



OFFICE OF
THE PROVOST

**Policy Reminders for Undergraduate Teaching Faculty
Fall 2026**

UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Please note the following dates from the [2026-2027 UG Academic Calendar](#):

FALL SEMESTER

- Community Day: August 18
- COE Retreat: August 19
- Start of UG Classes: August 25
- Convocation: August 25
- In-Service Day: September 15; no classes
- Presidential Inauguration: October 15; modified class schedule 8 am – 1:10 pm
(See separate email on 8.7.2026 for details)
- Fall Break: October 17-25
- Thanksgiving Break: November 25-29
- Last Day of Classes: December 11
- Semester Exams: December 14-17
- Grades Due: December 21, 9:00 am
- Winter Break: December 18 – January 8

SPRING SEMESTER

- Start of Classes: January 11
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: January 18; no classes
- In-Service Day: February 9; no classes
- Spring Break: March 6-14
- Easter Break: March 26-29
- Service Day: April 8; no day classes
- Last Day of Classes: April 30
- Semester Exams: May 3-6
- Undergraduate Commencement Weekend: May 7-8
- Approved Cross-Cultural Courses: May 16 – June 4

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, complete the syllabus template in the syllabus tab of your Canvas site, and post resources in the site as appropriate. Use of modules and the gradebook feature 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, ("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, AI use, etc.) are provided in the syllabus template.

SYLLABI CLEANUP

Please remove any old, outdated syllabi from previous semesters from Canvas folders that are accessible/viewable to students. The presence of outdated syllabi in a course site is a point of student confusion.

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 (registrar@messiah.edu). 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 confirmation that the student has 8+ credits of finals on the same day, the student may contact their instructor(s) to reschedule an exam at a time that is mutually acceptable.

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](#) (p. 29). Faculty members should notify their students via their course Canvas site when they need to cancel class at the last minute due to illness or emergency.

ONBOARDING TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Faculty members who are using 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;
- 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.

TURNITIN

Many Messiah University instructors use Turnitin (embedded in Canvas) to evaluate student writing for the possibility of plagiarism as well as a student's reliance on generative AI. Although the University allows the use of Turnitin for these purposes, some cautions are in order related to student privacy and to academic integrity violations. Turnitin has made it clear that it holds student submissions in perpetuity. Given the potential for student privacy to be compromised, please adhere to the following guidelines when using Turnitin:

- Do not use Turnitin when assessing student writing that is personal in nature (e.g., personal narratives in which students reveal details about their personal lives).
- Allow students to omit their names from the papers they upload, or at least allow them to upload papers using only their initials as identifiers.
- Do not have students include their ID numbers or other confidential information in the papers they submit.

Related to Academic Integrity Violations:

- Instructors should be aware that Turnitin's tools do not prove AI use, nor do they prove plagiarism, but rather they provide information that can help instructors make informed judgments about student AI use and plagiarism.
- You, as the instructor, have latitude in what you do with the results generated by Turnitin. If you're suspicious a student has (a) used AI to generate writing inappropriately or (b) has engaged in plagiarism, you will first want to have a conversation with that student. Please refrain from making accusations too hastily.
- If you conclude that the student has committed an academic integrity violation (see Messiah's Academic Integrity Policy) and especially if you believe they did so intentionally, you should complete an Academic Integrity Violation Report. Our policy and report template are available in FalconLink.
- As with other academic integrity violations at Messiah University, the University allows instructors to enact the penalty they believe best suits the situation. If you want to discuss a possible penalty with someone, talk with your department chair, program director, or the Dean of General Education, Common Learning & Academic Support.

Finally, given the potential for violating FERPA regulations, please do not run your students' work through other AI-detection or plagiarism checkers available on the internet.

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 or part of term, he or she is 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. 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.