



MEMORANDUM

TO: University Faculty

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

DATE: January 6, 2020

SUBJECT: Course Syllabus and Semester Information

This memo provides a summary of information that you may find helpful as you develop your course syllabi and prepare for the coming semester.

NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- [2020 Academic Summit](#) – January 16th, 8:30 am – 3:00 pm – Who are our Students? How do they learn?
- Sakai is still the URI LMS (Learning Management System) for the Spring 2020 semester. Visit <https://web.uri.edu/brightspace/> for information and updates about the transition to Brightspace.
- Fall 2019 IDEA results are available for review - <https://web.uri.edu/provost/idea/>.
- [Spring 2020 Academic Calendar](#)

UNIVERSITY MANUAL REQUIREMENTS

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.

A topic of considerable recent debate, is the use of technology during class and examinations, e.g., cell phones, iPads, laptops, etc. You may wish to include guidelines related to their use in your syllabus.

If you are Interested in learning more on this topic, see article from Yale Poorvu Center on Teaching and Learning on Use of Electronic Devices in Class: <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/Using-Electronic-Devices-in-Class>.

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 resources](#) and the [Faculty Information](#) web page for links to information on teaching & advising, technology, research and administration/policies.

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. (See exam schedule at <https://web.uri.edu/enrollment/final-exam-schedules/>)

Please familiarize yourself with remainder of [Chapter 8](#), which contains important academic regulations.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Accessibility - 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 Services for Students](#) provides [resources for faculty and staff](#).

[The Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning](#) has developed a self-paced [accessibility training course](#), available in Sakai, for online and blended courses.

[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.

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 [Disability Services for Students syllabus statement](#) is provided by DSS:

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, web.uri.edu/disability/, dss@etal.uri.edu. DSS in Providence is in room 239 of the Shepard Building, 401-277-5221, 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](#), [STEM 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 web.uri.edu/ceps/academic-skills-center/

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: <http://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 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 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 (<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 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 evaluation at the end of your course. Instructors will be able to set IDEA objectives for their courses from late February until the last day of classes. 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 day of classes; 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 2 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: web.uri.edu/provost/idea-procedure, 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 an enjoyable and productive semester.

jvp

c: Academic Deans