Policy Reminders for Graduate Teaching Faculty
Spring 2026

GRADUATE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Please note the following Spring 2026 dates from the [2025-2026 GRAD Academic Calendar](#) (dates for early summer 2026 can be found by following the preceding link):

SPRING 2026 SEMESTER
- Early 6-week term for OT begins: January 4
- Intensive course for Counseling: January 4 -24 (residency 8-10, 16-17)
- Intensive course for OT and PT: January 5-9
- Early 8-week and Semester-long terms begin: January 11
- In-Service Day: February 10; no classes
- Early 6-week term for OT ends: February 14
- Spring 12-week term for OT begins: February 15
- Early 8-week term ends: March 7
- Early 8-week grades due: March 12, 9:00 a.m.
- Spring Break: March 8-14
- Late 8-week term begins: March 15
- Easter Break: April 3-6
- Late 4-week term for PT begins: April 12
- Late 4-week, 8-week, Spring 12-week and Semester-long terms end: May 9
- Late 4-week, 8-week, Spring 12-week and Semester-long grades due: May 14, 9:00 am
- May Development Week: May 13-15
- Graduate Commencement: May 16*

*Full-time graduate faculty are required to march in Commencement on May 16. Any exceptions must be approved by the School Dean. Commencement details will be distributed in late February.

The [Holiday and Breaks Table](#) spells out implications of the University's holidays and breaks for graduate faculty, students, and staff.

TEACHING-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES

USE OF CANVAS
Effective use of the University's Learning Management System (LMS), Canvas, is one of the most effective tools for supporting student success in the classroom. All faculty must publish their courses in Canvas, orient students to their course site, post their course syllabus as an accessible file (.pdf) on their Canvas landing page, and post additional resources in the site as appropriate. The [Faculty Support & Resources Canvas site](#), to which all teaching faculty should have access, offers a wide range of resources for delivering course content, including

technology and other resources for both virtual and physical classroom spaces. If you do not have access to this helpful Canvas site, contact Tech Support at techsupport@messiah.edu or ext. 4444.

- **Design Parameters for Online Courses**. Online courses must be designed within the basic parameters outlined in the *COE Handbook*, Section 10 ("Online Course Policy").

- **Design Parameters for Face-to-Face Courses.** All face-to-face courses must utilize Canvas in at least the following ways:
  o Posting the course syllabus on the Canvas landing page for student access
  o Posting the course syllabus in Files for University archiving purposes
  o Posting faculty contact information and office hours
  o Posting all assignments
  o Posting all grades
  o Posting all course files and documents, including those that are distributed to students as hard copies

SYLLABI – REQUIRED ELEMENTS

A list of all required elements for Messiah University syllabi can be found in the *COE Handbook*, Section 10 (see "Syllabi, Course"). While departments/programs can require more elements, they cannot require fewer; that is, the requirements outlined in the *COE Handbook* are the minimal requirements for a complete syllabus. Syllabus statements that are required verbatim (e.g., statements to Title IX, FERPA, etc.) can be found in Section 10 of the *COE Handbook*. They are also available on the Faculty Support & Resources Canvas site (see "Institution-Wide Required Statements"), as is a syllabus template that ensures the inclusion of these elements.

- Note: many Messiah University graduate programs have developed a modified syllabus template with program-specific elements. If you do not have your program's syllabus template, please contact your Program Director.

SYLLABI – NEW REQUIRED ELEMENTS

In response to the widespread use of generative AI, two elements were added to the University's syllabus requirements effective fall 2025:

(1) All syllabi must include a statement about student use of AI tools in the course, which must be one of the following: (a) one of the statements posted on the Faculty Support & Resources Canvas site; (b) a statement that has been developed by your academic department or program; (c) a unique statement developed by the instructor. All statements must specify the range of allowable use, provide a rationale for that range of use, and refer to the University's academic integrity policy.
(2) If the instructor is using an AI tool to assist in the evaluation of student work, the instructor must provide a statement that tells students when the tool will be used and how the tool's feedback will be used in assessing their work.

SYLLABI COLLECTION

The University must retain copies of syllabi for each course taught to ensure that degrees and transfer credits are recognized by other institutions. We have an automated system for collecting syllabi directly from Canvas. To facilitate this required archival process, all faculty must do the following:

(1) upload the course syllabus to the course's Canvas site as a PDF file; the file must be located in the top-level folder of "Files," not a sub-folder;
(2) name the file as you prefer, as long as the name includes "yllab" and ends with ".pdf" (for instance, "CIS191syllabus.pdf", "Spring2026syllabus.pdf", or "SyllabusSpring2026.pdf").
(3) Remove all other syllabi, including ones from previous semesters, from the top-level folder of "Files."

Online Instructional Time

When courses are delivered online, consideration must be given to instructional time expectations mandated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Each credit hour requires 14 hours of classroom instruction, so a typical three-credit course requires a minimum of 42 hours of classroom instruction. For each hour in the classroom, students can expect to complete two hours of non-instructional time, or "homework." For application of these requirements to online instruction, see *COE Handbook*, Section 10 ("Online Course Policy").

