



**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

August 18, 2026

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

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

SUBJECT: Minimum Faculty Responsibilities & Recommended
Syllabus Language for Fall 2026

As we embark on the Fall semester of academic year 2026-2027, 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 per course). Additional office hours may be scheduled by appointment. Faculty may hold virtual office hours if clear instructions in the course syllabus are provided to the students.

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.

CLASS INSTRUCTIONAL MODE

All class sections for the Fall 2026 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. **Once posted in WISER, the instructional mode of a class section may not be changed without the approval of the department chair, dean, and provost.**

MISSED CLASSES

Planned Absences: All planned absences by instructors require prior approval from 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: Unplanned absences must be handled in a manner that ensures clear instructional continuity for students, including providing prompt communication with students, ensuring hours of instruction are met, and coordinating with the department chair or dean. For additional information on instructor absences, please refer to the Absence Policy.

Student Absences:

Students are responsible for adhering to course attendance policies and should communicate directly with their instructors regarding absences and arrangements for missed work. Staff in the Dean of Students Office and professional advisors in college advising centers and the Academic & Career Engagement & Success Center (ACES) can help students who have multiple sequential absences collaborate with their instructors and make plans to complete their courses. 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.

The Excused Absence policy may be viewed here: <https://www.umb.edu/registrar/policies/attendance>. When a student has excused absences that involve external documentation or serious illness the student can submit the [Notice of Absence Form](#), after which the Dean of Students Office will notify all of the student's instructors.

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 Fall 2026 semester is December 14 through December 18, 2026. The final examination period for the Fall 2026 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 Fall semester, the deadline is December 28, 2026. 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.

EARLY ALERTS

Please "Save the Date" to submit Fall 2026 alerts when mid-term rosters open between Monday, October 5th, and Monday, October 26th. Faculty can submit mid-term grades from the Canvas gradebook or using the Mid-term Grade function in WISER. In addition, please consider adding a note about the Early Alert program to your syllabi to indicate that you will be submitting alerts for your students. You may also want to share a rubric with your class indicating what a "satisfactory," "caution," and "in danger of failing" alert means in the context of your course and grading system. For Early Alert or registration questions, please feel free to contact Assistant Vice Provost [Gail Stubbs](#) or Interim Registrar [Sarah Bartlett](#).

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.

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) AND COURSE MATERIALS COSTS

All faculty are responsible for ensuring that their Department Chair or scheduler has accurate information about their course materials costs to include in Wiser. Course materials are defined as *required* textbooks, monographs, novels, journal articles, documents, eBooks, lab manuals, workbooks, websites, software programs, apps, courseware packages, and access codes to publisher-provided online resources. The lowest available bookstore or publisher price should be used to calculate cost, whether it be new, used, rental, or digital. Please do not include recommended or optional materials. Excluded from course materials costs are: supplies and equipment (e.g. lab coats, goggles, notebook paper, art materials, calculators, computers, lab fees, technology fees, or eLearning fees). UMass Boston is committed to expanding campus-wide efforts regarding the adoption of OER, no cost, and low-cost course materials. Studies show that early and easy access to information about course materials costs enables students to better plan for this expense, ensuring that they can obtain course materials and improving course performance.

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.

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.

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

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.

Below you will find recommended language for syllabi, including accommodations, academic integrity, early alerts, and use of AI tools.

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: <https://www.umb.edu/academics/seas/disability-services/>. 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.

Early Alerts

Please note that I participate in the Early Alert program to provide you with some early information on how you are doing in this course. Between Monday, October 5th, and Monday, October 26th, I will submit early alerts in WISER based on the following rubric:
(insert your rubric)

To check for alerts once they are submitted, click on the GRADES icon in the mobile view; make sure you are in the correct semester; go to OFFICIAL and pull down the choices; select PROGRESS REPORTS. If you receive a caution (CAU) or in danger of failing (FAI) alert, I suggest that you come to see me during my office hours, check in with your [advisor](#), and/or visit the [Center for Academic Excellence](#) for tutoring and other academic support services. If you receive a satisfactory (SAT) alert, keep up the good work!

Sample Early Alert Rubric:

The following Early Alert rubric was developed by faculty in the English Composition and Seminar programs, and will be used in ENGL101/102, First-Year and Intermediate Seminar courses:

In Danger of Failing (FAI) = currently failing or patterns suggest student is at risk of failing (e.g., several missed writing assignments + many absences, etc.).

Caution (CAU) = currently passing but student exhibits patterns that could eventually lead toward low grade/failure (e.g., a "C" average + many absences or missed/late assignments).

Satisfactory (SAT) = consistent satisfactory progress is being made.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Please note that at its October 2023 meeting, the Faculty Council recommended that all syllabi include one of two statements concerning the use 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.