



YSU INSTITUTE FOR  
**TEACHING & LEARNING**

INNOVATIVE | INCLUSIVE | INTEGRATIVE

# NEW FACULTY RESOURCE GUIDE

Last Modified: Fall 2023



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
Section 1: YSU Overview .....	4
YSU Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Plan .....	4
Section 2: Your Role as an Instructor .....	7
The Basics.....	7
Reciprocal Responsibilities Between Instructors and Students.....	7
Section 3: Course Design.....	10
Step 1: Articulate Expectations—AKA Develop Learning Outcomes .....	10
Step 2: Define Evidence of Learning and Develop Assessments .....	11
Step 3: Creating a Productive Class Environment.....	17
Section 4: Using Evidence-Based Teaching Practices .....	19
Evidence-Based Teaching.....	19
Bringing it All Together: Using the TEACH Principles of Good Practice .....	21
Section 5: Technology Resources Available for Faculty .....	23
Desktop & Hardware Support Services.....	23
Administrative Support Services.....	23
Teaching and Learning Support Services .....	25
Blackboard Learning Management System .....	26
Course Setup Process.....	26
Resources and Support .....	27
Section 6: Your Role in Supporting Students’ Success.....	28
YSU Faculty Academic Alert System.....	28
Academic Support Services.....	28
Non-Academic Support Services.....	29
Section 7: Key Policy Knowledge.....	31
Federal Laws .....	31
YSU Policies .....	32
Section 8: Life in Youngstown .....	34
Where to Get More Info on Youngstown .....	34
YO! App .....	34



## INTRODUCTION



# YSU INSTITUTE FOR TEACHING & LEARNING

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This resource guide is meant to provide you with some key knowledge about YSU and about teaching classes ahead of your first semester at YSU. The guide is meant as a reference, and it is not necessary to read it cover to cover; rather, we hope it will be a way for you to find information quickly.

We welcome any feedback or thoughts you have on what we could include in future versions to best help faculty in getting off to a good start at YSU!

Best of luck!

YSU Institute for Teaching and Learning



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## SECTION 1: YSU OVERVIEW



Youngstown State University (YSU) is a comprehensive, public, not-for-profit institution, designated by the State of Ohio as an urban research university. The institution has a current enrollment of approximately 10,000 undergraduate students. The university offers degrees at the Associate, Bachelor, Master, Specialist, and Doctoral levels, totaling 146 degree programs, as well as 37 certificate programs across a wide variety of disciplines within six undergraduate academic colleges and a college of graduate studies.

The institution has been regionally accredited since 1945 but has played an educational role in the region since the late 1800s. Formerly known as Youngstown College, the institution became Youngstown University in 1955 and then became part of the Ohio system as Youngstown State University in 1967.

You can check out this [university profile](#) for prospective students for an overview of YSU.

## YSU MISSION, VISION, VALUES, AND STRATEGIC PLAN

### YSU'S MISSION

**An Institution of Opportunity: *YSU inspires individuals, enhances futures, and enriches lives.***

As a student-centered university, Youngstown State University's mission is to provide innovative lifelong learning opportunities that will inspire individuals, enhance futures, and enrich lives. YSU inspires individuals by cultivating a curiosity for life-long learning; enhances the futures of our students by empowering them to discover, disseminate and apply their knowledge; and enriches the region by fostering collaboration and the advancement of civic, scientific, and technological development. YSU's culture of enrichment flourishes in our diverse, accessible, and quality education.

### VISION

Youngstown State University is where students thrive in their educational and career pursuits, where scholarship creates innovative solutions, and where community engagement is a cornerstone of collaboration that collectively contribute to the sustainable prosperity of the region and beyond.

### VALUES

We—the faculty, staff, administrators, and students of Youngstown State University—hold the following values essential to achieving the mission and realizing the vision.

- *Centrality of Students* – We put students first, fostering their holistic and lifelong success.
- *Excellence and Innovation* – We bring academic excellence and innovation to learning and life for all stakeholders.
- *Integrity and Human Dignity* – We root all behaviors, decisions, and actions in the achievement of integrity, mutual respect, collegiality, equity, and inclusion.
- *Collaboration and Public Engagement* – We embrace collaboration and create innovative partnerships to foster sustainability and enrich our university, our culture, and region.

### YSU STRATEGIC PLAN

YSU's Strategic Plan—Plan for Strategic Actions to Take Charge of Our Future—guides the direction of the university and helps to focus our efforts into the future. For an overview of the Strategic Plan, see [here](#), for more information, including Academic area goals and current initiatives, visit the [YSU Strategic Planning website](#).

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## YSU LEADERSHIP PROFILES



**Interim President Helen K. Lafferty, Ph.D.** - Helen K. Lafferty, Ph.D. began her tenure as interim president of Youngstown State University on Feb. 1, 2023. A native of Youngstown and graduate of Ursuline High School, Lafferty earned bachelor's and master's degrees from YSU and a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh, followed by post-doctoral work at the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard University, and the National University of Ireland-Galway. For more than four decades, Lafferty has been an administrator and a faculty member at Villanova University just outside Philadelphia. She has taken a sabbatical from Villanova to serve as interim president at YSU. More information on President Lafferty can be found [here](#).



