

## Teaching Standards

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### About the Teaching Standards

Faculty who teach with Brandeis Online are expected to adhere to the following teaching standards. Faculty will receive feedback regarding their adherence to these standards approximately four weeks after the session ends.

Please note: these standards are not exhaustive. Faculty must also adhere to the instructional policies outlined in the Brandeis Online Instructor Reference Manual, Brandeis University Faculty Handbook.

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### Teaching Standard 1 - Course Logistics and Facilitation

#### Course Content Visibility

Faculty are responsible for ensuring that students are able to view and access course content throughout the session in a timely manner. The expectation is that the course will be visible to students one week prior to the term start date inclusive of the welcome announcement, syllabus, and the first week of the course content.

Once the session begins, faculty are required to have at least three weeks of content (the current and two future weeks) available to students at all times. Additionally, faculty are strongly encouraged to make all weeks of the course visible from the start of the session.

#### Announcements and General Facilitation

Faculty are expected to communicate with students through class announcements and monitor other course communication forums to address student questions and concerns. At a minimum, faculty should post an announcement at the start of each week outlining the topic and activities students will engage in during the week ahead. The announcements forum may be used to post reminders, notifications that grades are available, and weekly wrap-up messages throughout the session to ensure students are well-informed.

Faculty are responsible for responding to student questions within a 48 hour timeframe. If an emergency arises and the instructor will be absent from the course for more than two consecutive days, students must be notified via course announcement and the Brandeis Online staff must be notified so that coverage for the course may be arranged if necessary.

#### Course Technology

Faculty are required to use the LMS and related university-supported tools to facilitate their online course. The course gradebook, discussion forums, communications tools, and content sections must be properly configured and utilized for the purpose of communicating with students, posting course materials, and delivering grades and feedback. Learning Design staff

can assist with configuration and consult on effective use of the technology. If an instructor wants to use a non-university supported tool for course communications (e.g. Slack), they must consult with the Assistant Director of Faculty Relations and Assistant Director of Online Learning first.

## Teaching Standard 2 – Instructor Presence & Engagement

Instructors' presence within the course and their engagement with students is critical to fostering an effective learning experience. The following standards for presence and engagement are intended to ensure that students will benefit from the instructor's professional and subject matter expertise throughout their learning experience.

### Synchronous Course Overview Session

Faculty are required to schedule a synchronous course overview session during the first week of the course to review the course syllabus, discuss major assignments, and answer initial student questions. The course overview sessions are *optional* for students, and ideally should be scheduled twice in the first week to accommodate student schedules. A link to a recording of the session should also be placed in the course for those unable to attend.

### Engagement in Discussions and Collaborations

Faculty are required to engage in and facilitate discussions and other collaboration activities within their online courses. Active engagement includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Responding directly to students' discussion posts/contributions
- Summarizing the major themes of a discussion
- Sharing one's own experiences and perspectives
- Probing with follow-up questions
- Highlighting or summarizing important points
- Redirecting or correcting misconceptions when necessary.

Instructors may do this via the discussion forums, announcement forums, video/audio recordings, or utilizing other communications tools within the LMS.

### Virtual Office Hours

Faculty are required to provide students with access to one-on-one instructor support by way of virtual office hours. Virtual office hours may be conducted on a by-appointment basis or offered on a consistent weekly schedule, and should be conducted via the instructor's Brandeis Zoom account. Instructors should anticipate allocating 1 to 3 hours per week for virtual office hours.

### Communication: Tone and 'Netiquette'

Much of the communication in an online course is mediated via text. As a result, instructors must consider the way their written communications may be received by students. "Netiquette" refers to the rules and norms for interacting with others online in a way that is courteous, respectful, and polite. Responsiveness and timeliness are also hallmarks of good netiquette. GPS faculty are encouraged to model netiquette in their online communications and promote it among their students.

## Teaching Standard 3 – Individual Feedback & Grades

In online courses, the majority of mentorship and guidance provided by the instructor is in the form of feedback on assignments and discussion participation. The following standards are intended to ensure that grades and feedback are provided in a way that is conducive to fostering an effective online learning experience.

### Grades and Feedback

Faculty are required to provide numerical grades to students for all graded activities. Grades should be posted in the LMS gradebook within 7 days. Numerical grades should be individualized and awarded based upon criteria outlined in the rubric and reflective of the student's effort toward meeting the assignment criteria. In general, students should be notified via the LMS when grades and feedback have been posted.

When providing feedback, use a supportive and encouraging tone, clearly highlighting specific achievements and constructively addressing areas for improvement, ensuring students understand how to apply these insights to enhance their future work

- Language explaining the student's earned grade and the rationale for any point deductions
- Use a positive and encouraging tone in your feedback, focusing on students' strengths and opportunities for growth to inspire confidence and motivation in their learning journey.
- Description of what the student did successfully and what the student could have done more effectively based upon the assignment expectations and rubric, using specific examples from the student's work.
- Details of how the student can improve or apply their success to subsequent assignments