



# **UTEP Faculty Handbook for Online Teaching and Learning**





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# Letter to the Faculty from the Dean of Extended University



UTEP has a long and rich history of developing and delivering online classes to our students. Over the last several years, we have increasingly understood how online classes and programs provide expanded access to the University and promote student success. We are happy that you are a member of the faculty who contributes to these goals of access and excellence. Whether you are teaching a core course for undergraduate students or a graduate-level course for working professionals, the role you play is significant to our students.

This handbook serves as a guide to all online instructors. It includes information on resources, responsibilities, best practices, processes, and policies. However, if you have questions not answered here, please let us know. We will do our best to find the answers for you.

Thank you again for the part you play in UTEP students' education.  
Go Miners!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beth Brunk', followed by a long horizontal line.

Beth Brunk, Ph.D.  
Dean of Extended University  
Professor of Rhetoric and Writing Studies





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## 1. Extended University

Extended University sits under the Office of the Provost and is UTEP's hub for online and other nontraditional academic programs, professional training and education, and community enrichment. We strive to live up to our name—Extended University—by increasing access to UTEP's outstanding educational opportunities for all who seek them.

Our departments provide educational services and support for both educators and students interested in alternative modes of teaching and learning. Faculty who are teaching online may interact with two of these departments: UTEP Connect and the Center for Instructional Design. For more information about Extended University and its structure, please [visit the Extended University website](#).

## 2. UTEP Connect

UTEP Connect is a portfolio of 100% online bachelor's, master's and graduate certificate programs available to students regardless of their location. Most UTEP Connect classes are offered in 7-week terms; some are offered in 14 weeks. UTEP Connect undergraduate courses are not visible on the Goldmine schedule. However, they are available on the UTEP Connect website, [click here](#) for complete information.

The following programs are offered 100% online:

### Bachelor's Programs

- Bachelor of Applied Arts and Science
- Bachelor of Arts in Chicano Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice
- Bachelor of Arts in Media Advertising
- Bachelor of Arts in Organizational and Corporate Communication
- Bachelor of Arts in Security Studies
- Bachelor of Business Administration in General Business
- Bachelor of Multidisciplinary Studies
- Bachelor of Science in Education with a Concentration in Early Childhood Care and Education (Birth to Age 5)
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing - RN to BSN Option

### Master's Programs

- Master of Arts in Education with a Concentration in Diversity, Equity and Social Justice in Education
- Master of Arts in Education with a Concentration in Linguistic Diversity and Educational Equity
- Master of Arts in Education with a Concentration in STEM Education
- Master of Business Administration
- Master of Defense and Strategic Studies
- Master of Education in Bilingual Education
- Master of Education in Early Childhood Education
- Master of Education in Educational Administration with a Concentration in Higher Education Leadership
- Master of Education in Literacy Education
- Master in Special Education with a Concentration in Bilingual Special Education
- Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing
- Master of Multidisciplinary Studies
- Master of Music with a Concentration in Conducting
- Master of Public Administration with a Concentration in Public Policy and Management
- Master of Science in Construction Management
- Master of Science in Nursing - Nursing Administration and Management
- Master of Science in Nursing - Nursing Education
- Master of Science in Nursing - Nurse Practitioner
- Master of Science in Systems Engineering

### Certificate Programs

- Graduate Certificate in Business Administration
- Graduate Certificate in Construction Management
- Graduate Certificate in K-12 Bilingual Education
- Graduate Certificate in K-12 English Language Learning (ESL)
- Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Administration
- Graduate Certificate in STEM Education
- Graduate Certificate in Systems Engineering
- Graduate Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing
- Graduate Certificate in Urban and Regional Planning

Undergraduate UTEP Connect courses are intended for 100% online students. Permission for undergraduate students seeking traditional degrees to register into an undergraduate UTEP Connect course must be requested by emailing [ucadvising@utep.edu](mailto:ucadvising@utep.edu).

### UTEP Connect's Course Designations

	Term A (7 weeks 100% online)	Term B (7 weeks 100% online)	Term C (14 weeks 100% online)
Fall	801	802	160
Spring	801	802	160
Summer	701	702	140



### 3. Center for Instructional Design

The Center for Instructional Design (CID) is a department of Extended University which offers online, hybrid and hyFlex course development and assistance to all UTEP faculty. The CID team is focused on providing research-based best practices in instructional design and development as well as instructional technology solutions that can help faculty maximize their students' learning experiences.

CID instructional designers are available to consult with faculty and staff and ensure that

- Course design meets SACSCOC and UTEP standards for quality
- Course materials meet both standards of copyright and ADA compliance as required by SACSCOC and federal law

CID works with faculty who are developing new online courses as well as updating courses that have been previously taught. Please see the Online Course Development Process section of this handbook for more information.





## 4. Responsibilities of Online Faculty

Academic departments identify and appoint faculty to teach online classes regardless of whether the classes are offered for traditional or for UTEP Connect programs. Faculty may be appointed to teach courses that run a full semester or a shorter part-of-term course. Most UTEP Connect courses run in 7 weeks; some are offered in 14 weeks.

