2021). This enables students to refer to the course syllabus when necessary, making it easier for them to fulfill their course obligations on time.
- 3** It provides an accessible and user-friendly resource where students can easily find and reference important information related to the course. (Kaur, 2021; Ludy et al., 2016).
- 4** According to the Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2017), as the amount of information to be processed increases, cognitive load also increases. Therefore, graphics that combine visual and textual content in the syllabus support learning and create a positive perception by reducing cognitive load (Nilson, 2006; Wickline et al., 2023).
- 5** Syllabus prepared using visual elements enables students to easily understand the information about the course and encode the information more effectively in their long-term memory.(Kaur, 2021; Ludy et al., 2016; Taves, 2023; Yarosh, 2021).
- 6** It offers a more inclusive learning experience by appealing to students with different learning styles and preferences (Biktimirov & Nilson, 2003).

Solution Suggestions -2

”What Should I Pay Attention to in Visual Syllabus Design?”

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“People learn better from words and pictures than from words alone.” (Mayer, 2014, p.394)

- 1 Reduce the amount of content in the visual syllabus, be selective, and include only the most essential information.
- 2 Ensure that the font size and style are easy to read and vary them only when necessary throughout the syllabus.
- 3 Use various design elements such as colors, visuals, static graphics, infographics, etc., to convey information to the audience and attract attention (Macintyre & Hamilton, 2010; Yarosh, 2021).
- 4 Ensure that words and images are arranged systematically to facilitate students' reading process and provide easier access to relevant information (Caviglioli, 2019).
- 5 Avoid "overdoing it". Don't overdo the use of lots of colors and different fonts.

6 Consider the **principles of multimedia design** when using design elements (Mayer, 2014).

- a. **The Multimedia Principle:** Simplify textual information that may create complexity or cognitive load by using various symbol systems such as static graphics, infographics, and visuals in a complementary manner (Dinç et al., 2023).
- b. **The Signaling Principle:** Consistently use signaling, such as coloring, bolding, or italicizing, only where the text needs to be highlighted.
- c. **The Spatial Contiguity Principle:** Present the visuals or graphics alongside the relevant text, if possible.
- d. **The Coherence Principle:** Avoid using unrelated elements, as this may impose cognitive load on students.
- e. **The Segmenting Principle:** Name and organize the content into appropriate sections to ensure that students can easily find the information they need.



You may also watch our previous tutorial on the multimedia principles to observe when designing course [materials here](#).

Solution Suggestions -3

“How Can I Integrate Visual Syllabus Into My Course?”

EE 303 FUNDAMENTALS OF POWER SYSTEMS

Faculty of Engineering / Electrical and Electronics Program
Fall 2023-24 / Course Visual Syllabus

COURSE DESCRIPTION

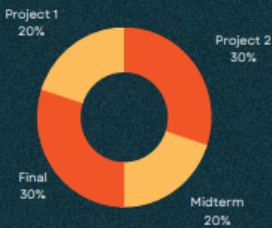
The students will learn the fundamental concepts of power systems and the economic operation of power grid. Course includes topics of phasor, real and reactive power concepts, magnetic circuits, transformers, admittance and network model, power flow solutions, economic operation of power grid, and power grid stability.

INSTRUCTOR

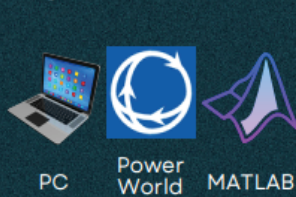
Asst. Prof.:



ASSESSMENT METHODS, WEIGHTS



TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS



RECOMMENDED BOOKS

1. John J. Grainger, William D. Stevenson, Jr., "Power System Analysis", McGraw-Hill International Editions, Inc., 1994.
2. Power System Analysis and Design, 5th Edition by J. Duncan Glover, Mulukutla S. Sarma, Thomas Overbye

GRADE BOOK

A	94.5 - 100
A-	94.49 - 89.50
B+	89.49 - 84.50
B	84.49 - 79.50
B-	79.49 - 74.50
C+	74.49 - 69.50
C	69.49 - 64.50
C-	64.49 - 59.50
D+	59.49 - 54.50
D	54.49 - 50.00

1

Considering that each student may have different learning styles, share the visual syllabus of the relevant course **alongside** your conventional syllabus.

2

Place the syllabus in an easily accessible place on the **LMS** page of the respective course and **clearly indicate** how students can access it.

3

During the first lesson, **review** the visual syllabus in detail and **emphasize its importance** to your students.

4

If students come to you about information found in the syllabus, advise them to refer to the syllabus first before providing a direct answer. This can encourage students to develop the **habit of referring to the syllabus** as their primary resource over time.

5

Get **feedback** from students about the usefulness and ease of use of the visual syllabus and improve the visual syllabus for the next semester.

Feedbacks



Instructor

"It is more appealing and user-friendly for students. The lesson has many sub-elements. The summary of all of them looks better in the visual syllabus. I would like to use visual syllabus in my future courses as well."

Students

- *"In my opinion, visual syllabi should be used in all courses. They are more impactful and memorable."*
- *"It would be great for the students if these syllabi could be used in other courses too! There are many things overlooked and forgotten in the conventional syllabus, leading to a loss of points. I had friends who failed different courses because of these overlooked things. However, this visual syllabus was very helpful for me to remember what I needed to do in the course."*



References

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