



MEMORANDUM

TO: University Faculty

FROM: Anne Veeger, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives

DATE: January 10, 2023

SUBJECT: Semester Information and Course Syllabus Guidance

Dear Faculty – We are looking forward to welcoming faculty and students back to campus for the spring semester and hope that you have had a chance to take some time to connect with family and friends during the intersession.

SPRING 2023 UPDATES

In light of current levels of influenza, Covid and RSV in the community at large, no changes have been made at this time to the university masking policy at this time:

MASK WEARING AT URI [as of January 9, 2023]: Although optional in most areas of URI's campuses, masks are still required in all classrooms, laboratories, and those spaces where direct academic instruction and research are taking place, unless the instructor or staff member expressly waives that requirement. Faculty who do not plan to waive the requirement are encouraged to have a supply of masks on hand for students who arrive to class without an appropriate face covering (see Mask Availability below). Students who do not comply with the masking requirement may be reported through the Student Conduct process (see [General Conduct Report](#)). Masking continues to be recommended for individuals who are immunocompromised or at high risk for disease, as well as for anyone who has a personal preference. We encourage everyone in the community to respect personal masking decisions. Masking requirements may change at a future date if warranted by community levels at URI or in the State. See Syllabus Statement section for suggested syllabus language.

MASK AVAILABILITY: The university makes both surgical and KN95 masks available to faculty. Masks can be requested through your Department Supply Lead [here](#).

ILLNESS-RELATED ABSENCES: Students, faculty and staff who have symptoms of viral illness (Covid, influenza, etc) should not come to campus or attend in-person classes/events/meetings. Faculty are entrusted to use their best judgment in making short-term adjustments to their courses to address illness-related absences such as alternative assignments, guest lecturers, student workgroups, remote delivery, etc. These short-term adjustments should be accessible and clearly communicated to your students, with notification also provided to your chair/program director and dean. Faculty have the flexibility to decide how best to accommodate student absences through the mechanisms detailed in [8.51.13 of the University Manual](#), and are encouraged to foster student success by providing easy access to course materials (course notes, recorded lectures, etc) or offering remote attendance if desired and appropriate to the course. Faculty should clearly outline class attendance and absence policies in their syllabus, bearing in mind that absences due to viral illness are expected. Students who are absent due to illness should not be penalized by grading or assignment/exam make-up policies. See syllabus section below for additional information.

ABSENCE NOTIFICATIONS: Faculty are asked not to require a note for classes missed due to illness. Mildly ill students who make appointments at Health Services in an effort to secure a faculty-required absence note take healthcare resources away from students who need timely medical attention. Last fall for example, student appointment requests exceeded the same-day service capacity of URI Health Services, resulting in multi-day appointment delays. Although faculty will continue to be notified by email if a student in their class is seen by Health Services and is medically unable to attend class for multiple days, students with mild viral illness and those who take a home-based COVID test generally do not need to see a doctor and should not be asked to do so in order to get note. Please emphasize to your class that staying home when ill protects the campus community and ethical conduct regarding these absences is expected.