Faculty teaching any online class are expected to adhere to all UTEP policies regarding instruction.

### Faculty New to UTEP and/or to Teaching Online

- A. Faculty who teach distance education courses are hired, appointed and credentialed by their academic program and college/school, and accreditation agencies require that faculty are well prepared to teach distance education courses. Faculty credentialing is initiated by the academic program in which the instructor will teach. The instructor is required to submit a CV and all post-secondary transcripts.
- B. To begin online course development and be eligible for online course instruction, faculty members must have completed or be enrolled in [The Teaching Online Academy \(TOA\)](#) unless otherwise agreed to by the Dean of Extended University. Faculty are also encouraged to enroll in the [Teaching Hybrid Academy \(THA\)](#) prior to developing and teaching a hybrid course. For hyFlex credentialing and course development, faculty members must complete either the Teaching Online Academy (TOA) or the Teaching Hybrid Academy (THA) and the [HyFlex Academy \(HFA\)](#) prior to developing and teaching a hyFlex course. All training is facilitated in an asynchronous, online course.



## Preparing to Teach

- A. All courses offered as distance education must be delivered via UTEP's institutional learning management system unless authorized by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. This helps to ensure accessibility to course materials, adherence to student confidentiality and record keeping. Additionally, a distance course must have the same learning outcomes, course descriptions, expectations, quality and rigor as its equivalent face-to-face course.
- B. When a faculty member develops a distance course with the assistance of the Center for Instructional Design, the Online Course Development Agreement, which includes the Joint Creation Ownership Agreement, will be signed by both the faculty and a representative of the university. This provides the faculty member with certain protections for the materials they develop. University rules pertaining to intellectual property can be found in Section IV, [Chapter 4](#) of the Handbook of Operating Procedures. UT System Board of Regents policies regarding intellectual property can be found in [Section 90101](#).
- C. Once approved, faculty will be contacted by an instructional designer to begin the course development process. Please plan for approximately four (4) months to develop the course.
  - a. Faculty assigned to a course should identify and select any required textbooks and/or course materials several months in advance of the course start date, when possible. Faculty should contact their department's administrative assistant for more information about ordering textbooks from the UTEP Bookstore.
  - b. If a course requires a faculty-authored textbook, the faculty member should obtain approval to do so from the department chair, college dean, provost and president. The form can be accessed on the [Provost's Office](#) website.
- D. When appropriate documentation is available, faculty assigned to teach a course that has already been developed for online delivery can request to have the course copied from a previous semester. An instructional designer will contact the faculty to determine if any revisions are required or if assistance is desired.
- E. Pursuant to the Texas statute regarding "Public Course Information," a course syllabus should be posted to Faculty Success no later than seven (7) days after the first day of class. More information about what should be included on the syllabus and how to upload it is available [at this link](#).

## Teaching the Online Class

- A. When possible, faculty should email the syllabus and course calendar to students one week prior to the course start date. Faculty can open a Help Desk ticket to request assistance with a class roster and emails. More information about what should be included in the syllabus can be found in [UTEP's Handbook of Operating Procedures, Section 4.8.3](#).
- B. Once the course has started, to avoid confusion for students, faculty should conduct all course-related communication within Blackboard.
- C. As indicated in [UTEP's Handbook of Operating Procedures, Section 4.8.2](#), faculty should post a schedule of regular office hours that is convenient to students and meets departmental requirements. Faculty are expected to be available at the times indicated. A reasonable guideline for minimum office hours is 0.7 scheduled office hours per each teaching load credit for which the faculty is formally responsible. Online students are not able to come to campus to attend office hours. Therefore, chat, email, phone, video, or some other synchronous tool should be used. Additional virtual office hours can be arranged by appointment. If office hours are cancelled, students should be provided advance notice with instructions on how to contact the faculty member if needed.
- D. Faculty should respond to student communication as quickly as possible—ideally in no more than two working days. A statement of expectation for response time should be provided in the syllabus so that students are aware of the parameters. If a student concern requires more than two days to resolve, faculty should send an acknowledgment email.
- E. Faculty should log into the Blackboard course no fewer than three different days a week.

- F. Faculty should provide regular feedback to students in response to discussion boards, assignments, tests, and so on. Particularly in 7-week courses, students should receive feedback on their work within one week of submission
- G. Faculty should regularly submit grades in the Blackboard online grade book.
- H. Faculty who suspect a student of plagiarism or some form of academic dishonesty must report the suspicion to the Dean of Students via [The Office of Community Standards](#). The Office of Community Standards will investigate the allegation and determine the course of action. It is against Regents' Rules and Regulations for faculty to make a determination independent of The Office of Community Standards. According to [UTEP's Handbook of Operating Procedures, Section 4.14](#), "such action is a disciplinary penalty that violates the student's right to due process and leaves the faculty member vulnerable to a student grievance petition, a civil lawsuit, and possible disciplinary action by the University." More information is available in the [HOOP](#).