**Provost Brien N. Smith, Ph. D.** - Brien N. Smith, Ph.D. was named Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs in 2019. Provost Smith previously worked as a Dean of the business college at Indiana State University, and before that spent 23 years at Ball State University in Indiana in a variety of capacities, including assistant chair in the Department of Management, assistant dean for Graduate Programs, chair of the Department of Marketing and Management and associate dean of the Miller College of Business. He also served two terms as chair of the University Faculty Senate at Ball State. More information on Provost Smith can be found [here](#).

**YSU Senior Leadership:** members of YSU senior leadership may be found here: [University Administration](#)

**YSU College Deans:** College and Dean information below; you can also visit this [site](#) for the Associate Deans and support staff for each of the colleges.

- [Bitonte College of Health and Human Services \(BCHHS\)](#): Dean Jeffery B. Allen ([bio](#))
- [Beeghly College of Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, and Education \(BCLASSE\)](#): Dean Charles Howell ([bio](#))
- [Cliffe College of Creative Arts \(CCCA\)](#): Dean Phyllis M. Paul ([bio](#))
- [College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math \(STEM\)](#): Dean Wim Steelant ([bio](#))
- [Williamson College of Business Administration \(WCBA\)](#): Dean Kelly Wilkinson ([bio](#))
- [College of Graduate Studies](#): Dean Sal Sanders ([bio](#))

**Department Chairs:** for a current list of Academic Department Chairpersons and their support staff, visit this [site](#).

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## YSU ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

If you'd like to see how different university divisions are organized and staff in each, visit the [HR Organizational Development](#) site and click on "Organizational Charts." **You will need your YSU ID and password to access the OneDrive files.** There are charts for:

- [Academic Affairs](#)
- [Division of Workforce Education and Innovation](#)
- [Finance and Business Operations](#)
- [Legal Affairs and Human Resources](#)
- [President's Division](#)
- [Student Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness](#)

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## WHO ARE YSU STUDENTS?

To learn a bit more about the students you'll be teaching, we have several resources for you to explore:

[Institutional Research and Analytics Campus Facts](#): offers yearly institutional data including enrollment, headcounts, retention, and degrees awarded.



The [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) is a survey offered to students every other year that asks students about their educational experiences and how YSU supports their education. The [Snapshot Report](#) offers a good overview of students or you can see the data and additional reports on the NSSE site.

In addition, YSU surveys students biennially to ask them about their satisfaction with their overall college experience with the [Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Surveys](#). The data from this survey provides a picture of student perception of various areas of university life.

Finally, the National Center for Education Statistics maintains a website that provides overview information about institutions, called College Navigator. They have a [YSU profile](#) based on information we report to the Department of Education.



## SECTION 2: YOUR ROLE AS AN INSTRUCTOR

### THE BASICS

Let’s start with the basic elements of your job. There are several places you can reference to be sure you are clear on all your position responsibilities:

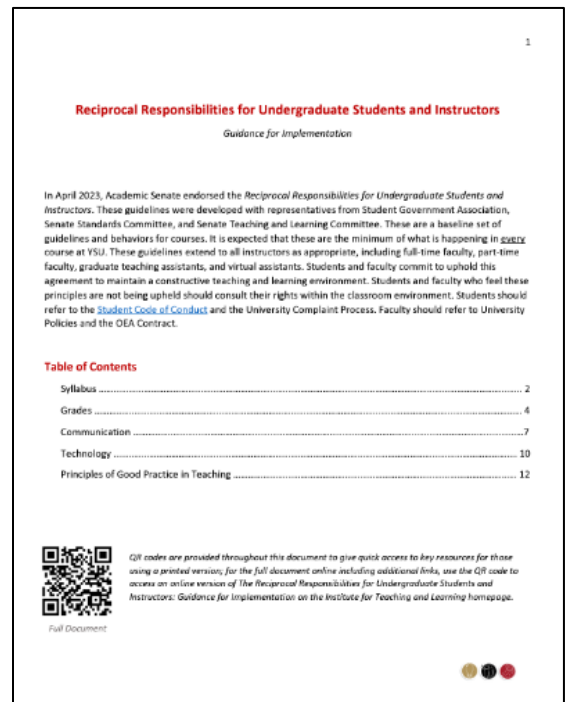
1. The posting language for your position. Because the specific description varies depending on the department, program, etc., you should refer to this posting. If need be, you can reach out to your Chairperson or the [Office of Human Resources](#) for a copy of the posting.
2. Full-time faculty are part of the YSU-OEA bargaining unit, and the responsibilities of faculty positions are covered by the YSU-OEA agreement. Visit the [Bargaining Unit Agreements page](#) on the Human Resources website for the most up-to-date agreement or contact your OEA representative.

