

Course Design Assistant

The Course Design Assistant is an institutional-grade, custom AI Copilot agent created to support RIT faculty in designing, revising, and optimizing their courses. It functions as a virtual peer instructional designer, providing immediate, evidence-informed guidance on course mapping, assignment sequencing, digital accessibility, and workload balance.



Core Architecture

The agent has been designed to pull from specific websites, including RIT web pages, and a Sharepoint repository of carefully curated articles related to best practices in instructional design, and teaching and learning. To further support course design in the RIT learning management system, web pages from myCourses (D2L Brightspace) are also part of the agent's knowledge base.

Key Features

- ✓ Enterprise-level data protection
- ✓ Constrained to 250 words per turn
- ✓ Curated knowledge sources
- ✓ Customized for busy faculty at RIT

How to Prompt the Agent

Generative AI is only as good as the prompt given to it. This Copilot agent was developed with the intent to remove some of the burden from the user in crafting a prompt. However, to get the most out of this tool, you can follow these simple guidelines:

- **Provide Clear Context:** Include essential details like your discipline, course level, and modality in your initial request so the assistant can tailor its guidance to your teaching environment.
- **Define Your Design Goal:** Clearly state the specific challenges you are addressing to receive targeted, actionable recommendations rather than general theory.
- **Leverage Your Existing Work:** Paste your current syllabus, text, rubric, or assignment prompts directly into the chat, and ask the assistant to revise them for clarity, tone, or alignment.
- **Specify Your Desired Output:** To save time, request the exact format you need so you can quickly integrate the advice into your course materials.

Suggested Prompts

The following prompts have been written to help you get started with the Course Design Assistant tool:

- **Scaffolding Assignments:** I want to break my large final paper into smaller, low-stakes scaffolded assignments. Can you give me a clean mapping table and some transparent syllabus language I can use to explain it to my students?
- **AI Integration & Transparency:** I am designing an assignment and want to allow students to use generative AI for brainstorming, but not for writing. How can I structure this using the AI Assessment Scale, and what syllabus language should I use?
- **myCourses (Brightspace) & UDL:** I want to organize my online myCourses (Brightspace) course modules to be more consistent and accessible. What is a recommended weekly module layout, and how can I ensure it meets Universal Design for Learning standards?
- **RIT Policy & Integrity:** I'm updating my syllabus policy section on academic honesty and accommodations. What is the standard RIT language or process I need to include for student integrity and DSO accommodations?
- **TILT Assignment Redesign:** Here is a current assignment prompt I use. Can you help me restructure it using the Transparency in Learning and Teaching framework (Purpose, Task, Criteria) so it is clearer for my first-year students? [Paste your assignment text here]
- **Digital Accessibility:** I am preparing my course materials and want to make sure my PDFs and online documents are fully accessible. What are 3 immediate, practical adjustments I can make to improve my course's digital accessibility?
- **Course Outline:** I am designing a 16-week face-to-face course. Can you help me map out a high-level weekly course outline that ensures alignment between weekly topics, readings, and major assignment milestones?
- **Workload Calibration:** I feel like my 16-week syllabus is packed with too many readings and lectures, and students are falling behind. How can I audit my course workload to find the right balance without sacrificing core learning goals?
- **Alternative Assessment:** I want to move away from traditional high-stakes exams in my course, but I still need to accurately assess student mastery. What are 2-3 inclusive, authentic alternative assessment models that align with UDL guidelines?
- **Syllabus Tone:** I want to revise the policy and introduction sections of my syllabus to sound more supportive and collaborative, rather than strictly punitive, while keeping RIT compliance intact. Can you look at this policy and give me a student-facing rewrite? [Paste policy text here]

Google Gemini was used for drafting portions of this user guide.