## Concluding the Class

- A. Students will be sent a link to complete their course evaluations online approximately 10 days before a course ends. Faculty should encourage students to complete the questions by the deadline. Evaluation responses are available on my.utep.edu. The following link provides instructions on how to access results: [Course Evaluations](#).
- B. Faculty should prepare grades for submission by the deadline designated by Registration and Records. If there is a concern about posting grades by the deadline, please contact the [Registrar](#) as soon as possible.
- C. If a student is unable to complete the coursework due to extenuating circumstances, when appropriate, faculty should follow the process of assigning a grade of "Incomplete" and later changing that grade when the work is completed. When entering grades in Goldmine, a form will be available for details related to the incomplete grade. Instructions on completing the Incomplete Grades form are located at the following link: [Incomplete Grades Form](#). Faculty are encouraged to establish a reasonable deadline for the work to be completed so as not to impede student progress toward graduation.
- D. If a student either "never attended" or "stopped attending," faculty should assign an "F" grade in Goldmine. For students who "stopped attending," faculty should also provide the date of the last known active participation by the student in an instructional activity such as a response to discussion boards, study group, assignments, class lecture, lab, tests, etc. This does not include a student simply logging into the class as this is not considered "active participation."
- E. Students with an "incomplete" may need special access to the course material/Blackboard shell. To do this, faculty should submit a Help Desk ticket at [helpdesk@utep.edu](mailto:helpdesk@utep.edu). The request should include the student's email address, student ID number, the course name and CRN as well as the requested start and end date for access.

## After the Class

- A. According to [UTEP's Handbook of Operating Procedures, Section 4.17](#), academic departments should communicate to faculty the policies and procedures for retaining student records and documents (tests, assignments, etc.) used to determine course grades. Most of these items will already been retained in the Blackboard shell for the course. Policy dictates that these documents should be available for a minimum of one year after the course ends to support compliance with grade appeals. However, a three-year retention schedule is recommended.
- B. A student may request that a final grade be reviewed. The student should address the concern directly to the faculty member. A grade change form can be completed if a grading error was made. If the student disagrees with the faculty member's decision, she or he may also seek assistance or intervention from the department chair or other appropriate academic administrator. Information about the grade grievance process can be found in [UTEP's Handbook of Operating Procedures, Section 4.15](#).
- C. Additional information about student complaints regarding online classes can be found on the [UTEP Connect website](#).





## 5. Teaching With Artificial Intelligence

### *What is artificial intelligence?*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the science of creating machines that think like humans. These machines can solve complex tasks that previously required human thinking. Many AI computer systems are built to recognize patterns, make decisions, and judge like humans.

### *What is generative artificial intelligence (GenAI)?*

Generative AI (GenAI) is created largely by chat bots like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Perplexity, and Scribe, wherein generative AI systems can create content, such as text, audio, images, and video that may be almost indistinguishable from content that was created by humans. These systems work by employing algorithms and neural networks while being trained on large domain-specific datasets. The AI and its output are continually evaluated, and its process fine-tuned to improve its performance (Deangelis, 2018, & IBM).

### **AI Statements and Course Expectations**

It is important to note that the choice to make use of GenAI technologies in the classroom and the specific policies around AI usage in such contexts is generally at faculty discretions. Communicate in your syllabus the expectations for students' course-related uses of AI. Set tone, routines, and guidelines early in the semester and engage students in openly discussing the opportunities and limitations of AI, as well as what represents misuse of AI in your course or for specific assignments and activities.

## University Policy and Academic Integrity

Openly communicating the university's policy for academic integrity in your syllabus will establish expectations for your course as well as for students' academic careers at the university. Engage in conversation around university expectations at the beginning of the term and during your course.

- UTEP currently has a [guide to Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty](#)
- For potential language to include in your syllabus, see UTEP's [sample syllabus and AI statement](#)
- Additionally, students are required to abide by the UTEP's [Handbook of Operating Procedures on Student Conduct and Discipline which includes academic dishonesty](#).

Discuss with students how the use of AI fits within the university's policies on academic integrity and misconduct. For example, students may have the misconception that since a chatbot is not a real person, they can use the text it generates without plagiarizing or committing misconduct. Prompt them to consider the nuances of using AI-generated works and related ethical considerations to help them understand what is permitted and prohibited at the university and in your course.

## Additional Sample AI Statements:

- [Princeton University: Guidance on AI/ChatGPT](#)
- [Yale University: Guidelines for the Use of Generative AI Tools](#)
- [University of Texas at San Antonio: Generative AI, Teaching and Learning](#)

## Ethical Implications

Many students are already using generative AI on their own, and this will likely increase as these tools are integrated into more technologies we use regularly. When faculty members acknowledge and model ethical generative AI use, they can guide students how to effectively use these tools. Furthermore, faculty members should invest time to discuss the difference between differing opinions and fairness in contrast with biased material and responses.

