



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** University Faculty

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

**DATE:** January 12, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Semester Information and Course Syllabus Guidance

Dear Faculty - As we approach the start of classes on January 24, we know that many of you have questions about our plans given the recent surge in cases associated with the Omicron variant. Visit [web.uri.edu/coronavirus/](http://web.uri.edu/coronavirus/) for the latest information about URI plans, including the January 6 message from President Parlange, and copies of all communications distributed by URI Communications. We continue to monitor conditions across the state and will adjust as needed, but we expect to resume in-person learning with the first day of classes on January 24.

## COVID-19 UPDATES

**COURSE MODALITY:** Courses should proceed this semester in the modality approved by the Faculty Senate and as listed in the course offerings when students registered. Faculty are entrusted to use their best judgment in making short-term adjustments to their courses so they can be attentive to any health issues at home and/or address significant student absenteeism due to illness. This will allow faculty to meet their commitments to both their families and students during this challenging time. Such adjustments might include alternative assignments, guest lecturers, student workgroups, remote delivery, etc. as during course interruptions in pre-Covid times. These short-term adjustments should be accessible and clearly communicated to students enrolled in the course with notification also provided to your chair and dean.

**COVID ABSENCE ACCOMMODATIONS:** Any student who indicates that they are experiencing COVID-like symptoms of illness should get tested at URI Health Services. Faculty will be notified by email if a student in their class is medically unable to attend class for multiple days. Faculty have the flexibility to decide how best to accommodate student absences through the mechanisms detailed in [8.51.13 of the University Manual](#). Faculty are not being asked to implement multiple concurrent teaching modalities in their courses but may offer a remote attendance or recorded lecture option if desired and appropriate to the course. Faculty are encouraged to clearly outline their class attendance/absence policies on their syllabus.

**VACCINATION BOOSTER REQUIREMENT:** All eligible URI students and employees are required to submit proof that they have received their vaccine booster shot. Details about the requirement and instructions are available [here](#).

**COVID VACCINATIONS/BOOSTERS AVAILABLE ON THE KINGSTON CAMPUS:** URI is hosting [vaccination/booster clinics](#) in January and February. The clinics are free and open to students, faculty, and staff. Vaccinations are also readily available [throughout the State](#).

**COVID TESTING:** All students, regardless of vaccination status, are required to submit a negative point-of-origin COVID test prior to returning to campus. Students, faculty and staff who are unvaccinated, with an approved exemption, are required to participate in regular [surveillance testing](#) either through URI or at an off-site location if coming to Kingston is not convenient. Vaccinated community members continue to have barrier-free access to surveillance testing. [Symptomatic testing](#) will be available daily, including weekends for members of the URI community with any symptoms. Free testing is also available for faculty, staff and students at state-run testing sites across RI, including [locations](#) convenient to our campuses.

**UPDATED ISOLATION/QUARANTINE GUIDANCE:** URI is updating its isolation and quarantine guidance following the updated CDC recommendations. The revised policy will be released the week of January 17. Students, faculty, and staff will be required to isolate for five days, and if symptoms have improved or resolved, may return to classes/work while

taking extra precautions, including wearing a well-fitting KN95 mask, for an additional five days. Vaccinated individuals identified as a close contact are not required to quarantine but must wear a mask when around others.

**UNIVERSAL INDOOR MASK REQUIREMENT:** [Universal indoor masking](#) remains required of all community members, on all campuses, regardless of vaccination status. We strongly recommend surgical or higher grade masks in all indoor campus spaces. [Masks should be properly worn, well-fitting, and high quality](#). Students who do not comply with the universal masking requirement may be reported through the Student Conduct process (see [General Conduct Report](#)).

**KN95 AND SURGICAL MASK AVAILABILITY:** The university is making both surgical and KN95 masks available to faculty. Faculty may request a supply of surgical masks to distribute to students who arrive to class without an appropriate face mask. Masks can be requested through your Department Supply Lead as described [here](#).