### RECIPROCAL RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS

In April 2023, Academic Senate endorsed the *Reciprocal Responsibilities for Undergraduate Students and Instructors*. These guidelines were developed with representatives from Student Government Association, Senate Standards Committee, and Senate Teaching and Learning Committee. These are a baseline set of guidelines and behaviors for courses. It is expected that these are the minimum of what is happening in every course at YSU. These guidelines extend to all instructors as appropriate, including full-time faculty, part-time faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and virtual assistants.

Students and faculty commit to uphold this agreement to maintain a constructive teaching and learning environment. Students and faculty who feel these principles are not being upheld should consult their rights within the classroom environment. Students should refer to the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and the University Complaint Process. Faculty should refer to University Policies and the OEA Contract.

**Guidance of Implementation:** In addition to the Reciprocal Responsibilities listed below, the Institute for Teaching and Learning created a [Guidance for Implementation document](#) to support your classroom practices.



### SYLLABUS

Instructor Classroom Practices	Undergraduate Student Classroom Practices
On the first day of classes, instructors commit to provide the syllabus (a draft, at minimum, including required texts/materials, tentative schedule), unless there are extenuating circumstances such as a late course assignment.	On the first day of classes, students should have the syllabus (a draft, at minimum, including required texts/materials, tentative schedule), unless there are extenuating circumstances such as a late course assignment.
By the 7 <sup>th</sup> business day of the semester, instructors commit to provide a completed syllabus.	By the 7 <sup>th</sup> business day of the semester, students should have a completed syllabus.



Instructors commit to post their syllabi to Blackboard.	Students commit to read and comprehend their syllabi.
Material deviations from the syllabus must not harm the students. Updates to the syllabus must be posted and communicated to students in writing.	Students commit to stay informed about any changes to the syllabus by referring to any updated syllabus version.
The syllabus should contain elements in the YSU <a href="#">Common Syllabus</a> .	Students commit to ask clarifying questions about the syllabus as soon as possible.

## GRADES

Instructor Classroom Practices	Undergraduate Student Classroom Practices
Instructors commit to communicate to each student a clear idea of their grade trajectory in the course by three weeks prior to the last day to withdraw (including, but not limited to, substantive feedback such as grades, points, verbal or written assessment).	Students commit to stay abreast of their grade trajectory and to communicate with an instructor before withdrawing from a class due to concern about their grade.
Instructors commit to give feedback and/or return graded material as soon as possible (e.g., within two weeks during a regular semester term unless otherwise indicated).	Students commit to actively review grades and seek feedback about performance in a timely way (e.g., within one week after receiving feedback or graded material).
Instructors commit to post grades/assignment scores to Blackboard or equivalent learning management system.	Students commit to check for grades/assignment scores in the designated location, whether Blackboard or equivalent learning management system.

## COMMUNICATION

Instructor Classroom Practices	Undergraduate Student Classroom Practices
Instructors commit to indicate their preferred method of communication on the syllabus.	Students commit to adhere to instructors' preferred methods of communication.
Instructors commit to maintain a professional demeanor when interacting with students (e.g., using preferred names/titles, communicate about missing scheduled meetings).	Students commit to maintain a professional demeanor when interacting with instructors (e.g., use preferred names/titles, communicate about missing scheduled meetings).
Instructors commit to respond to student electronic communication within two business days.	Students commit to respond to instructor electronic communication within two business days.
Instructors commit to communicate course information to students in clear and consistent locations.	Students commit to seek information in the course syllabus, announcements, etc. prior to contacting the instructor with questions.





Instructors commit to connect students with help (i.e., early alert system) where necessary to support student success.	Students commit to use resources and seek help recommended to them by their instructor to support their success (e.g., Writing Center, IT Service Desk).
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## TECHNOLOGY

Instructor Classroom Practices	Undergraduate Student Classroom Practices
Instructors commit to make policies clear regarding use of technology, cell phones, participation, etc. in the classroom	Students commit to follow course policies regarding use of technology, cell phones, participation, etc. in the classroom.
Instructors commit to provide resources or links to resources to assist students with expected technology competencies, including learning management systems.	Students commit to become proficient in expected class technology and seek additional assistance in a timely manner if needed.
Instructors will adhere to <a href="#">University Policy</a> regarding audio and video recording in the classroom.	Students will adhere to <a href="#">University Policy</a> regarding audio and video recording in the classroom. <a href="#">LINK</a> to University Policy.

