

Recommended Language for Syllabi in COVID-19

Below you will find some several “blurbs” that reflect university policy and temporary measures meant to address possible issues or exigencies related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These are merely **suggestions** meant to be helpful as you tailor your syllabi for the Fall semester: faculty are not required to use any of these suggestions on their syllabi. We’ve also included a few thoughts to consider in each category as you negotiate the hurdles posed by the pandemic.

Copyright (for recorded class sessions, especially):

Faculty may wish to frame out a statement themselves but in general syllabi should state that: (1) professor holds the copyright in lectures and course materials, (2) that copyright encompasses student notes or summaries that exactly reproduce lectures or materials, (3) the materials are made available to students for their personal use only, and (4) students may not distribute or reproduce the materials without express written consent of copyright holder. (They can still share notes on an individual basis for personal use.) Something like this (this is not intended to be a mandate, just an idea of the kind of language you might put in your syllabus; in other words this is intended to be guidance as opposed to policy):

My lectures and course materials, including, but not limited to power point presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. I am the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own use; however, you may not, nor may you allow others to, reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly whether or not a fee is charged without my express written consent. Similarly, you own copyright in your original papers and exam essays. If I am interested in posting your answers or papers on the course web site, I will ask for your written permission.

In addition to a syllabus statement: (1) post materials only on a password-protected platform for registered and enrolled students, (2) advise students that your course materials and your course presentations are protected and that students may not share them except as provided by U.S. copyright law and University policy, and (3) use the © symbol on those materials to hammer the point home (i.e. © Dr. Harald Beck, 2020) on the materials that you distribute that are original works.

Language for CourseHero and Chegg and the like:

Many of those kinds of sites have some sort of a filter set up whereby if you write as a footer “*This content is protected and may not be shared, uploaded or distributed*” your materials/document would be flagged by the site and taken down. (If you or others find out about things being distributed on either of these sites, know that only the copyright holder/faculty member can issue a takedown notice, but they have made it relatively easy: for CourseHero it is <https://www.coursehero.com/copyright-infringement/#/> or for Chegg available [through this page.](#))

Absences/Attendance:

Obviously, absences are tricky during the extenuating circumstances of a pandemic, which may cause lengthy illness or may involve students (or faculty) missing class on account of caring for a family member or coping with unexpected circumstances arising from homeschooling children, erratic work schedules, or other challenges related to the pandemic. Even the definition of “absence” can be tricky when classes are asynchronous. Therefore, faculty and students should expect to be as flexible as possible while still maintaining expectations of class participation (where so much of the important work of learning happens) and ensuring that students take responsibility for making up missed work. Providing clear guidance and expectations on your syllabus, particularly in these uncertain times, will be key to managing such potential issues and supporting student success. For example, in addition to the language below (or some subset of it), you might describe specifically on the course syllabus the types of participation, attendance, and engagement required for the course.

“Attendance” in a course that is fully online or has an online component may be evaluated differently. Online attendance, like in-person attendance, is more than just logging into the course or being physically present. Attendance in any case is measured by your intellectual and active engagement with the course content, course tools, course instructor, and with other students in the course.

I. For in-person, asynchronous or synchronous coursework:

1. It is the regular policy of the university to excuse the absences of students for the following reasons:

- illness or injury when the student is unable to attend class*
- death of a family member (see the [Student Bereavement Procedure](#) on the website)*
- religious observance where the nature of the observance prevents the student from attending class*
- participation in university activities at the request of university authorities (e.g., Intercollegiate Athletics, Forensics Team, Dance Company, etc.)*
- compelling verifiable circumstances beyond the control of the student*

2. The exceptional circumstances presented by the COVID pandemic create the potential for additional flexibility in qualifying absences as excused. Such extenuations might include: absences related to extended illness, quarantine, caring for family members, childcare (and support of children’s online learning) due to school closures, or urgent job concerns related to financial need, emergency situations, or food insecurity.

Students requesting an excused absence must provide documentation to the instructor two weeks prior to the scheduled absence when known in advance or as soon as possible when not known in advance. Absences that do not fall into any of the above categories are unexcused..

3. Students who will be representing TU at events, conferences, or other official activities should obtain verification of absence from the appropriate official. A Notification of Absence from Class Form from the Office of Campus Life, University Union 232, should be given to instructors to verify the excused absence. Students are encouraged to notify faculty of anticipated class absences as soon as they learn they will be missing class.

II. Students who are absent from class are responsible for any missed work, assignments or assessments (e.g., quizzes, tests, papers, etc.). Student responsibility for missed work is particularly important in the event of an absence due to an extenuating circumstance of the pandemic. Faculty members are required to allow students with documented excused absences to make up missed work or assignments when this is feasible. Only in the case that the nature of the assignment makes this impossible, should faculty members be expected to make a reasonable adjustment of the assignment.

If you'd like more specific language regarding attendance and participation, see below.

Academic Integrity:

Students are responsible members of the academic community. You are therefore obligated not to violate the basic standards of integrity. You are also expected to take an active role in encouraging other members of the community to respect those standards. Should you have reason to believe that a violation of academic integrity has occurred, you are encouraged to make the suspicion known to a member of the faculty or University administration.