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## NEWS & RESOURCES

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- **URI Writing Award** - The **Third Annual University of Rhode Island Writing Award** celebrates the best writing produced by both URI undergraduate and graduate students. Awards of up to \$1,000 will be made in these categories: research, creative, advocacy, and science. **Faculty recommendations** are often critical in encouraging students to recognize themselves as good writers. If you can recommend any current student(s) for this writing award, please direct them to [Writing Across URI](#) for more information, or send an email including their name(s) to [writingacrossuri@etal.uri.edu](mailto:writingacrossuri@etal.uri.edu). Thank you for supporting URI's student writers!
- **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.
- **Spring 2022 Academic Calendar** – Available [here](#). Classes begin on Monday, January 24.
- **2-HR Final Exam Time Blocks Reminder** - Starting in Fall 2021, per the URI Faculty Senate, all final exam time blocks are 2 hours, with 1.5 hours between exam blocks. The final exam schedule is available [here](#).
- **Brightspace Course Shell Availability** – All course shells were available in Brightspace as of the end of November. If you need help, attend one of the [TLS Ed Tech Faculty drop-in Zoom](#) sessions. Support for Brightspace is available [here](#). New to Brightspace? Take the [self-paced Basic Brightspace Training Course](#).
- **Fall 2021 IDEA results** are available for review - [web.uri.edu/provost/idea/](http://web.uri.edu/provost/idea/). See [Reflective Teaching Practice & IDEA](#) from ATL for resources to incorporate into your reflective teaching practice.
- **New Advancement for Teaching & Learning (ATL) Website** – Visit the new [ATL website](#) to learn about what they have to offer and to access their library of web-based resources, including the ATL Teaching Strategies and Techniques quick links - <https://web.uri.edu/atl/teaching/teaching-strategies-techniques/>
- **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>
- **Academic Enhancement Center Drop-In Support:** The AEC Drop-In Center has relocated to their new location in Carothers Library lower level, room LL004. Students are welcome to visit the Drop-In Center for STEM and BUS course content tutoring. Writing Consultants will also be on staff in the evenings to support undergraduate student writers. Please visit their website for details and full schedule at [uri.edu/aec/tutoring](http://uri.edu/aec/tutoring). Tutoring support begins 1/31/22.
- **Academic Testing Center** – The ATC is back! *Did you know that from Nov 2 – Dec 21 the ATC proctored 335 exams saving faculty 754.5 HOURS of test time?* The **Academic Testing Center** (ATC) offers a dedicated facility and professional proctoring support for faculty and students. Faculty are invited to submit requests for exams, quizzes, and assessments for students with approved testing accommodations, URI sanctioned make-ups, and excused absences. Professors can create an account by completing an [enrollment form](#) and then [submit detailed exam requests](#) through the RegisterBlast portal once it is approved. The ATC will reopen on January 24 and offer expanded testing sessions Monday-Friday - including evenings. Enroll and send us your request today!

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## STUDENT SUPPORT AND SUCCESS

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**SYLLABUS QUICK TIPS FOR SPRING:** Please visit [web.uri.edu/atl/design/syllabus/](http://web.uri.edu/atl/design/syllabus/) for syllabus resources from our colleagues in the Office of ATL.

- Clearly indicate which technology platforms students will need to use in your course and where to find them.
- Set students up for success by clearly articulating 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 spring courses.

- 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.
- 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 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.

- **Universal indoor masking is required of all community members, on all campuses and in university vehicles, regardless of vaccination status.**
- We strongly recommend surgical or higher grade masks in all indoor campus spaces. Masks should be properly worn, well-fitting, and high quality.
- Students who do not comply with the indoor masking requirement will be asked to leave class and will be reported through the [Student Conduct](#) process.
- Students who are experiencing symptoms should NOT go to class/work until they have received a negative test; or if they test positive, after they have completed the required isolation period. Those who test positive for COVID-19 should follow updated [isolation guidelines](#) from the Rhode Island Department of Health and CDC. Please visit the Health Services website for the most up-to-date [symptomatic testing schedule](#).

If you are unable to attend class, please notify me prior to the start of class at 401/874-xxxx or [xxx@uri.edu](mailto: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](http://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](http://web.uri.edu/disability), or emailing: [dai@etal.uri.edu](mailto: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 **beginning Monday, January 31st, 2022**. Services are based out of Roosevelt Hall, the Carothers Library room LL004, and online. Peer tutoring is available for STEM-related courses through drop-in centers 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](http://uri.edu/aec).

- **STEM Tutoring** helps undergraduate students navigate a variety of 100 and 200 level STEM courses and a limited selection of BUS, STA, ECN, and CSC courses. The STEM Tutoring program offers free online and in-person peer tutoring. Students can select **occasional or weekly tutoring appointments** through the TutorTrac system or visit the Drop-In Center, located in the Carothers Library lower-level room LL004. The TutorTrac application is available through [URI Microsoft 365](#) single sign-on and by visiting [aec.uri.edu](http://aec.uri.edu). More detailed information and instructions can be found at [uri.edu/aec/tutoring](http://uri.edu/aec/tutoring).

- [Academic Skills Development](#) programs teach students how to manage time, study effectively, and address common academic challenges. **UCS 160: Success in Higher Education** is a one-credit course focused on developing strategic approaches to planning and studying. **Academic Consultations** are 1 to 1 meetings that help students to identify and address individual academic challenges. Students can schedule an in-person or online consultation with [David Hayes on Starfish](#). **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](mailto: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. Spring 2022 consultations are available through: 1) 25- or 50-minute **in-person appointments**, 2) synchronous **online appointments**, and 3) asynchronous **next-day written feedback**. Synchronous appointments hosted by WC Online 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](http://uri.mywconline.com). For more information, visit [uri.edu/aec/writing](http://uri.edu/aec/writing).

**Graduate Writing Center (for graduate courses):** The [Graduate Writing Center](#) 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

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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.

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. (Final exam schedule is posted at [web.uri.edu/enrollment/final-exam-schedules/](http://web.uri.edu/enrollment/final-exam-schedules/)). Please note that starting in Fall 2021 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

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**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/](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 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/](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*

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](mailto: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.

jvp  
c: Academic Deans