NEWS & RESOURCES

- **DID YOU KNOW?** – Students who receive financial aid report that they want to purchase textbooks and course access codes from the URI Bookstore before the start of the semester using their financial aid. Unfortunately, they find that some faculty haven't submitted their course information to the bookstore. If texts and access codes aren't available through the URI bookstore, students must wait for a refund or use a credit card to purchase through an outside source. Please support student success by making your [course materials available through the URI bookstore](#).
- **Concerned about Chatbot GPT?** Student use of artificial intelligence (AI) platforms to complete course assignments has been the subject of a number of [recent news stories](#) ([and this one](#)). We plan to host a “conversation” about AI and academic integrity during the spring semester and will explore ways to avoid this type of academic integrity issue and even incorporate it into your assignments. AI for example, does a passable job constructing a Wikipedia-style response, but struggles with higher order responses such as compare and contrast or incorporating perspective into a response. Students can also be asked to generate a Chatbot GPT response, and then write a critique of the response, identifying inaccuracies, incomplete or confusing information, and adding course-appropriate context and examples.
- **Reducing barriers for students with disabilities** – Every qualified student with a disability has the right to equal access to educational programs, services, activities and facilities. Documentation-supported accommodations are communicated to faculty through a letter from Disability, Access and Inclusion (DAI), delivered by the student. Faculty are required to provide these accommodations and are encouraged to review the information on the [DAI website](#).
- **Disability, Access, and Inclusion Drop-In Hours** – Questions about student DAI accommodations? DAI staff are available each weekday from 10-11am and 3-4pm in their webex room: <https://rhody.webex.com/meet/DAI> or call 874-2098. Please also reach out to us at dai@uri.edu if you would like to discuss a **Workshop** for your department or colleagues, we can work with you to tailor this to your individual needs and interests.
- **Spring 2023 Academic Calendar and Final Exam Schedule** – Available [here](#). Classes begin on Monday, January 23. Spring Break is the week of March 13. Classes end on Monday May 1st.
- **Brightspace and Panopto Support** – visit <https://its.uri.edu/tls/>. New to Brightspace? Take the [self-paced Basic Brightspace Training Course](#).
- **ITS Support and Training** – Visit <https://its.uri.edu/training/> for information on upcoming training and drop-in support. The ITS Virtual Service Desk is a great way to get help quickly.
- *January 11, 19 and 24* – **Self-Merging Brightspace Sections into one course shell** – <https://its.uri.edu/training/>
- **Captioning Capabilities in URI Systems** – visit <https://its.uri.edu/tls/ada/> for information on live and post-production captioning.
- **Advancement for Teaching & Learning (ATL) Resources** – As you develop your courses and syllabi, please take advantage of the faculty development resources offered through the Office for the [Advancement of Teaching and Learning](#), including the [syllabus development](#), [course design](#), and [assessment design](#) resources. Visit the [ATL website](#) for their library of web-based resources, including the ATL Teaching Strategies and Techniques quick links - <https://web.uri.edu/atl/teaching/teaching-strategies-techniques/>.
- **Writing Across URI** - Monthly writing retreats; support for faculty writers; consultations on designing effective writing assignments; support for integrating Eli Review in any course. Contact writingacrossuri@etal.uri.edu or visit <https://web.uri.edu/writingacrossuri/> for more information.
- **Spring 2023 Academic Enhancement Center services begin 1/30/23**. Visit uri.edu/aec/ for information about the three programs that make up the AEC: STEM & BUS Tutoring, the Undergraduate Writing Center, and Academic Skills Development.
- **Academic Testing Center (ATC)** –The ATC offers a dedicated facility and professional proctoring support for faculty and students. Faculty are invited to submit requests for exams and quizzes for students with approved testing accommodations, excused absences, and culturally responsive assessments. Professors can create an account by completing an [enrollment form](#) and then [submit detailed exam requests](#) through the RegisterBlast portal once it is approved. Faculty, colleges, and departments interested in ATC services, unique needs, or expanded partnerships can contact Lisa Macaruso, lmacaruso@uri.edu, for a consultation.
- **Fall 2022 IDEA results** are available for review – web.uri.edu/provost/idea/. See [Reflective Teaching Practice & IDEA](#) from ATL for resources to incorporate into your reflective teaching practice.

STUDENT SUPPORT AND SUCCESS

SYLLABUS QUICK TIPS: Please visit web.uri.edu/atl/design/syllabus/ for syllabus resources from our colleagues in the Office of ATL.