Face-To-Face Classes and Faculty Absences

Faculty members who teach face-to-face courses or synchronous online courses are expected to meet with their students at the scheduled times. Face-to-face classes are to be taught in person (not remotely) unless the faculty member is unable to be present due to illness, emergency, or a prearranged absence (e.g., for a professional conference). In the case of anticipated absences, faculty members should notify their supervisors well in advance and make appropriate coverage plans according to the faculty absence policy outlined in Section 6A of the *COE Handbook*. Faculty members should notify their students via their course Canvas page when they need to cancel class at the last minute due to illness or emergency.

AVAILABILITY AND FEEDBACK

Faculty are expected to communicate their availability and mode of preferred contact clearly on the course syllabus. In addition, the faculty member's response time and other expectations must be made clear and published appropriately within the course site. Feedback and interaction should be complete, timely, and friendly. Best practices highlight daily interaction in an online course.

OFFICE HOURS

All faculty, those teaching online and face-to-face courses, are expected to maintain regular office hours (see expectations in *COE Handbook*, Section 6A). Office hours must be announced to students and included in the course syllabi.

ACADEMIC UPDATES

Academic Updates are an application in Self-Service that provides instructors a formal and uniform method to provide feedback to students on their academic progress at the course level. The student is notified via email when an instructor implements this method of feedback. Additionally, the student's academic advisor, the respective program director, and the registrar's office will receive an electronic copy. The School of Graduate & Professional Studies encourages instructors to provide feedback to all students as Academic Update may be used in both warning a student of unsatisfactory progress as well as affirming good student performance. Instructors are required at a minimum to utilize this feedback mechanism when a student is in danger of receiving a final grade of a C+ or lower or is repeatedly displaying poor academic progress.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

INSTITUTIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to teaching, Ranked Faculty members have responsibilities related to institutional service (e.g., advising, department meetings, committee meetings, search committees, etc.). Further, SGPS faculty are required to be present for professional responsibilities, such as department/program meetings, school meetings, and Community of Educators/school/program retreats. A Ranked Faculty member is expected to meet his or her other on-campus institutional/professional responsibilities unless the faculty member is on an approved leave or fulfilling an off-campus institutional/professional responsibility. These responsibilities will

likely require a faculty member to be on campus multiple times per week. Only fully remote faculty members should be regularly requesting to attend meetings virtually.

COMMUNITY OF EDUCATORS EXPECTATIONS

Full members of the Community of Educators are required to attend August COE Retreat, Fall and Spring In-Service Days (for programming in their area), and May Development Week activities. Graduate faculty are required to march in the SGPS commencement ceremony Any request for an excused absence must be approved by Dean of SGPS.

CALENDAR/SCHEDULE COORDINATION

All employees are expected to use their Outlook calendars to assist with scheduling meetings in a timely fashion. Please ensure you have all appointments blocked off accordingly (including personal appointments) during the normal business hours of 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. All face-to-face classes instructional time should automatically transfer to your Outlook calendar from Banner. If you have problems with Outlook, please contact Tech Support at techsupport@messiah.edu or ext. 4444.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND RESOURCES

INCLEMENT WEATHER/CAMPUS CLOSING

In the event of weather conditions or other unexpected emergencies, the University may announce and implement a campus closure or delayed opening. The University will communicate this news to students and faculty via email, text message alert, the University website home page, and a Canvas banner announcement. If campus is closed or delayed and your class is scheduled to meet during that delay or closure, the faculty member may determine how best to proceed with the course to successfully maintain the integrity of the learning objectives. This includes the following options:
- holding class synchronously online at the scheduled time
- delivering asynchronous online instruction
- arranging for make-up opportunities after campus reopens.

Regardless of the method chosen, faculty must communicate clearly and proactively with students on the Canvas course site. This communication should be timely, generally within an hour of the delay/closure announcement and always before the class was scheduled to meet. Please note: when campus is closed, a faculty member may not hold a class session on campus.

DELAYED CAMPUS OPENINGS

A delayed campus opening or campus closure does not impact the schedule of courses that meet after the stated opening time. For synchronous class meetings (in-person or online), instructors should follow the regular class schedule, even in the case of a delayed opening. For example, if class normally meets on MWF 11:00 – 11:50 AM, then in the case of a delayed opening or a closure, if the instructor chooses to have a synchronous online class meeting, it must take place at 11:00 – 11:50 AM. It is important for student success and clarity of messaging that each instructor post all changes in class plans as a Canvas announcement. Though email or other communication may also be effective, these should be in addition to, and not instead of, communication in Canvas. Please note: when campus is on a delay, a faculty member may not hold a class session on campus and should not arrive on campus more than 20 minutes before campus opens.

ACADEMIC CATALOG

The SGPS 2025-2026 academic catalog can be found here. Previous catalogs are archived on the web and can be found by toggling through the drop-down menu, located in the top right corner of the page.

STUDENT SERVICES.

Information regarding a variety of Graduate Student Services are available [here](#).

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES - GRADUATE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of their degree, Messiah University graduate students will:

1. Exhibit mastery of specialized knowledge
2. Perform scholarly activities informed by professional standards
3. Demonstrate mastery of competencies required in their field of study
4. Articulate how Christian faith and principles inform their vocation
5. Apply ethical principles relevant to their profession
6. Demonstrate intercultural competence