## SECTION 3: COURSE DESIGN

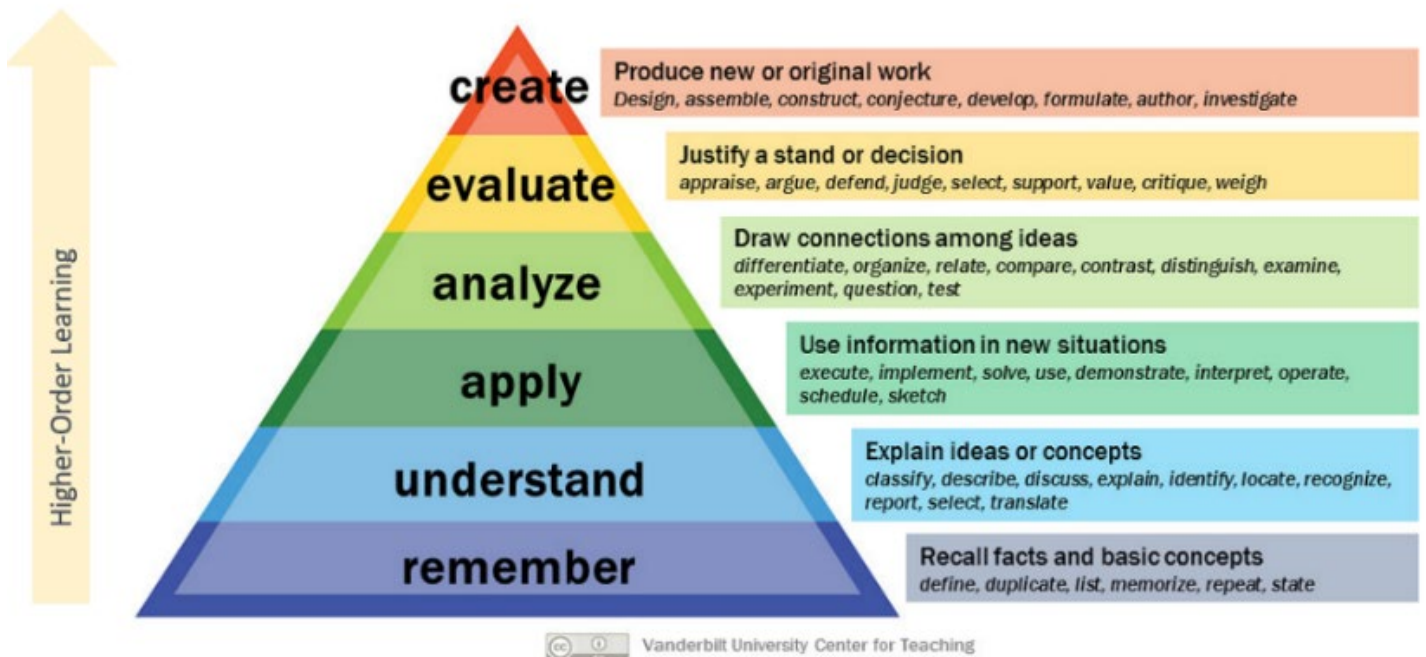
Considering the design of your courses can ensure that you clearly communicate your content and that students will be able to understand and integrate the information and skills. One effective way to design courses is through a backwards design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The backward design model is learner-focused since the model focuses on student knowledge and demonstration, not what the instructor does. The model also lends itself to transparent and integrated instruction—every activity has a purpose and that approach combats student concerns about “busywork.” The backward design model involves three main stages: articulate your expectations, define evidence of learning, and structure the class to help a student pursue the course goals.

### STEP 1: ARTICULATE EXPECTATIONS—AKA DEVELOP LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student learning outcomes (SLOs) define what you want students to know and be able to do upon successful completion of your course. This is different than what you will do—SLOs are learner-, not instructor-, focused. SLOs are also different than course goals. Course goals tend to be more based on instructor behaviors, “fuzzier,” or might be inside a student’s head and not easily observed. LOs are focused on how students might be able to demonstrate what they know.

### DEFINING WAYS AND LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE WITH BLOOM’S TAXONOMY

Typically, when designing learning outcomes, we utilize Bloom’s revised taxonomy (2001), which is a theoretical framework for organizing ways of knowing. The taxonomy generally moves from less to more complex. Learning outcomes in college courses are most often focused on cognitive learning, so they would focus on the continuum of lower-order to higher-order thinking. Bloom also developed psychomotor and affective taxonomies, which may be of use in some fields, such as physical therapy or counseling. Click [here](#) for an overview of the three domains of learning.



SLOs use verbs to operationalize the ways of knowing and clarify how we expect students to demonstrate their learning. The figure outlines both the levels of Bloom’s revised taxonomy as well as common verbs associated with knowledge demonstration at that level. For example a student being asked to demonstrate remembering might be asked to *define* a term or *list* a set of terms, while a student being asked to demonstrate evaluation might be asked to *critique* a theory. There are many online resources available with tables of Bloom’s taxonomy verbs for writing SLOs; we have provided a simple one here, but a quick Google search will yield many additional options.



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## WRITING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Now you are ready to write student learning outcomes that summarize what you want your students to know and/or be able to do because of completing your course. Typically, courses have around three to five learning outcomes for a course, and they should be broad enough to summarize all the major content of the course.

Deciding at what level to write your learning outcomes depends on several factors, including course level, type of content, and place in the curriculum. We generally expect students in introductory or lower-level courses might only achieve knowledge at a mid-level of Blooms (apply or analyze), while those who complete a program to be at the higher levels of Blooms (analyze, evaluate, create).

For writing student learning outcomes, higher levels of knowledge generally include lower levels of knowledge. In other words, if a learning outcome for the course is that students can apply a theory, that learning outcome “contains” that students remembered and understood the concept as well.