- Set students up for success:
 - Clearly articulate what it takes to be successful in your course (how much time outside of class, how to approach the material, how to “study”, etc).
 - Encourage students to complete the [AEC Academic Success modules](#) to set themselves up for success in their courses.
 - Clearly indicate which software/technology platforms students will need to use in your course and where to find them.
 - Get to know your students: use a survey to ask them to share something about themselves that they would like you to know.
- Establish class conduct and communication expectations in collaboration with your students, including expectations regarding academic integrity, mask wearing, eating/drinking in class, and use of electronic devices in class.
- Be explicit, in writing, about what constitutes academic integrity in your course – common sources of confusion for example, are whether they can collaborate on homework/take-home tests, or look at (or share) exams from prior semesters.
- Be explicit, in writing, about your policies regarding use of your course materials (e.g. posting course materials to a third party site like Chegg).
- Clearly communicate class attendance/participation expectations.
 - Students should communicate illness-related absence in advance of missed class/assignment/assessment.
- Explicitly communicate options for accommodating illness-related absences, including missed work/exams.
 - If appropriate for your course, consider recording your class for later viewing. Students report that they find class recordings to be a helpful study resource, and this can also be helpful in the event of absences.
 - See [Grading for Equitable Learning](#) from ATL for resources on Grading and Student Assessment

SYLLABUS STATEMENTS: We ask you to include these statements (or similar) in your syllabi:

COVID/Viral Illness Precautions Statement: The University is committed to delivering its educational mission while protecting the health and safety of our community. As members of the URI community, students are required to comply with standards of conduct and take precautions to keep themselves and others safe.

- Masks are required in all classrooms, laboratories, and spaces where direct academic instruction and research are taking place, unless the instructor or staff member expressly waives that requirement.
- We strongly recommend surgical or higher grade masks where face coverings are required. Masks should be properly worn, well-fitting, and high quality.
- Students who do not comply with the classroom/lab masking requirement will be asked to leave class and will be reported through the [Student Conduct](#) process.
- Students who are experiencing symptoms of viral illness should NOT go to class/work. Those who test positive for COVID-19 should follow the [isolation guidelines](#) from the Rhode Island Department of Health and CDC.

If you are unable to attend class, please notify me prior to the start of class at 401/874-xxxx or xxx@uri.edu or through the medium we have established for the class.

Anti-Bias Syllabus Statement: We respect the rights and dignity of each individual and group. We reject prejudice and intolerance, and we work to understand differences. We believe that equity and inclusion are critical components for campus community members to thrive. If you are a target or a witness of a bias incident, you are encouraged to submit a report to the URI Bias Response Team at www.uri.edu/brt. There you will also find people and resources to help.

Disability, Access, and Inclusion Services for Students Statement: Your access in this course is important. Please send me your Disability, Access, and Inclusion (DAI) accommodation letter early in the semester so that we have adequate time to discuss and arrange your approved academic accommodations. If you have not yet established services through DAI, please contact them to engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations in the classroom. DAI can be reached by calling: 401-874-2098, visiting: web.uri.edu/disability, or emailing: dai@etal.uri.edu. We are available to meet with students enrolled in Kingston as well as Providence courses.

Academic Enhancement Center: The Academic Enhancement Center (AEC) offers face-to-face and online services to undergraduate students seeking academic support. Services are based out of Roosevelt Hall, the Carothers Library room LL004, and online. Peer tutoring is available for STEM & BUS-related courses through the Drop-In Center and small-group tutoring. The Writing Center peer consultants offer feedback focused on supporting undergraduate writers at any stage of a writing assignment. The UCS 160 course and one-to-one Academic Skills Consultations offer strategies for improving studying and test-taking skills. Complete details about each of these programs, up-to-date schedules, contact information, and self-service study resources are all available on the AEC website, uri.edu/aec.

