


MEMORANDUM

TO: University Faculty

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

DATE: August 19, 2019

SUBJECT: Course Syllabus, Attendance Policy, Final Exam Policy, Syllabi Statements, etc.

This memo provides information intended to help you have a successful start to the semester.

Course Syllabus Requirement - Your course syllabus is an important document that introduces you and your course to your students, including your course scope, expectations, learning outcomes, deadlines, attendance policies, grading criteria, and other important information. Please note section 8.50.30 of 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 should serve as a roadmap to successful course completion. I urge you to provide students with as much information as possible about test schedules, office hours, availability of special tutorial sessions, and expectations on individual assignments. Providing such information can help avoid misunderstanding, frustration—on both sides—and foster a better acceptance of responsibility by our students. This clear outlining of expectations helps to ensure that students in your classes are fully aware of your academic standards and how they will be assessed during the course.

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: <https://web.uri.edu/teach/>, including the syllabus development resources <http://web.uri.edu/teach/syllabus/>. For other general information for faculty, please check out the following websites: <http://web.uri.edu/faculty/> and <https://web.uri.edu/atf/>.

The *University Manual* also contains information that will be helpful to you in preparing your syllabus. I refer particularly to the following sections: 8.39.10-12 (attendance); 8.51.11-14 (excused absences); 8.51.15 (examinations during the semester); 8.51.16 (final examinations); 8.27.10-19 (plagiarism—instructor's responsibilities, judicial action, and student's responsibilities); and 8.52.10 (grading criteria). Each semester, issues are directed to this office that are addressed specifically in these sections. A recent area of concern is the use of electronic equipment during class and examinations, e.g., cell phones, iPads, laptops, etc. It might be prudent to include guidelines related to their use in your syllabus.

The remainder of Chapter 8 contains other academic regulations that you will want to review in preparation for the new semester. The *University Manual* is available on the University website through the Faculty Senate webpage. (See <http://www.uri.edu/facsen/>)

Accessibility - To ensure that we are providing opportunities for all students to be successful, course materials need to be accessible to all students (e.g., videos, audios, texts, etc.) in both face-to-face and online courses. If you need help in determining solutions to accessibility issues, please contact the Office of Disability Services,

the Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, and/or ITS Instructional Technology and Media Services (<https://web.uri.edu/itms/>).

Student Support Services - It is helpful if you make students aware of special support services on your syllabus. Two important resources are the Office of Disability Services for Students and the Academic Enhancement Center.

A helpful Disability Services for Students statement could be as follows:

Your access in this course is important. Please send me your Disability Services for Students (DSS) 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 DSS, please contact them to engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations in the classroom. DSS in Kingston is located in room 302 of the Memorial Union, 401-874-2098, uri.edu/disability/, dss@etal.uri.edu. DSS in Providence is located in room 239 of the Shepard Building, 401-277-5221.

<https://web.uri.edu/disability/providence/>, dss@etal.uri.edu

Students could be encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to enrich their learning through the **Academic Enhancement Center** as follows:

This is a challenging course. Success requires that you keep pace with the work, understand course concepts, and study effectively. The Academic Enhancement Center helps URI students succeed through three services: Academic Coaching, Tutoring, and The Writing Center. To learn more about any of these services, please visit web.uri.edu/aec/ or call 401-874-2367 to speak with reception staff. In Providence, the Academic Skills Center (ASC) is at 239 Shepard Building, (401) 277-5221. Hours are posted each semester at <http://web.uri.edu/ceps/academic-skills-center/>

Final Exams - Please pay special attention to section 8.51.16, which states the University's long-standing policy against administering examinations during the final week of classes or at other inappropriate times. Specifically, it states the following:

... 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 schedule so they can plan ahead. (See exam schedule at <http://web.uri.edu/enrollment/academic-calendars/>)

FERPA - Please be aware in your communications with 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: <http://security.uri.edu/policies/ferpa/>

Video Capture – Additionally, there are some privacy issues to consider for those faculty who are using video capture in their classrooms in order to make recordings available to students for review. If the video captures only the instructor and course materials, there are no issues. If the video captures images or voices of your students AND you intend to use these recordings in another class or for any another 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 Honesty - 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 (<http://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

Student Evaluations of Teaching (IDEA) - As you develop your syllabus and course learning objectives, please think ahead to the 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 evaluation at the end of your course. Instructors will be able to set IDEA objectives for their courses between September 27th, at 11:59 pm and December 11th, at 11:59 pm. 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 evaluation feedback. The student evaluation period begins on November 25th at 11:59 pm and closes on December 11th at 11:59 pm. Results will become available December 30th at 11:59 pm for Instructors, Chairs, and Deans.

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 IDEA course evaluations are administered online during the final two weeks of the term and students are able to use a variety of devices e.g. (laptop, cell phone, tablet) to complete the evaluation. Faculty are encouraged to provide at least 15 minutes at the beginning of a class for students to complete their evaluation. We will continue to provide webinars, videos, and workshops to assist faculty in setting up their evaluations as well as in interpreting and using the 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 looking for ways to increase response rates please visit: web.uri.edu/provost/idea-procedure, or contact Sean Krueger at, skrueger@uri.edu.

Thank you for reading this very long but hopefully informative memo. A clear syllabus that includes expectations, objectives, and support opportunities is a significant tool in enhancing student learning and retention, which is a major concern for all of us.

Best wishes for an enjoyable and productive semester.