Writing learning outcomes can follow a simple formula. Generally, the structure is, “Students will be able to (action verb) (something). Sometimes learning outcomes contain a condition, such as “as a result of (experience/activity/assignment),” but this is not required or necessary in the case of course SLOs. Here is an example, “Students will participate effectively as a task-oriented team.”

To write good learning outcomes, you want to check that your SLOs follow good practice. Good learning outcomes:

- Use action verbs.
- Can be observed (can’t observe inside someone’s head).
- Are measurable (can’t measure behavior after the class ends).
- Are done by the learners.
- Are limited to one concept (avoid the word “and” to limit to one concept).
- Avoid vague words like “know” or “understand.”

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## DEPARTMENT AND UNIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

There may be other considerations to consider when designing or modifying a course, such as: is the course a general education course? If so, there are general education outcomes that must be included on the syllabus and addressed through the course content and assessments. Another consideration is where does the course fit within your degree program(s)? Are there program-level outcomes that need to be addressed as well? If you aren’t sure about where your course fits in the program or general education curriculum, check with your Chair or Program Director.

## STEP 2: DEFINE EVIDENCE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOP ASSESSMENTS

Once you have defined course SLOs, you might be tempted to get started on the content of your course. However, in backward design, the second step is deciding what acceptable evidence of learning looks like and what form this evidence should take. The goal of deciding acceptable evidence is about “unpacking” your SLOs and specifying how students would demonstrate those outcomes.

Outcome criteria are also written in a learning outcome format but are more specific, and usually, there are multiple criteria to represent different dimensions of learning. For example, if you have an outcome-focused on writing, there may be criteria focused on the argument, writing to the audience, proper grammar, style, etc.

For example, if you have the course level outcome: “Students will participate effectively as a member of a task-oriented team,” then you might write the following outcome criteria:

- Students will follow a project task list.
- Students will produce a co-written paper.



- Students will complete a self-assessment of their contributions to the project team.

## ORGANIZING OUTCOME CRITERIA

Once you have defined your criteria, there are several ways to organize the criteria. Outcome Criteria can be a continuum, from a checklist of expectations to a fully developed rubric, but regardless, students need to know what you are looking for in your assignment. It is also helpful to differentiate between the criteria for adequate versus exceptional work. Providing criteria can also be used in or out of class for peer review, providing the opportunity for students to catch issues before submission (as well as saving your time in grading).

There are three basic types of rubrics: checklists, holistic rubrics, and analytic rubrics. **Checklists** are the simplest type of rubric and list accomplishments that are evident in the students' work. **Holistic rubrics** describe levels of performance about the overall quality of the paper or project, without considering the components of student work separately. **Analytic rubrics**, guide the scoring of student work on multiple traits first and then sum the individual scores to arrive at a total score. We will discuss the basics of writing a simple analytic rubric.

A rubric is a chart that has the categories or dimensions of learning on one axis and the levels of achievement on the other axis. Each of the cells uses descriptive language to describe characteristics associated with each level of achievement within each aspect/dimension of performance. Here is a playful example from Jennifer Gonzalez in her Cult of Pedagogy [article](#) on different types of rubrics:

Breakfast in Bed Analytic Rubric					
	Beginning (1)	Developing (2)	Accomplished (3)	Exemplary (4)	Score
Food	Most food is colder or warmer than it should be, is under- or over-seasoned, or is under- or overcooked.	Some food is colder or warmer than it should be, is under or over-seasoned, or is under or overcooked	All food is at the correct temperature, adequately seasoned, and cooked to the eater's preference.	All food is perfectly cooked and seasoned to the eater's preference. Additional condiments are offered.	
Presentation	More than one item (tray, napkin, or silverware) is dirty or missing.	Tray, napkin, or silverware may be dirty or missing.	Food is served on a clean tray, with napkins and silverware. Some decorative additions may be present.	Food is served on a clean tray, with napkins and silverware. Several decorative touches are added.	
Comfort	Wake-up is abrupt, little to no help with seating, and the recipient is rushed and crowded during the meal	Wake-up is somewhat abrupt, the recipient may struggle with seat adjustment, or there may be some rushing or crowding during eating.	The recipient is woken gently, assisted in seat adjustment, and given reasonable time and space to eat.	The recipient is woken gently and lovingly, assisted until seating is just right, and given abundant time and space to eat.	

For examples of rubrics in different disciplines and with different types of assignments, check out Carnegie Mellon's Eberly Center's [guide](#) on rubrics. Finally, whatever the final form and function of your rubric(s), consider sharing them with your students. Transparency in expectations provides a powerful way to [communicate what students need to do](#) to be successful.

## PROVIDING EXEMPLARS

Nearly as important as providing criteria is providing examples of what your assignment looks like in real-world practice. To avoid [problems](#), such as a class full of copies of the exemplar, provide multiple examples across a range of performances—you could include examples of excellent work, and some only adequate ones as well. Most interesting



are those exemplars that have both clear strengths and weaknesses. Encouraging students to analyze samples (using your criteria) provides some critical reflection on how they should guide their efforts.