- **STEM & BUS Tutoring** helps undergraduate students navigate a variety of 100 and 200 level STEM & BUS courses through free peer tutoring in-person and online. Students can select **occasional or weekly tutoring sessions** through the TracCloud system or visit the Drop-In Center, located in the Carothers Library lower level room LL004. The TracCloud application is available through URI Microsoft 365 single sign-on and more detailed information and instructions can be found at uri.edu/aec/tutoring.
- **Academic Skills Development** courses and programs teach students how to plan and apply time management and study strategies. **UCS 160: Success in Higher Education** is a one-credit course on strategic approaches to planning and studying. **UCS 161x: Becoming a Self Directed Student** teaches strategies for taking greater control over their academic work and lives. **Academic Consultations** are 1 to 1 meetings that help individual students to address their academic challenges. Students can schedule in-person or online consultations with [David Hayes on Starfish](mailto:davidhayes@uri.edu). **Study Your Way to Success** is a self-guided web portal connecting students to tips and strategies on studying and time management related topics. For information or help with scheduling, contact Dr. Hayes directly at davidhayes@uri.edu.
- **The Undergraduate Writing Center** provides peer writing support to students in any class, at any stage of the writing process: from understanding an assignment and brainstorming ideas, to developing, organizing, and revising a draft. Writing consultations are available through: 1) 25- or 50-minute **in-person appointments**, 2) synchronous **online appointments**, and 3) asynchronous **written feedback**. Synchronous appointments hosted by WCOonline are video-based, with audio, chat, document-sharing, and live captioning capabilities, to meet a range of accessibility needs. View availability and book online at uri.mywconline.com. For more information, visit uri.edu/aec/writing.

Graduate Writing Center (for graduate courses): The [Graduate Writing Center](http://uri.edu/aec/writing) provides writing support to all URI doctoral and master's students to foster continuing development of academic and professional writing skills necessary to succeed in graduate programs and academic or professional careers.

ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: To ensure that we are supporting the success of all students, course materials need to be accessible (e.g., videos, audio recording, texts, etc.) in face-to-face, blended and fully online courses.

The Office of Disability, Access, and Inclusion provides [resources for faculty and staff](#).

[ITS Instructional Technology and Media Services](#) provides information and support about [captioning video content](#). Adding captioning to video content is an essential step in making videos accessible to all viewers – especially for learners who are deaf or have low hearing. Captions are also shown to increase comprehension for students whose native language is different from what is spoken in the video.

UNIVERSITY MANUAL REQUIREMENTS

Please familiarize yourself with [Chapter 8](#) of the University Manual which contains important academic regulations.

Course Syllabus Requirement ([University Manual 8.50.30](#)) – According to the University Manual: “*All instructors shall make available a syllabus in the first week of class, or first day of class for fully-online accelerated programs (8.51.24), to students enrolled in each of their courses. Syllabi components should clearly communicate classroom policies, essential aspects of the course, and expectations of student participation.*”

In addition to satisfying Faculty Senate approved policies, your syllabus communicates mutual expectations between you and your students and serves as a roadmap to successful course completion, including your course scope, expectations, learning outcomes, deadlines, attendance policies, grading criteria, and other important information. Please provide students with information about assessment/major paper/project due dates, office hours, availability of special tutorial sessions, and expectations on individual vs group work. This clear outlining of expectations helps to ensure that students in your classes understand how they will be assessed and are fully aware of your academic standards. Providing such information can help avoid misunderstanding, frustration—on both sides—and foster acceptance of responsibility by our students.

RESOURCE NOTE: As you develop your courses and syllabi, please refer to the faculty development resources offered through the Office for the [Advancement of Teaching and Learning](#), including the [syllabus development](#), [course design](#), and [assessment design](#) resources.

The *University Manual* also contains information that is helpful in preparing your syllabus. I refer particularly to the following sections in [Chapter 8 of the Manual](#): [8.27.10-19](#) (plagiarism—instructor's responsibilities, judicial action, and student's responsibilities); [8.39.10-12](#) (attendance); and [8.51.10-27](#) (examinations). Each semester, issues are directed to this office that are addressed specifically in these sections.

Final Exams - Please pay special attention to section [8.51.16](#), which states the University's long-standing policy regarding administering examinations during the final week of classes -

... Final examinations are not required by the university, but any final examination, with the exception of take-home examinations, must be administered according to the final examination schedule prepared by the Office of Enrollment Services.Faculty members cannot administer an examination during the last five days classes are in session in lieu of a final examination, but must instead postpone such an examination to be administered according to the final examination schedule.

In order to avoid conflicts with final examinations, it is helpful to list the time of the final for your course in the syllabus and to provide students with the link to the final exam schedule so they can plan ahead. (Final exam schedule is posted at <https://web.uri.edu/academic-calendars/>). Please note that per the URI Faculty Senate, all final exam time blocks are 2 hours. Students will have a 1.5 hour break exam blocks.