At the start of the semester, highlight some of the positive uses of generative AI and some of the negatives and problems with using generative AI. Asking some guiding questions is a valuable way to engage students in a discussion about AI use and will clarify what is permissible in your course.

Make your policy on generative AI use in your course and specific assignments clear to students by integrating the expectations into your syllabus and each assignment.

## Utilizing Gen AI in Classwork

There are several reasons why faculty members in higher education may consider allowing students to use generative artificial intelligence (AI) in their coursework:

1. **Preparation for the workforce:** AI is becoming increasingly prevalent in various industries. Additionally, many industries are incorporating AI technologies into their workflows. Allowing students to use AI in their coursework provides them with practical experience and exposure to the tools and prepares them for the demands of the modern workforce (The University of Texas at El Paso, 2024; Amazon Web Services and Access Partnership, 2023).



2. **Enhanced problem-solving skills:** AI can be a powerful tool for analyzing data, identifying patterns, and solving complex problems. Allowing students to use AI in their coursework can help them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills by leveraging the capabilities of these technologies. These skills are part of [UTEP Edge](#), a framework that increases students' confidence, enhances their personal and professional skills, and equips them with a competitive advantage beyond graduation as they enter the workforce or pursue a graduate degree (The University of Texas at El Paso, 2024; Amazon Web Services and Access Partnership, 2023).
3. **Interdisciplinary learning:** AI is often used across different disciplines, including computer science, engineering, business, healthcare, and more. Allowing students to use AI encourages interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering a holistic understanding of how AI can be applied in various fields.
4. **Ethical considerations:** Integrating AI into coursework provides an opportunity to discuss ethical considerations related to AI development and use. This includes issues such as bias in algorithms, intellectual property, and responses received from generative AI chatbots.

Faculty members should provide appropriate guidance and resources to ensure that students use AI responsibly and ethically. Furthermore, considerations should be made to accommodate students who may not have prior experience with generative AI tools.

## Orientate Yourself with GenAI and Possible Uses for Coursework

Experiment by submitting exam questions, essay prompts, or learning activities into a generative AI system like [ChatGPT](#), [Gemini](#), [Claude](#), [Perplexcity](#), and [Scribe](#). If your course centers on imagery or illustrations, experiment by submitting learning activities to [DALL-E2](#). Consider the responses you receive and forecast how students may use Gen AI to plan, develop, or complete work in your course.

Next, review your syllabus and evaluate which activities or assessments would lend themselves to implementing the use of AI activities (if at all). Consider what you would allow or disallow as part of the activity or assignment. Finally, think about what approaches to AI use might you encourage or prohibit.

## Teaching With Artificial Intelligence Academy: A Self-Paced Course

The Teaching With Artificial Intelligence Academy (TAIA) is tailored to equip faculty and staff with the knowledge and skills to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into syllabi, course design, and assessment. Participants will learn how AI tools can leverage student engagement, address ethical implications, and impact student success. Additionally, participants are provided with a preview and tutorials for Blackboard's AI Design Assistant, debuting at UTEP in June 2024. The academy is delivered 100% online and located in Blackboard. [Register](#) and contact [instructionaldesign@utep.edu](mailto:instructionaldesign@utep.edu) for more support.

## References

- Amazon Web Services and Access Partnership. (2023, November). Accelerating AI skills: preparing the workforce for jobs of the future. Retrieved on May 1, 2024, from: <https://assets.aboutamazon.com/e1/a0/17842ee148e8af9d55d10d75a213/aws-accelerating-ai-skills-us-en.pdf>.
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- The University of Texas at El Paso. (2024, March 29). UTEP Edge. Retrieved on May 1, 2024, from: <https://www.utep.edu/edge/>.
- IBM. (n.d.) What is a neural network? <https://www.ibm.com/topics/neural-networks>.

# 6. Online Course Development Process

CID assists instructors with the development of new online courses, the redesign of existing online courses, or with updates to returning online courses. An instructional online designer will schedule an initial online meeting with the instructor to map out the course and create a development timeline. Next, the designer will discuss how they can assist with design, media and graphics, streaming video and films, and increased accessibility to best enhance the course. Once the course is complete, the instructional designer will review the course material using a course quality rubric (CQual) and technical review. The results will be shared with the instructor and the instructional designer will assist with any final updates prior to course launch.

If faculty are teaching a NEW course online for the first time, they should complete the [Online Course Development Agreement](#). When all approvals are received, faculty will be contacted by an instructional designer from CID to set up a time to meet in person or online.

## New Online Course Development Process

Generally speaking, the course design process takes about four (4) months and includes the following steps:

1. Develop course description, goals, and objectives
2. Submit an Online Course Development Proposal
3. Complete a course development timeline
4. Complete a course map
5. Confirm access to publisher content if it will be required (e-textbook, lab materials, and so on)
6. Gather/and or work on developing all resources for the course including course calendar, PowerPoint Presentations, handouts, readings, videos, assignments, assessments, links, and so on
7. Respond to comments on the Course Quality Rubric Review (CQual), which assesses the pedagogical design of a newly developed course in relation to course objectives and outcomes. The CQual assesses the effectiveness of standard tools and features in a fully online course including a course syllabus and calendar, discussion board format, and the effective use of social media. Once the CQual rubric has been completed, the instructional designer makes recommendations for improvement to both the instructor and program director. These recommendations must be completed prior to course launch.
8. Respond to comments on the Technical Review to ensure the course is technically sound and all content can be accessed. The results will be shared with the instructor, and CID will assist with any final updates prior to course launch.