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## ALIGNING ASSIGNMENTS WITH EXPECTATIONS

Sometimes determining appropriate criteria makes apparent what types of assignments are needed to evaluate, but at other times it is less apparent. And, in addition to assessments to evaluate student knowledge, it is also beneficial to align homework and other low-stakes assessments to both the SLOs and the type of performance desired. Check out this short video, "[Professor Dancelot and the Perils of a Misaligned Course](#)" from BYU for a humorous cautionary tale on alignment.

When selecting appropriate assessments, align the assignments with the SLOs and expectations for the course or module. This includes matching the Bloom's level at which you expect students to perform. If the expectation is that students are evaluating information, then a multiple-choice test may not be the best evidence (unless you have the measurement expertise to develop higher-order items). Similarly, if they are only asked to remember something, then a quiz asking them to identify or define terms may be acceptable. In addition to the examples in the table below, check out this [chart](#) on selecting assessments based on the desired performance from West Virginia University.

Bloom's Level	Course Outcome	Sample Assessment
<b>Remember</b>	Recall the laws associated with probability and various statistical models.	Multiple-choice questions addressing differences in statistical models and problem-solving.
<b>Apply</b>	Apply basic sociological theories to current controversies in society.	Students work in groups to create a poster board presentation and present their topic of choice, explaining how it relates to sociological theory.
<b>Create</b>	Design an exercise program to address the needs of a specific population.	Have students create a 2-week exercise plan that accurately reflects the needs of the required individual.

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## FORMATIVE VERSUS SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

In addition to deciding what evidence of learning students need to demonstrate, it is important to include assignments that allow students to practice what they are learning and get feedback on their progress. Assessments that provide these elements are called **formative assessments**. In addition, formative assessments encourage engagement in the course and provide opportunities for students to gain confidence in their skills or, in some cases, information on what they need to work on to be successful. These types of assessments should be no- or low-stakes in terms of course points, small in scope/length, and frequent.

In addition to more traditional formative assessments, such as homework or problem sets, there are Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) that can provide feedback to you as an instructor about how your students are progressing. As an added benefit, they easily provide variety to your class and engage student interest. An example of this would be the Muddiest Point. In this CAT, at the end of the class period, students are asked to jot down (on paper, or electronically) the least clear point they encountered. This provides feedback to you as an instructor if there are areas that students are struggling with and may benefit from review or further instruction. For more information on CATs, check out this short [guide](#) from IUPUI's Center for Teaching and Learning

Assignments that focus on the student's level of mastery and form central evaluation evidence are considered **summative assessments**. These tend to represent a larger portion of the course points and do not provide as much opportunity for a student to learn and grow from, as they represent an appraisal of knowledge and skills.



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## PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENTS

Peer and self-assessment activities can help students see examples of others' work and get feedback on their performance. As an added benefit, peer and self-assessment can reduce your workload and result in higher quality assignment submissions. These activities provide opportunities for students to develop critical and reflective thinking. However, without sufficient guidance the experience may not be as fruitful as it could be.

Teaching students how to self-assess their learning and progress is a valuable tool for them, both in and after college. The literature says that self-assessment encourages reflective practice, increases motivation, and promotes ownership of their learning. You can use a variety of different tools, but a great one to start with is using cognitive wrappers. Cognitive wrappers are a short survey given to students when returning an exam or other assignment—but without a grade! Students are asked to reflect on their level of preparation, the types of mistakes they made, and what behaviors they may adjust in the future. Only after completing and submitting the survey will they get access to their final grade. For cognitive wrapper templates, click [here](#) or [here](#), or for a more detailed explanation of the metacognition principles, click [here](#) for an article by Jose Bowen

There are several considerations when using peer review. In addition to [teaching students to evaluate each other](#), you must communicate the purpose of the exercise and provide clear directions. It is important to be explicit about providing constructive criticism. This may require a practice review, using rubrics for evaluation, using anonymous samples, and/or incorporating the quality of feedback as part of the student's assignment grade. For more on peer review see the Cornell Center for Teaching Innovation [guide](#) on peer assessment.

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## DESIGNING EFFECTIVE PROMPTS

Another consideration with assessment is ensuring that our prompt elicits the desired performance. It is not an uncommon occurrence for someone to visit us in the Institute for Teaching and Learning and say that they gave students an assignment but what they got back was nothing like what they asked for. Not only is it a frustrating experience for the instructor, but also for the students—what's more, it is a missed opportunity for students to practice or apply what they are learning. Faculty have an important role in student success, and that is providing both high standards and high support to students. To this end, it is important to explain to students what performance levels are expected--what success looks like—and there are several ways faculty can communicate these expectations: when creating assignment prompts and when giving assignment examples.

The framework in this section is informed by the TILT (Transparency in Learning and Teaching) Project, with focuses on revealing the “hidden” curriculum in higher education—that is, all the expectations that many students are not aware of when entering college. This approach can have an equity impact because it helps all students better understand expectations. Organizing your assignments in a way that clarifies what you are looking for and why both empower students and create conditions for learning. Click here to learn more about [TILT](#).