OTHER TOPICS

FERPA - Please be aware in your communications with students and about a student's academic progress in your course, that FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) regulations prohibit any disclosure of “personally identifiable information” from a student’s “education record” without the prior written consent of the student. For more detailed information on FERPA regulations, please go to: security.uri.edu/policies/ferpa/

Video Capture – There are some privacy issues to consider for those faculty who are using video capture in their classrooms. If the video captures only the instructor and course materials, there are no privacy issues. If the video captures images or voices of your students AND you intend to use these recordings in another class or for any other purpose, students must be notified of this in advance on the syllabus and you must provide accommodations for students who do not wish to appear in class recordings.

Academic Integrity - Understanding the culture of source management and attribution in academe is a process of learning and relearning, with increasing complexity over time. Our goal is to better distinguish between intentional plagiarism or cheating, and making mistakes. URI’s Student Handbook web.uri.edu/studentconduct/student-handbook/ provides guidelines concerning academic honesty in this regard. Additional assistance is available at the [Writing Center](#) and the [Academic Enhancement Center](#). It may be useful to add a statement in your syllabi using the following language:

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student’s name on any written work, quiz or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student’s own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student’s own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty.

- *Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation*
- *Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently*
- *Unauthorized possession or access to exams*
- *Unauthorized communication during exams*
- *Unauthorized use of another’s work or preparing work for another student*
- *Taking an exam for another student*
- *Altering or attempting to alter grades*
- *The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams*
- *Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references*
- *Facilitating or aiding another’s academic dishonesty*
- *Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the instructors*

Students who engage in academic dishonesty should be reported through the Student Conduct process (see [General Conduct Report](#)).

Student Feedback – URI uses the [IDEA Diagnostic Feedback Instrument](#) to collect student feedback. As you develop your syllabus and course learning objectives, please think ahead to their alignment with IDEA course objectives that will be measured at the end of the semester (see list below). Incorporation of relevant learning objectives in your course syllabus is likely to yield more reliable and informative student feedback on the IDEA feedback form at the end of your course. Instructors will be able to set IDEA objectives for their courses during the last 6 weeks of the semester. While you may want your students to master many of the IDEA objectives, you should choose no more than 2 or 3 essential and 2 or 3 important objectives that are critical learning objectives for your course. Choosing a larger number of objectives will limit the usefulness of your feedback. The student response period begins ~2 weeks before the end of classes and closes at 11:59 pm on the last reading day; students can use a variety of devices e.g. (laptop, cell phone, tablet) and in order to maximize response rates, faculty are encouraged to provide 15 minutes at the beginning of a class for students to complete the IDEA survey. Results are available to Instructors, Chairs, and Deans two days after official grades are officially posted for the semester.

The 13 IDEA course objectives are listed below for your convenience (with links to IDEA resources):

1. [Gaining a basic understanding of the subject \(e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories\)](#)
2. [Developing knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives, global awareness, or other cultures](#)
3. [Learning to Apply Course Material \(to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions\)](#)
4. [Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course](#)
5. [Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team](#)
6. [Developing creative capacities \(inventing, designing, writing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.\)](#)
7. [Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity](#)
8. [Developing skill in expressing myself orally or in writing](#)
9. [Learning how to find, evaluate, and use resources to explore a topic in depth](#)
10. [Developing ethical reasoning and/or ethical decision making](#)
11. [Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view](#)
12. [Learning to apply knowledge and skills to benefit others or serve the public good](#)
13. [Learning appropriate methods for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting numerical information](#)

The Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning provides [support for setting your objectives and interpreting your results](#). If you would like to review the elements of the IDEA instrument, please go to: <https://www.ideaedu.org/Services/Student-Ratings-of-Instruction-Tools>. If you have questions about how the process works at URI or are looking for ways to increase response rates please visit: <https://web.uri.edu/provost/idea/>, or contact Sean Krueger at, skrueger@uri.edu.

Thank you for all the work you do supporting the success of your students and best wishes for a safe and productive semester.

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c: Academic Deans