Cheating means using, attempting to use, and/or disseminating unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids, videos or other devices in any academic exercise. This includes unauthorized communication of information during an exercise or exam. Some examples include but are not limited to: Copying from another student's paper or receiving unauthorized assistance during any graded deliverable; using books, notes or other devices (e.g., calculators, phones, watches, laptops, or other internet enabled devices) when these are not authorized; procuring without authorization tests or examinations before the scheduled exercise (including discussion of the substance of examinations and tests when it is expected these will not be discussed); copying reports, laboratory work, computer programs or files and the like from other students; collaborating on laboratory or computer programs or files and the like with other students; collaborating on laboratory or computer work without authorization and without indication of the nature and extent of the collaboration; sending a substitute to take an examination, using solutions manuals, providing exam and assignment questions to student websites or using such a website to complete an assignment and/or exam (including free or pay websites that maintain textbook and/or instructor solutions). To clarify, copying or collaborating with other students or using external resources, including other people, on any type of assignments that are expressly designed to be completed individually is cheating.

*Recorded sessions and any associated materials are designated **ONLY** for registered students in the class. Any sharing or dissemination of recordings beyond the student body registered in the course and section constitutes a violation of privacy and may also be categorized as cheating or defamation of character (depending on the circumstance), a possible copyright infringement.*

Complicity in Academic Dishonesty means helping or attempting to help another commit an act of academic dishonesty. Some examples include but are not limited to: Allowing another to copy from one's paper during an examination or test; distributing test questions or substantive information about the material to be tested without authorization before the scheduled exercise; collaborating on academic work that is expressly designed to be completed individually; taking an examination or test for another student; signing a false name on an academic exercise; or sharing assignment or exam information before, during, or after the deliverable in written, electronic, video, or verbal form. (Note: Collaboration

and sharing information are characteristics of academic communities. These become violations when they involve dishonesty. Students should seek clarification when in doubt).

Abuse of Academic Materials means destroying, stealing, or making inaccessible library or other resource materials. Some examples include: Stealing or destroying library or reference materials needed for common academic exercises; hiding resource materials so others may not use them; destroying computer programs or files needed in academic work; stealing or intentionally destroying another student's notes or laboratory experiments; receiving assistance in locating or using sources of information in an assignment where such assistance has been forbidden by the instructor.

Online Conduct:*

The discussion board should be viewed as a course forum to discuss the readings, videos, and other course-related content. Your participation in the discussions counts as attendance in this asynchronous online course. The tone of all posts should be respectful and professional in nature.

- *Treat the other students and your faculty member the same online as you would in person. Engage with others in a respectful manner.*
- *Keep in mind that written communication lacks the non-verbal cues we use to understand each other. It may be helpful to review what you write to ensure the message reads the same way you are intending it to.*
- *Remember the [TU Student Code of Conduct](#) in all online engagement.*
- *It is not appropriate to post statements of a personal or political nature, or statements criticizing classmates or faculty. Inappropriate statements/language will be deleted by the course faculty.*

Loaner Laptop Availability and Student Support Funds:

The Office of Technology Services (OTS) has a limited number of laptops to loan to students whose personal computers are unable to run Blackboard, WebEx, Zoom or applications required by the curriculum. If you need to borrow a device, talk to your instructor; they can submit a request on your behalf.

The Towson University Foundation has created the Student Emergency Fund, which has some funds available to assist students in purchasing hotspots, upgrading home internet, and other necessary technologies. For more information, see their [website](#).

Netiquette:*

Students in this online course are expected to observe common rules of netiquette (or Internet etiquette). Those rules include but are not limited to:

1. *Proofread your message before you hit send.*
2. *ALL CAPITALS is the same as shouting your message, check your caps' lock button.*
3. *Don't flame—everyone is entitled to the right to speak their opinion. Respect the opinions of others.*

4. Make meaningful replies. Don't just agree—say why you agree! Or disagree, as the case may be—just do so respectfully.

5. Follow the [TU Student Conduct Code](#).

6. Know that students who do not follow basic netiquette rules may be suspended from discussion board use.

More specific language for attendance and participation:

Online Course: This program and course depend upon synchronous online meetings and you are expected to be “virtually” present for these just as if you were meeting in a regular classroom. You must have a working computer, microphone, webcam, and internet connection.

- In the event of technical difficulty for the **student**:
Email your professor immediately. Do your best to resolve the issue before class.
- In the event the **instructor** has technical difficulty
If the instructor disappears and doesn't return in 3 minutes, please wait an additional ten minutes before logging off. The instructor will be trying to reestablish the connection and/or may be trying to reach an alternate internet connection. If the professor does not return within those 10-15 minutes, see Blackboard for instructions which will be posted as soon as possible. You are not expected to wait longer than twenty minutes.
- In the event of a snowstorm, hurricane, or any widespread loss of power and/or internet connections which disrupts many participants, alternate materials will be posted on Blackboard. Make sure to check as soon as you are able to connect to the internet.
- **Use of a webcam is mandatory.** Each student will be permitted 2 instances where technical difficulties or other issues are cited for lack of camera use. For every incident past 2, the final grade tally for the class will be decreased by 5 points.
- **“Attentiveness.”** It will be evident to the instructor if you are not at your PC and engaged with the class. Remember, you are expected to be present, available to be called upon to comment or contribute at any time. Up to 10 points may be lost for any class session where you are “present” but evidently not engaged. Such measures are used to ensure that you are actually receiving the instruction required in your online course.

*Much of the material in the Online Conduct and Netiquette sections are borrowed from University of Texas, Arlington.