



OFFICE OF
THE PROVOST

Policy Reminders for Undergraduate Teaching Faculty Spring 2026

UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Please note the following dates from the [2025-2026 UG Academic Calendar](#):

SPRING 2026 SEMESTER

- Start of Classes: January 12
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day: January 19; no classes
- In-Service Day: February 10; no classes
- Spring Break: March 7-15
- Easter Break: April 3-6
- Service Day: April 9; no day classes
- Last Day of Classes: May 1
- Semester Exams: May 4-7
- Undergraduate Commencement Weekend: May 8-9*
- May Development Week: May 11-15
- Approved Cross-Cultural Courses: May 18-June 5

*Full-time undergraduate faculty are required to march in Undergraduate Commencement on May 9. Any exceptions must be approved by the faculty member's School Dean.

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. Use of modules and the gradebook features is also expected. 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.

SYLLABI – REQUIRED ELEMENTS

A list of all required elements for Messiah University syllabi can be found in the *COE Handbook*, Section 8, Part I (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 8 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.

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.”

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE

- Final exam periods are an important and integral part of the semester. The exam schedule is set by the Registrar’s Office each semester. Faculty members must follow the [published schedule](#).
- Faculty members are required to conduct a significant evaluative experience/exam or some other educative experience during this time. Faculty should design their courses in a way that preserves the integrity of finals week. Minimally, this means that faculty should (1) be cautious about the amount of work they assign students in the week prior to finals week, and (2) schedule final exams or other semester-ending experiences during finals week.
- Students are expected to attend their final exam period at the scheduled time. Any student having more than eight credit hours of final examinations in one day may request a change in his/her final schedule by emailing the Registrar’s Office. It should be noted that travel arrangements are not sufficient reason for exceptions to the exam schedule. All student requests for rescheduling exams must be submitted to the Registrar at least one week prior to the first day of final examinations. Upon the Registrar’s approval of the request, the student may contact their instructor to reschedule the exam at a time mutually acceptable to both the instructor and the student

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.

ONBOARDING TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Faculty members who are utilizing teaching assistants (TA's) in connection with a course are required to onboard their TA's via a Dynamic Form developed for this purpose. The form (a) provides clarity on the appropriate use of TA's; (b) trains TA's on issues of confidentiality; (c) secures the department chair's approval of the TA being hired; and (d) alerts Tech Support to give the TA the level of Canvas access they need to do their work. To initiate this process, the faculty member should go to Falconlink and type in "Onboarding a TA." It should be clear what to do from that point on (the faculty member's part will take only 5-10 minutes). Questions about this onboarding process should be directed to Tech Support at techsupport@messiah.edu or ext. 4444

ACADEMIC UPDATES

Academic Updates are an application in Falconlink 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, residence life educator, athletic coach (if applicable), the Office of Student Success, and the Registrar's Office will receive an electronic copy. Academic Updates may be used in both warning a student of unsatisfactory progress as well as affirming good student performance. Instructors are required to utilize this feedback mechanism when a student is in danger of receiving a failing grade or is repeatedly displaying poor academic progress.

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

CONTRACTUAL TIMELINE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Most Ranked Faculty members (Term-Tenure Track Faculty, Clinical Track Faculty, and Lecturers) are on 9-month contracts, which run from the Monday of the week before fall classes begin through the end of May Development Week. Since Ranked Faculty members are under contract one week prior to the beginning of fall classes and through May Development Week, they are required to be present for professional responsibilities, such as department/program meetings, school meetings, General Education development sessions, Community of Educators retreats, etc., during this timeframe.

FACULTY ACCESSIBILITY DURING BREAKS

Ranked Faculty members on 9-month contracts have no official responsibilities on University holidays or student recesses, and are not expected to respond to routine email or other communication requests during those times. Exceptions may be needed for time-sensitive communications from their academic advisees or prospective students. Out of courtesy to colleagues, and current and prospective students, faculty members should provide information about when they will be available to respond to non-urgent communications.

EXPECTATIONS FOR ATTENDANCE AT UNIVERSITY EVENTS

All full-time undergraduate faculty members are expected to attend COE Retreat in August, In-Service Days in both fall and spring, and undergraduate May Development Week activities. They are required to march in the spring UG commencement ceremony and in fall Convocation. Any request for an excused absence must be approved by their school dean.

INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

In addition to teaching, Ranked Faculty members have responsibilities related to institutional service (e.g., advising, department meetings, committee meetings, search committees, etc.). If a Ranked Faculty member is not teaching any courses in a given term, he or she is nonetheless expected to meet his or her other on-campus professional responsibilities unless the faculty member is on an approved leave or fulfilling an off-campus institutional/professional responsibility.

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.