

NEW 2024 University Syllabus Requirements!

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Office of the Provost

**STEARNS CENTER FOR
TEACHING AND LEARNING**

George Mason University®

Syllabus Guidance for Fall 2024

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome back! The Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning continues to collaborate with units across campus to support you in whatever modality your teaching occurs in Fall 2024.

A [new catalog policy](#) this year spells out university requirements for all syllabi. So even if you are familiar with most of George Mason University's resources and procedures, please take a few minutes to review this email and the linked resources.

On behalf of the entire Stearns Center, I wish you a smooth start to your semester and engaging conversations with your students and colleagues.

Shelley

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NEW SYLLABUS REQUIREMENTS FOR FALL 2024

In Fall 2023, Faculty Senate updated the [GMU Catalog Policy AP.2.5](#) with two requirements. All syllabi need to include some basic structural elements, and all syllabi

need to include the Common Policy Addendum. Most faculty will find that you are already meeting these basic guidelines, and so you will have few adjustments to make.

- **Please review the Checklist of Required Syllabus Information** to be sure that you are providing the required information to your students. You may
 - Refer to our [online checklist](#), (under Required Syllabus Information) or
 - Download our [PDF checklist](#) for your reference, or
 - Download our [document sample template](#) and guide to help you build your syllabus

- **Please ensure that you are providing all students with the required Common Policy Addendum.** These four policies need to be presented to students using the language provided here. You may
 - Link students to [this online page](#), or
 - Download [this PDF](#) to include in your course materials, or
 - Download [this editable document](#) to add the exact required language to your print or online policies

UPDATED STEARNS CENTER RESOURCES

We are continuing to update our “Instructor’s Guide to **AI Text Generators** (e.g. ChatGPT)” and our “[Contingency Planning Guide](#)” (strategies you can employ now to help you adapt to weather or illness in your class this semester).

You can see our updated [Classroom Guide](#) pages for photographs and list of resources and technologies for any of your on-campus classroom(s).

UPDATES TO ACADEMIC STANDARDS POLICIES

Beginning Fall 2024, George Mason University is replacing all language about Academic Integrity and the Honor Code with updated language and policies about Academic Standards. Please familiarize yourself with the [GMU Catalog Policy about Academic Standards](#), and watch for more resources from the Academic Standards Office this fall.

ADDITIONAL STEARNS CENTER SYLLABUS RESOURCES

As you’re finishing your syllabi, we hope you will review our **updated page with resources for [designing your syllabus](#)** that highlight critical components for your syllabus and provide links to relevant resources. You might want to use information here to help you

- Inform students about any **technological requirements** they may need in order to access portions of your course via Blackboard or Canvas, to use streaming applications such as Blackboard Collaborate or Zoom, or to complete an exam via Honorlock or Respondus Lockdown Browser
- Adapt your **syllabus schedule** to specific holidays
- Describe your commitment to, and course design elements that support, a welcoming and **inclusive learning environment**
- Articulate your **policies regarding Generative AI tools** so that students are aware of your expectations and reasons

RESOURCES FOR DESIGNING IN CANVAS OR BLACKBOARD

RECOMMENDED LMS SYLLABUS STATEMENT

As the university transitions from Blackboard to Canvas, it is crucial to keep students informed about which learning management system (LMS) you will be using this semester. Clear communication will help minimize confusion and ensure that students can access course materials and resources without issues. To assist in this process, please include the statement below in any communications you send in preparation for the semester or on your syllabus. By proactively sharing this information, you will help facilitate a smoother transition for your students and contribute to a more effective learning experience.

Important Notice: This course will be hosted on [Blackboard/Canvas] for the Fall 2024 semester. Please ensure you are familiar with accessing and navigating this platform. Resources and support are available at: <https://lms.gmu.edu/getting-started-students/> to help you get started. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to me or contact the ITS Support Center for assistance.

Instructors who are using Canvas during the Fall 2024 semester, or preparing for Spring 2025, can find information and resources at <https://lms.gmu.edu>

- All faculty are invited to participate in the [August Bootcamp](#), August 13-14-15
- Additional all-campus training events will take place on Canvas Day, Wednesday October 16, as well as through additional “bootcamps” in December and January
- Faculty are invited to consult with a trained, experienced Canvas Faculty Mentor to talk about strategies relevant to the courses and students they (will) teach (scroll down on this page to see the mentors and sign up for a time)

Instructors who are using Blackboard can refer to our resources

- Our [Teaching Information Landing Page](#) directs faculty to resources for teaching face-to-face, teaching via synchronous web-conferencing (e.g., Zoom/Collaborate), and/or teaching using asynchronous online materials (Blackboard)
- Our [New to Blackboard](#) resource collection includes instructions for uploading the Stearns Center recommended course template or requesting a “sandbox” so you can practice your course design

- Our [Webinars and Trainings](#) page gives information about how to contact us with questions or to arrange a consultation, as well as listings for upcoming and previously recorded events, including short workshops on specific tools like Zoom

TEACH INCLUSIVELY AND SUPPORT STUDENT NEEDS

At George Mason we remain committed to providing a safe learning, living, and working environment that embraces our diversity and is free from discrimination. We provide resources for faculty, students, and campus offices as they implement policies and provide learning opportunities that include all students at the university.

You may find the following resources helpful:

- [The Student Support and Advocacy Center \(SSAC\)](#) can assist you in helping Mason students seek support services and explore healthy lifestyle choices. They offer educational programming, one-on-one consultations, and resources in the areas of interpersonal violence, personal wellness, and alcohol and drug use; they also assist students encountering barriers to personal success. If you are concerned about a student, please review the SSAC's [guide for faculty](#) and consider making a referral (form available from their website).
- The Stearns Center's advice for faculty on "[Creating Inclusive Classrooms](#)" at Mason can assist you in creating a vibrant and dynamic learning community for your students, one that includes ample opportunities for exploration of self, identity and independence.
- [GMU's Diversity Statement](#) and [GMU's Non-Discrimination Policy](#) affirm our belief that student diversity is an invaluable asset for enriching the learning that happens in our courses (whatever modalities we may use).
- The [calendar of religious holidays and observations](#) can help you anticipate and minimize difficulties for students of different faiths. (It is the student's responsibility to speak to the instructor in advance should their religious observances affect their participation in class activities and assignments — but we encourage all faculty to be proactive in limiting conflicts and reaching out to students to let them know how best to succeed in your course.)
- You should be aware of how to report incidents of sexual misconduct to the [University Title IX Coordinator](#). Mason is committed to creating a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and incidents of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. As a faculty member, you are required to report any such incidents you become aware of on campus. When you do so, you will be made aware of the range of options and resources available to you and your students.

We have identified a number of other [student support resources](#) to facilitate student success in and beyond the classroom; by including information or links regarding relevant resources for students in your course materials, you can help promote their learning and well-being.

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