



**Office of the Provost and
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs**

University of Massachusetts Boston
100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125-3393
P 617.287.5600 | F 617.287.5600 | umb.edu

December 20, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR: All Faculty, Deans, Department Chairs, and Program Directors

FROM: Joseph B. Berger, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Minimum Faculty Responsibilities & Recommended
Syllabus Language for Spring 2024

As we embark on the Spring semester of academic year 2023-2024, I take this opportunity to remind you that every faculty member is responsible for contributing to the health and well-being of our students in addition to fulfilling our mission through basic and best practices that promote meaningful educational experiences for students. To help us all have up-to-date information about these practices and our shared commitments to them, I am providing a summary of these here to reaffirm their importance to our students, the faculty, and the university.

OFFICE HOURS

All full-time faculty members must schedule, post, and keep regular office hours. A minimum of three hours per week is required, with additional hours offered during peak advising times. I urge faculty to be especially generous with their time as students may need advice and counsel about how to succeed in their goals. Part-time faculty members should schedule office hours in proportion to the number of courses taught (e.g., one hour per week for those teaching one course). Additional office hours may be scheduled by appointment. Faculty may hold virtual office hours if the students have written instructions that are available throughout the semester about scheduling and attending virtual scheduled office hours.

COURSE SYLLABI

During the first week of classes faculty members are required to provide their department chairs with a syllabus for each course that they are teaching this semester.

Please note that at its October 2023 meeting, the Faculty Council recommended that all syllabi include one of two statements concerning the use or restriction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the course.

The two possible statements offered from the *Faculty Council (Minutes for Monday, October 02, 2023, pp. 6-7)* are:

- **AI is prohibited:** In this class, all work submitted by students must be generated by the students themselves, whether working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person or entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment; this includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and using AI tools like ChatGPT. All work submitted must contain citations for any material that has been quoted or referenced. If students are unsure about whether or not a source is appropriate to use in the assignment, they should contact the instructor.
- **AI is allowed with attribution:** Use of AI tools, including ChatGPT, is permitted in this course on certain assignments [either detail assignments or types of assignments here, or clarify how they will know which ones!]. To adhere to our scholarly values and to the Student Code of Conduct, students must cite any AI-generated material that informed their work; citations should include not only in-text citations and listing in the references, but also the full text of cited ChatGPT (or other Large Language Model (LLM) generator) as an appendix to the assignment. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution qualifies as academic dishonesty. Students are also responsible for making sure that any AI generated text does not contain false or erroneous information. If students are unsure about whether or not a source is appropriate to use in the assignment, they should contact the instructor.

CLASS INSTRUCTIONAL MODE

All class sections for the Spring 2024 semester have been scheduled, approved, and listed on WISER to be offered via the most appropriate instructional mode – in-person, hybrid, BeaconFlex, remote, or online. **The instructional mode of a class section may not be changed without the approval of the department chair and dean.**

MISSED CLASSES

Planned Absences: All planned absences by instructors for professional or personal reasons must be approved in advance by the department chair (or dean or designee in schools and colleges without a departmental structure). In such cases, the instructor is responsible for arranging make-up classes or providing alternative instructional activities. **Unplanned Absences:** In addition to unplanned absences (e.g., medical procedures, unexpected family crisis, unplanned community emergencies), an instructor may not be able to teach a class, or too many students need to miss class or cannot attend a face-to-face class meeting for a particular reason. However, in these situations, we must be equally vigilant about our students' learning. Based on consultative work with deans, department chairs, and graduate program directors, the following framework guides how we will be advocates for both community health *and* quality learning when such situations inevitably arise.

As a matter of practice, we expect that the following will be addressed diligently when in-person learning cannot safely proceed for a brief period:

- The instructor communicates the potential impact to students and informs them that a careful plan to continue instruction will be implemented to minimize disruption to students' learning;
- The instructor arranges for a contingent learning path – a well-defined plan is needed that identifies how the contact hours will be covered for the impacted class session(s), including identifying an alternate instructor when necessary;

- The instructor coordinates implementation of the plan in consultation with the department chair
 - for most classes which are face-to-face (F2F), this includes identifying a point person who goes to the assigned F2F classroom as a resource to help ensure that students who do show up have all the information they need. If the class is proceeding remotely, students who are in the F2F classroom can join remotely while they are in the classroom.

Departments and faculty are strongly advised to consider in advance how to enact a contingent learning plan that is most appropriate for their courses when such situations arise.