We often talk to students about what we want in an assignment, but less often do we talk about why we are asking students to do something. In the TILT Framework, there are two elements to an assignment prompt—purpose and task.

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### Assignment Purpose

In an assignment, it is important to explain to students the skills they will practice as well as the knowledge they will gain. And, in addition to relating these elements to the course outcomes, it is important to relate the skills and knowledge to their real lives. For example, in a career course, a student might be asked to do an informational interview about a career they are considering. In a case like this, the purpose, skills, and knowledge could look something like this:

**Assignment:** *Informational Interview*

**Purpose:** *The purpose of this assignment is to help you make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering.*



**Skills:** *The purpose of this assignment is to help you practice the following skills that are essential to your success in school and your professional life beyond school. In this assignment, you will:*

- *Access and collect needed information from appropriate primary and secondary sources.*
- *Synthesize information to develop informed views.*
- *Compose a well-organized, clear, concise report to expand your knowledge on a subject in your major (or the major you are considering).*

**Knowledge:** *This assignment will also help you to become familiar with the following important content knowledge in this discipline:*

- *Issues facing professionals in a field.*
- *Scholarly research formats for documenting in-text sources and creating reference pages (i.e., bibliographies).*

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## ASSIGNMENT TASK

In an assignment, you should outline specifically what you expect the student to do and how to do it. This means stepping through all the elements of the assignment (e.g., first do this, second do this). You are using your expert knowledge to help focus student effort most effectively and avoid unnecessary or unproductive time. To continue with the interview example above, this is what the task steps would look like:

*Task: to complete this assignment you should:*

- *Select two professionals in your prospective academic discipline and/or career field that are considered experts in an area in which you are interested.*
- *Secure an interview with the professionals for a date and time that is convenient for both of you.*
- *Prepare 8-10 questions to ask professionals about their expertise in a particular academic discipline/career field. The questions must be based on a review of the field using 5 credible sources as defined by the librarian in our research module. Sources should be cited using APA formatting.*
- *Conduct a 20–30-minute, face-to-face interview with each professional to gather knowledge that will help you to make an informed decision about the major/career you are considering. You will want to audio/video record the interview with the interviewee’s permission.*
- *Prepare a typed transcript of the interviews.*
- *Prepare and contrast the information provided by both professionals in an 8-page (1.5-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins) report that documents the advantages and disadvantages of a career in the selected field.*

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## PROVIDING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Believe it or not, [our students want](#) frequent testing and feedback. Consider for a moment the “old school” method of teaching, where the only opportunities for feedback are a grade on a midterm and a final. Not only is that stressful for students, but it leaves almost no opportunity for learning/improving from the testing. Here, a grade effectively ends the learning experience at its current level. What our feedback should instead do is guide students toward success rather than judge them or find fault. In this, it’s important to be regularly transparent about how students are doing and how they can improve and improve and offer opportunities for them to do so.

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## OFFER FREQUENT LOW-STAKES ASSIGNMENTS



Students will feel more efficacy and motivation when they succeed early and often. In place of (or in addition to) high-stakes exams, use [low-stakes assessments](#) (i.e., assignments with low or no course point values) that help students learn in smaller doses. Fixing problems via feedback early in the semester will help students get on the right track before it's too late. In other words, formative assessment and feedback contribute to positive summative assessment and feedback.

---

## TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Good feedback is prompt, specific, and encouraging. There are several things you can do to [make your feedback better](#), and most of them will make your life easier!

- Give feedback as soon as possible. Your students will not only be less frustrated, but they'll also remember the feedback and perform better.
- Be specific; avoid generalizations like "good job," or "needs improvement." Instead, focus on what exactly worked and didn't, and describe how the student can improve. Be sure to find something positive to say (sometimes we're so busy justifying a grade that we forget to say a kind word). Then whenever possible, offer the chance for a redo. **Seeing a grade ends learning; redoing an assignment IS learning.** It also helps to remind students what this bit of information means in the big picture.
- Consider your context and tone. Feedback shouldn't feel like control, or that students are being pitted against each other. It helps to simply explain how and why you give feedback the way you do.
- The more you involve students in the process of giving and taking feedback, the more invested they will feel. Giving them a voice in the process or criteria, using peer feedback, or creating ways to have students [give you feedback](#) can increase student investment.
- [Focus on the behavior](#), and not the person. (e.g., "this sentence..." rather than, "you said...")

A final note. Consider using multiple forms of feedback rather than hitting everything with the same hammer. Some means of feedback are more intimate and personal, others quicker and to the point. Ask students what they like! While many of us are used to written feedback, there are many options, e.g. ([Fiock & Garcia](#)):

- [Rubrics](#): online scoring guides are transparent and less prone to bias.
- [Annotations](#): notes or comments added digitally directly in Blackboard to essays and other assignments.
- [Audio or Video](#): fast, more personal, and less likely to be misinterpreted than writing. Video is also useful for nuanced or complicated feedback.
- [Peer review](#): online systems can save lots of time.
- Embedded comments and tracked changes: show your concerns and how to make changes in [Microsoft Word](#).
- Electronic surveys or live polling: a fast way to judge class understanding.
- Automatic feedback: makes grading seamless. Contact YSU [Instructional Design and Development Center](#) to learn more!