## Existing Course Process

For all returning courses (courses that are not new and have permission to be copied from a previous semester), an instructional designer from CID will contact the instructor of record eight (8) weeks prior to launch date and ask for the previous semester's CRN number so that the existing course can be copied into the upcoming one. Two (2) weeks prior to course launch, CID will perform a technical review and provide feedback to the instructor.





## 7. Best Practices for Online Teaching

Because it's not just the content that affects student learning and retention but also the design of the course, we encourage faculty to develop and deliver interactive and engaging courses. Here are a few basic tips for a positive online teaching and learning experience. Please be sure to consult with an [Instructional Designer](#) for assistance in developing a high quality online course. If at any time assistance with the online course is needed, please submit a [Help Desk ticket](#). The request will be routed to the correct individual.

Research shows, and our UTEP students consistently comment, that students are more successful and engaged in an online class when the instructor is present. Some effective, but simple, ways to improve instructor presence include:

### ***Videos***

A short welcome video is a good way for faculty to introduce themselves to the class. Something quick and captured with a laptop, tablet, or smart phone camera helps students feel welcome and connected to the class.

### ***Meet and greet***

Some students enjoy the opportunity to meet each other in social discussion threads. Faculty might consider setting up a discussion thread with a name like cafe, campfire, or lounge or give students a fun prompt that allows them to introduce themselves and share interests.

### ***Help me!***

Students can be a great resource for each other when questions arise. Creating a thread where students can post questions about how to do something, when something is due, or for clarification on an assignment is a good way to establish a collaborative environment among the students. Very often, classmates will answer the question before the instructor is able to do so.

### ***Announcements***

Weekly announcements are a good way to show students that faculty are engaged in the class and to keep students checking in regularly. These can be alerts to important projects coming up, notifications that grades are available, or congratulations on good work. Too many announcements can be overwhelming, so faculty should plan their announcements thoughtfully. To learn more, follow this link: [Announcement Tutorial](#).

### ***Checklists***

Providing a weekly checklist can keep students organized and on track. The checklist should include each of the activities for the week: readings, class discussions, mini-assignments, project scaffolding, and so on. Faculty can also use the checklists to make sure that feedback has been given where and when appropriate.

### ***Details***

Extensive instructions on student responsibilities are appreciated by students. Because they don't have the opportunity to ask questions during class, adding extra details will help them feel more confident that they are understanding their work.

### ***Low-stakes assignments***

Courses that require students to complete a few high-stakes projects often put undue stress on the student and do not necessarily promote deep learning and retention of information. Faculty should consider assigning a series of low-stakes assignments that give students the opportunity to test out ideas, scaffold their work, and engage with their classmates. These don't all have to be "graded" the same as a test or a major project. Students might receive participation points or receive a pass/fail grade.

### ***Regular feedback***

Whether it's in a face-to-face class or an online one, students are often anxious to receive feedback on their performance. Faculty can alleviate this anxiety by commenting on and/or returning feedback to students on a regular schedule. Sometimes this feedback may be extensive, but other times it may be concise. Faculty can let students know when to expect feedback to help mitigate questions about the timeline.

### ***Collaboration***

Providing students the opportunity to work together in a class not only helps them feel connected to the course, the classmates, and the instructor, but it also helps them to develop collaboration skills and strategies for learning and working in a digital world. Faculty should not assume that students will know how to do this right away. Working in groups can get messy and become frustrating. Faculty can help students by providing tips and guidance.

### ***Edge Advantages***

The UTEP Edge is a campus-wide student success initiative built on the ideas that we educate talented students, offer enriching experiences, and promote lifelong success. UTEP Connect and the Center for Instructional Design have been developing ways to incorporate Edge Advantages into online courses. For more information, see the Online Edge Guidelines document, Edge Advantages rubrics, and other materials on the [Center for Instructional Design](#) website.

### ***Live sessions***

Unless students are aware in advance of the expectation, faculty should not require students to be available at a certain time and location. However, providing the occasional opportunity to meet with the faculty member or with other students can increase student engagement. Using Zoom, students can meet with faculty during office hours, participate in group work such as peer reviews, or make presentations to a live audience. Faculty should keep in mind that students may be logging in from locations across the world, so time zones will play a factor in students' availability. To learn more, follow this link: [Zoom Tutorials](#).

Live sessions should be recorded so that students can review the material at a later time.