Time period of absence from teaching a particular course/section**	Decision-making authority	Required Sequence of Reporting
A week or less	Department Chair	Instructor makes a request to the Department Chair. The Department Chair conveys details of the request to Dean and plans for ensuing communication to students about the instructor's absence. Instructor or Department Chair (with CC to the other) informs students of continued learning plans that have been provided by the instructor. Dean's Office tracks approved requests with weekly reporting to the Provost's Office.
Up to two weeks	Dean's Office	Same as above, except that the Provost's Office should be informed as soon as such a request is approved to coordinate with the Registrar's Office, who will place information about the temporary change in WISER for students. A contingency plan must be developed and provided to the Provost's Office if the instructor does not return to F2F at the end of the two-week period.
More than two weeks	Provost's Office	The Dean's Office provides the Provost's Office with the anticipated dates of absence, the learning plan, and contingency arrangements if the instructor's absence extends for longer than the anticipated absence. The Dean and Department Chair ensure that students' pedagogical needs are being met. Department Chair informs students of continued learning plans (with CC to instructor and forward afterward to Dean and Provost). Provost's Office will coordinate with the Registrar's Office.

**While each request will be reviewed on its own merits, if an instructor seeks approval for a second week during the same semester (i.e., weeks are viewed as cumulative, not necessarily consecutive), the decision-making authority becomes the Dean; if more than two weeks, the decision-making authority becomes the Provost's Office.

Student Absences:

In general, when students are absent for extended periods, including when they are directed by University Health Services to isolate or quarantine, they should confer directly with their instructors to inform them of the absence and to determine the best course of action, which may include working out arrangements for missed classes and making up coursework, and in some cases might necessitate withdrawing from a course. Staff in the Dean of Students Office and professional advisors in college

advising centers and the University Advising Center can help students who have multiple sequential absences collaborate with their instructors and make plans to complete their courses.

The excused absence policy and recent amendments to the policy may be viewed here: <https://www.umb.edu/registrar/policies/attendance>. Nonetheless, I bring to your attention the following brief synopsis: When a student has excused absences that involve external documentation and/or when students are very ill and would like assistance to communicate the absence and guidance on working with their instructors on making arrangements, there is a mechanism for students to provide a notification of the absence ([Notice of Absence Form](#)), following which all of the student's instructors are notified of the student's absence by staff in the Dean of Students office.

As part of our commitment to becoming a health-promoting and student-centered university, instructors should accommodate students with excused absences to the greatest extent possible, particularly given the circumstances and the inevitable increase in absences. Instructors can support students by the following actions:

- Plan for student success in courses given the inevitability of student absences.
- Communicate in syllabi what students should do when they are absent (see recommended syllabus sections that are attached as a Word document with this letter).

When students have multiple sequential absences, instructors are asked to report concerns to the Dean of Students staff and professional advisors so they can follow up with students.

FINAL EXAMINATIONS AND SUBMISSION OF GRADES

Faculty members are obligated to restrict the administration of final examinations to the official examination period, which for the Spring 2024 semester is May 13 through May 17, 2024. The final examination period for the Spring 2024 semester is posted on the UMB website and exam dates and times will also be posted in WISER for faculty and students. Faculty members may not, therefore, administer final examinations during the last week of classes or during the study period. Please be reminded, also, that a timely submission of grades is required. For the Spring semester, the deadline is May 24, 2024 online. The timeliness of grades submission is particularly essential for students who are graduating, continuing their education at another institution, or updating academic progress status for financial aid eligibility.

ATTENDANCE AT COMMENCEMENT

Attendance by faculty at Commencement is defined as a minimum faculty responsibility by the FSU collective bargaining agreement, article 15.13. Please arrange travel and research plans to accommodate this responsibility and to allow you to celebrate your students fully at this culminating moment in their educational paths. They and their families, and friends will appreciate your attendance deeply.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities must be afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, all postsecondary education programs and activities (including any course, program of study, or activity offered). Rules or policies that would limit students with disabilities from participating fully in a program or activity may not be imposed. Academic standards should not be compromised, but accommodation must be provided to afford qualified students with disabilities an equal education

opportunity. The Ross Center for Disability Services determines accommodations by reviewing pertinent documentation from qualified medical care providers and consultation with the student. Faculty members should *not*, however, provide any form of academic accommodation for students with disabilities without approval from the Ross Center for Disability Services. Instead, faculty members should refer students who seek accommodations due to a disability to the Ross Center. Faculty collaboration with the Ross Center is strongly encouraged. If questions or concerns arise about the implementation of reasonable accommodation, please contact the Ross Center at 617-287-7430. Information on faculty responsibilities and rights is available on the Ross Center website.

STUDENT-ATHLETES

As a result of competition schedules, it may be necessary for student-athletes to miss an occasional (or partial) day of class. Faculty are expected to be sensitive to the pressures on students created by competition schedules and to accommodate them in ways that do not disadvantage student-athletes vis-à-vis others in their classes. Aside from absences due to competition, student-athletes are expected to attend all classes. They are also expected to make appropriate arrangements with instructors to make up tests and other assignments missed due to travel.

Thank you for your cooperation in supporting and adhering to these practices. I know that, collectively, the faculty takes its responsibilities very seriously. I view the requirements for holding office hours, distributing course syllabi, meeting all classes, notifying chairs of planned or unplanned absences, making arrangements for missed classes, administering final examinations during the designated examination period only, and attending Commencement as falling under the “minimum assigned duties” referenced in the faculty collective bargaining agreement. I seek the cooperation of department chairs and deans in ensuring that these duties are fulfilled in all instances.

Recommended Syllabus Sections

Office of the Provost

December 20, 2023

Syllabi provide important information to students about their courses, our expectations for members of the campus community, and the resources and support services that are available. We ask that faculty provide syllabi to students that are inclusive and accessible. The Health, Wellbeing, and Success section has been updated since August 2021 to bring it up to date with the current COVID-19 situation and guidance. Please update the language in your syllabi.

Below you will find recommended language for two sections of syllabi, accommodations and academic integrity, which are provided to faculty each year by Provost's and Deans' offices. Based on the recommendation of faculty, you will find an additional recommended section focused on health-promoting resources and online resources that were expanded during remote operation and that continue to be relevant.

This document is being provided in Word document format to facilitate copy pasting the information below into syllabi.

Accommodations

UMass Boston is committed to creating learning environments that are inclusive and accessible. If you have a personal circumstance that will impact your learning and performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible, so we can discuss the best ways to meet your needs and the requirements of the course. If you have a documented disability, or would like guidance about navigating support services, contact the Ross Center for Disability Services by email (ross.center@umb.edu), phone (617-287-7430), or in person (Campus Center, UL Room 211). To receive accommodations, students must be registered with the Ross Center and must request accommodations each semester that they are in attendance at UMass Boston. For more information visit: www.rosscenter.umb.edu. Please note that the Ross Center will provide a letter for your instructor with information about your accommodation only and not about your specific disability.

Academic Integrity and Student Code of Conduct

Education at UMass Boston is sustained by academic integrity. Academic integrity requires that all members of the campus community are honest, trustworthy, responsible, respectful, and fair in academic work at the university. As part of being educated here, students learn, exercise, increase, and uphold academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential within all classrooms, in the many spaces where academic work is carried out by all members of the UMass Boston community, and in our local and global communities where the value of this education fulfills its role as a public good. Students are expected to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct, including policies about academic integrity, delineated in the University of Massachusetts Boston Graduate Studies Bulletin, Undergraduate Catalog, and relevant program student handbook(s), linked at www.umb.edu/academics/academic_integrity.

Health, Wellbeing, and Success

UMass Boston is a vibrant, multi-cultural, and inclusive institution committed to ensuring that all members of our diverse campus community are able to thrive and succeed. The university provides a wide variety of resources to support students' overall success. As we continue to deal with the evolving impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, these resources are more important than ever.

- Are you in emotional distress? Call 617.287.5690 to speak with a licensed clinician 24/7 who can offer support, crisis recommendations, and assistance with finding resources.
- Have a campus question or issue? Use Here4U in the UMass Boston app or via www.umb.edu/here4U.
- Need help with food insecurity, legal consultation, financial counseling or emergency supplies? Contact U-ACCESS (<https://www.umb.edu/campus-life/current-students/u-access/>)
- Want advice in navigating a university or life situation? Contact the Dean of Students Office at www.umb.edu/deanofstudents.
- Want to connect with housing and food insecurity support, student life groups and events, or recreation activities? Visit www.umb.edu/life.
- Want to access resources specifically for immigrant-origin, DACA, TPS, and undocumented students? Visit www.umb.edu/immigrant.
- Looking for additional identity-based community support? Find more resources at www.umb.edu/identity-support
- Want to make the most of your academic experience? Visit www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/academic_support.
- Unable to attend class on a specific date or participate in an exam or class requirement due to a religious observance? Fill out the excused absence form (requires 2-weeks' notice) to request religious accommodation at www.umb.edu/religiousabsence.