### ***Flexibility and patience***

While online students should be held to the same standards as face-to-face students, faculty teaching an online class should remain flexible and exercise patience. If this is the first time a student has enrolled in an online class, it may take a bit of time until she or he feels comfortable with the learning management system and with self-regulating habits required to keep up with the work. Working with these students to get on track will be to everyone's benefit by the end of the semester.

### ***Formative feedback***

Student feedback helps faculty improve their courses and instructional strategies. While end-of-semester summative evaluations are used to improve future iterations of a course, [formative assessments](#) (such as midsemester evaluations) enable current students to also benefit from positive adjustments.

### ***Course accessibility***

Just as in a face-to-face course, students with a range of abilities will enroll in online classes. In addition to wanting all students to have access to course materials and activities, Section 508 of the American with Disabilities Act requires us to do so. Blackboard Ally is a tool designed to evaluate and improve the accessibility of courses. Ally provides easy-to-follow instructions for remediation of content that may not be accessible to users. More information about using Ally is provided on the [Technology Support Help Desk](#) website.

### ***Due dates and times***

Because many online students work or have other obligations, consider setting due dates at a time that reduces anxiety for students. Late in the evening, perhaps 11:59 p.m., and on the weekend allows online students a bit of flexibility for completing their work.

### ***Outside events and activities***

Asking students to participate in an outside event or activity can be a valuable addition to a course. However, faculty should keep in mind that UTEP Connect students may be located in the El Paso region, across the United States, or anywhere in the world. Students in fully online courses should not be required to come to campus to conduct business or attend class-related functions on or near the UTEP campus. If attending an event is an important part of the course, faculty should ask students to identify an appropriate event or location and seek approval prior to going.



# 8. Syllabus Guidelines

As noted above, state law requires a course syllabus be posted to Faculty Success no later than seven (7) days after the first day of class. When possible, faculty should email the syllabus and course calendar to students one week prior to the course start date. Student rosters are available in Goldmine. Contact the UTEP Help Desk for assistance, if needed. A course syllabus provides a wealth of information about the faculty member and the course to students. There is no one way to write a syllabus, but there are several kinds of information that are essential and will improve communication between faculty and students and that can help guide the class to a successful end. It may be helpful to think of five main sections: Course Information, Course Communication, Course Policies and Course Resources. An online syllabus template is available at the following link: [Online Syllabus Template](#).

## Course Information:

- Course description
- Course objectives and/or learning outcomes
- Required materials
- Course assignments
- Grade breakdown and scale
- Technology requirements

## Course Communication:

- Office hours
- Email/phone
- Blackboard: discussion boards, announcements, etc.
- Netiquette (online etiquette)

## Course Policies:

- Attendance/participation
- Synchronous sessions
- Deadlines
- Make-up work
- Course drop
- Incompletes
- Accommodations
- Scholastic integrity
- Artificial intelligence
- Test proctoring
- Course copyright

## Course Resources:

- Technology
- Academic
- Individual

## Course Schedule:

- Readings
- Assignments/projects
- Tests



## 9. Faculty Communication

For ease of communication, faculty should use Blackboard and/or their UTEP-issued email address for class-related communication. By policy, the @utep.edu email address is the only acceptable email address to be used for UTEP business. Please see UTEP's [Acceptable Use of Information Resources policy](#).

Faculty email accounts are generated automatically once the hiring process is complete. Human Resources or the hiring department will provide the employee with the email address as soon as it is available. To set a login password or to obtain your account information, contact the [Help Desk](#).

To access email with any browser, visit my.utep.edu and sign in with your UTEP username and password, then click on Webmail.

# 10. Services and Support

Sometimes it is challenging to assist online students in accessing resources that are easily available on campus. Extended University has collaborated with many campus units to develop and improve services for students who are not able to come to campus. Several of them are listed here.

## Blackboard Central

If on campus, faculty can visit Blackboard Central for support with face-to-face, hybrid, and fully online courses that contain content inside of the Blackboard LMS. The faculty lab is open M-F, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. or contact them at [blackboardcentral@utep.edu](mailto:blackboardcentral@utep.edu).

## Bookstore

When possible, digital textbooks are more efficient for students to acquire and access prior to the course start date. Textbooks and other materials should be ordered by the Bookstore's deadline, and we advise providing online students with access to the titles at least two weeks prior to the class so that they can be ordered and received before the class starts.

## Center for Accommodations and Support Services

The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) provides assistance to students who require it. To request an accommodation from an instructor, students must register with CASS. Online instructors who have questions about how to provide accommodations to a student should call or email CASS for guidance.

For more information, see the [CASS Student/Faculty Handbook](#) on their website.

## Institute for Scholarship, Pedagogy, Innovation, and Research Excellence (InSPIRE)

The Institute for Scholarship, Pedagogy, Innovation, and Research Excellence (InSPIRE) brings individuals and groups together on campus to promote collaboration and create synergy towards achieving UTEP's institutional goals. Recognizing that the ultimate goal of everything we do is student success, InSPIRE has an obligation to continuously improve as educators and scholars for the benefit of our students. The center aims to create a culture in which high value is placed on professional development and lifelong learning, and to provide increased learning opportunities to support that culture.

InSPIRE serves as the hub that capitalizes on and fosters the rich assets and talents of faculty from all ranks. While connecting shared academic interests across disciplines, the center supports communities of practice and provides professional development opportunities in a variety of areas including teaching and learning, research and creative activities, and leadership.

## Center for Instructional Design

The [Center for Instructional Design](#), or CID, assists faculty in the development and revision of online courses. They make sure that the courses meet SACSCOC accreditation requirements as well as standards of copyright and ADA compliance.



## Help Desk

Both students and faculty experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, and so on) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Help Desk for assistance. Contact the Help Desk via phone, email, chat, their [website](#), or in person if on campus.

## Library

The [UTEP Library](#) is well prepared to assist online students with their research. Most journal articles and many books are available electronically. Librarians are available to work with faculty to make sure their online students have access to important course documents.

## Math Resource Center for Students (MaRCS)

Students can receive tutoring for math courses at the Math Resource Center. Helpful resources are also available on their [website](#).

## Military Student Success Center

UTEP welcomes military-affiliated students to its degree programs, and the [Military Student Success Center](#) and its dedicated staff (many of whom are veterans and students themselves) are here to help personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.

## Miner Learning Center

Students in certain classes (usually core courses) have access to online tutoring through the Miner Learning Center. To see what courses are available for tutoring assistance each semester, please see their [website](#).

## University Writing Center

The University Writing Center is a comprehensive writing resource for all UTEP Connect students. The University Writing Center can assist with any writing project and is available to provide feedback at any stage of the writing process. Synchronous online appointments are available to students through the [website](#) and can be accessed through Zoom.

## UTEP Connect

[UTEP Connect](#) provides assistance to prospective students as they are making decisions about the best institution and academic program for them, advises undergraduate students, and supports online student success. UTEP Connect also provides assistance to faculty for the administration of their courses.



## 11. Academic Policies and Procedures

The following policies apply to all UTEP faculty. Faculty members should also familiarize themselves with college- and/or department-level policies.

### ***Student privacy and FERPA***

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) allows students at an institution of higher education to control outside access to their education records, including requests for information from their parents, guardians, or others as designated by the student. Without a student's written consent, The University of Texas at El Paso may not disclose information from a student's education records to outside third parties. However, students can also provide a standing release allowing UTEP to disclose information to others.

Online student privacy must be maintained at all times by keeping grades secure in Blackboard. Grades must not be viewable to other members of the course. No student grades or information may be posted outside of secured systems any time during or after the semester. If external tools (wikis, blogs, etc.) are used, the faculty member must ensure that Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements are met.

In most cases, it is acceptable for faculty to ask students to post and comment on collaborative and/or social media platforms. However, students should not be required to post information that is protected under FERPA (their class schedule, for example). Faculty comments and grades on student work should never be made public. As a solution, faculty should inform students that their work may be public and provide students with information on making their wikis and blogs private if so desired. Faculty cannot require students to reveal private information to the class and should respect students' requests to not post information for class viewing.

### ***Accessibility***

Section 508 of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) requires instructors to provide equal access to course materials for all students. The Center for Instructional Design assists faculty in making sure their courses are ADA compliant. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must work with the [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#).

### ***Intellectual property***

University rules pertaining to intellectual property can be found in Chapter 4 of the Handbook of Operating Procedures. UT System Board of Regents policies regarding intellectual property can be found in [section 90101](#).

### ***Copyright of course materials***

The TEACH Act (Technology, Education, and Copyright Harmonization) provides guidance for academic institutions relative to copyright regulations. Under the TEACH Act, it may be permissible to make some copyrighted materials available to students if they are:

- Directly related and integral to the course content
- Accessible only by students enrolled in the course
- Retained only for the duration of the class
- Do not exceed the length or amount displayed in a face-to-face class

Students should be made aware of the institution’s copyright policies, specifically that course content may subject to copyright laws and protections.

### ***Research involving human subjects***

All UTEP researchers including faculty, staff, and students who will be conducting human subject research must complete human subject research ethics training and complete the [Institutional Review Board approval process](#).

### ***Use of student work***

When faculty wish to use student work—whether for research or for pedagogical purposes—they must request the students’ permission. To use student work in any research-related project (presentations, publications, posters, etc.), faculty should follow the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process for human subject research including requesting that students complete an IRB approved consent form. When seeking to use student work for publication or pedagogical reasons (e.g., examples of effective projects), the [“Student Authorization and Waiver for Release of Education Records for Publication of Student Authored Materials” form](#) should be completed.

### ***Anti-discrimination***

Any member of UTEP who engages in discrimination or other conduct that is in violation of University policy is subject to the full range of disciplinary action, up to and including separation from UTEP.



## ■ Faculty

### ***Faculty appointments and credentialing***

Faculty teaching online courses are identified and appointed by their academic departments. Those who are new to teaching at UTEP must be credentialed to do so. This process requires that the faculty member submit a CV and transcripts to the academic department.

### ***Teaching online preparation***

Faculty who will teach an online class for the first time must complete the Teaching Online Academy which is provided by the Center for Instructional Design. This facilitated, asynchronous course is offered three times a year and lasts four weeks. Faculty can click on the following link to register: [Teaching Online Academy](#).

Faculty new to teaching with Blackboard should also enroll in the self-paced Blackboard training. To enroll, please request access on the Blackboard Central website.

### ***Faculty-authored textbooks***

Faculty-authored textbooks and materials must be approved in advance. Approval is initiated at the department level and is also granted by the college dean, provost, and University president. The form can be found on the [Provost's Office](#) website.

### ***Compensation***

Faculty appointments are made at the department level. Faculty teaching an online class in-load will not receive additional payment for the course. Faculty teaching on a part-time basis, or as an overload, will receive the rate they would receive for teaching a face-to-face course. Payments must be in alignment with the timeframe of the course. Payments cannot be issued to a faculty member prior to the course start date. Questions about compensation for teaching an online class should be directed to their respective academic department.

### ***Compliance***

All faculty must complete UTEP's compliance modules. The Office of Institutional Compliance will send an email with additional information. For more information, see [UTEP's Standards of Conduct Guide](#).

## ■ Students

### ***Academic honesty***

UTEP students are expected to maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work undertaken at the University. If a faculty member suspects that a student has not upheld this standard in any way, the students' work must be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. The process is available on the [The Office of Community Standards](#) website.

Faculty should provide clear guidance to students on the acceptable uses of artificial intelligence programs such as ChatGPT. If artificial intelligence is prohibited in your class, please make that course policy explicit. This may be done in the syllabus, in discussion, on individual assignments, and elsewhere.

### ***Grade grievances***

If a student has a question about a grade, he/she should email course faculty for clarification. However, students may challenge a final grade only on the basis of: malice, bias, arbitrary or capricious grade determination or impermissible discrimination. More information is available at the [Dean of Students website](#).

### ***Late registration***

Students must be registered for a UTEP Connect course the Friday prior to the course start date. Students are not permitted to register for a UTEP Connect course after the first day of class.

### ***Course withdrawal***

It is the student's responsibility to drop a course that he/she no longer wishes to take. Grades for dropped courses are assigned as follows:

1. If a student drops before the official census date of the semester, neither the course nor a grade will appear on the student's academic record.
2. If a student drops after the census date, but before the student-initiated course drop deadline, a grade of W will be assigned.
3. With the exception of a complete withdrawal, if the student drops after the student-initiated course drop deadline, instructors will determine a grade of W or F for the course. A grade of W should be considered only under exceptional circumstances and must be approved by the instructors and department chair of the course.
4. In the event of a complete withdrawal, a grade of W will appear on the student's academic record.

### ***Withdrawal due to active military service***

Students who have to withdraw because they have been called to active military service must submit a request with supporting documentation to the Student Withdrawal Committee. Students may either receive a refund for the course, an Incomplete for the course, or an appropriate final grade if the instructor deems that a substantial amount of coursework has been completed.

### ***Students in disaster areas***

Online students who are located in, or are called to work in, declared disaster areas should contact a UTEP Connect advisor who will provide assistance. Affected students may choose to work with their instructors to complete the work, request an Incomplete with faculty approval, or withdraw from the courses.

### ***Incomplete grades***

A grade of Incomplete should be issued only in exceptional circumstances and requires the instructor to complete a form located inside of the faculty services tab in Goldmine. According to University policy, the student will have up to one year to complete the work. However, in order to encourage students' progress toward their degrees and taking into account the instructor's availability, an earlier date may be agreed upon between the faculty member and the student. When the work is complete, faculty can submit a grade change form with the new grade. If a grade change form is not submitted within a year, the grade will automatically change to an F. A student may not enroll in a course in which she or he has an unresolved grade of I. Click the following link for instructions on completing the Incomplete Grades form: [Incomplete Grades form](#).

# 12. Important UTEP Websites

## ■ Online programming and support

Extended University

<https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/>

UTEP Connect

<https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/utepconnect/index.html>

Center for Instructional Design

<https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/cid/index.html>

Institute for Scholarship, Pedagogy, Innovation, and Research Excellence (InSPIRE)

<https://www.utep.edu/faculty-development/>

UTEP Technology Support/ Help Desk

<https://www.utep.edu/technologysupport/>

## ■ Student services and information

Center for Accommodations and Student Support

<https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/>

Military Student Success Center

<https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/mssc/>

Miner Learning Center

<https://www.utep.edu/mlc/>

Office of Community Standards

<https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/standards/>

Registration and Records

<https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/registrar/>

Student Affairs

<https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/>

University Bookstore

<https://www.bkstr.com/texaselpasostore/home>

University Library

<https://www.utep.edu/library/>

University Writing Center

<http://uwc.utep.edu/index.php>

UTEP Edge

<https://www.utep.edu/edge/>