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## PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT, AND UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

Most faculty are not asked to participate in program-, department-, or university-level assessments in their first year. We will not go into detail here but will just touch on the types for your information. For a nice overview of assessment, check out this assessment brief, [What Faculty Need to Know About Assessment](#) from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

As for the assessments done at YSU, there are several:

- [Program Student Learning Outcomes Assessment](#) is a process to evaluate the learning students gain through academic degree programs. The process is facilitated by the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL)
- [General Education Assessment](#): General Education is currently undergoing a revision of the model in Academic Senate; part of that revision will include an assessment of learning in the courses.





- University Assessments: the Institute for Teaching and Learning fields several surveys to students asking about their experiences; the [National Survey of Student Engagement \(NSSE\)](#) and the [Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Surveys](#). Data from these surveys are shared widely across campus and are used in strategic planning, institutional decision-making, and continuous improvement activities.

### STEP 3: CREATING A PRODUCTIVE CLASS ENVIRONMENT

As much as possible, intentionally setting up the environment of your class can pay high dividends in how students see and interact with you and the course content. We will address several of the key features of getting off on the right foot with your students from day one.

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#### USE THE COMMON SYLLABUS

If you do only one item in this section, adopting the recommended Common Syllabus should be it. The Common Syllabus was created by the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee and endorsed by Senate in 2021. The template was developed using literature on best practices in communication and aims to create a welcoming, learner-centered environment. You can use the template to build a syllabus from scratch, adapt your existing syllabus, or transfer information from a syllabus you may have been instructed to use.

A few of the benefits of using the Common Syllabus:

- Already in ADA format, so you don't have to worry about the accessibility of your syllabus.
- Uses warm and encouraging language, while also providing suggestions to outline expectations in areas like technology, attendance, and class responsibilities (including the newly Senate-endorsed [Reciprocal Responsibilities for Undergraduate Students and Instructors](#))
- Has links to all required university policies, so all policies and links are up-to-date and correct (perhaps unlike the course syllabus you were gifted!)
- Has links to a wide array of student academic and non-academic support services (a helpful list for your students and can help familiarize yourself with available resources!)
- Has a link to a guide on using pronouns for faculty.
- Has optional Honors contract language if you have a student seeking an honors designation in your course

ITL maintains the downloadable templates for the recommended, required, and Blackboard versions of the Common Syllabus, as well as the policy and resource links outlined above, on the [YSU Common Syllabus page](#).

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#### GRADING AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Research shows that clearly defining expectations plays an important role in student motivation for learning ([Ambrose et al., 2010](#)). That is why explaining to students what is expected of them is of critical importance, particularly with how they will be evaluated. Explaining to students what and how they will be evaluated, **guides students on how to be successful**.

- Do you clearly outline what is due and when?
- Do you explain your grading criteria for assignments, activities, and/or class participation?

It can also be helpful to provide students with examples of good (and even less good) assignments. Be sure to instruct students on where and how you would like them to submit assignments—if you use Blackboard, it can be helpful to include a [short tutorial](#) on how to submit. A few of the policies to consider are:

1. **Late Work (and Make-up Policies):** Let students know if, and under what circumstances, you will accept late work. Will you allow late work for reduced points? Will you include an “oops token” (an opportunity to turn



work in late for no penalties) or drop the lowest grade in a group of assignments? Finally, how will you handle make-up work for excused and/or unexcused absences?

2. **Academic Integrity:** consider how you will create an environment that supports academic integrity? While the first thought for most is how to “police” against cheating, there are other ways to address this issue, including ways to prevent as well as have students integrate integrity in their work. See this [article](#) by Wa-Mbaleka on Cheating Reduction Strategies or Montclair State University’s [suggestions](#) for generative AI integrity concerns.
3. **Attendance Policies:** student presence is important to learning but consider how you can recognize that our students have lives and responsibilities outside of the classroom as well. Be sure to follow university [policies on absences](#)—it is important to note that recent Ohio law changes require religious accommodation of students.
4. **Technology Policies:** consider how you wish technology to be used during class. A student-centered technology statement could recognize the need for maintaining attention while still enabling the use of technology as a tool. There is some suggested technology language in the Common Syllabus template.

For more information and sample policy language, click [here](#) or see the Common Syllabus template.

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## POSTING SYLLABUS AND GRADES

**Posting the Syllabus:** Making the syllabus accessible to all your students ensures they can stay informed about current class activities and deadlines. While a paper copy may also be helpful, posting your syllabus to Blackboard ensures students have access; in addition, Academic Senate endorsed a policy for faculty to post their syllabus to Blackboard. Instructions to add your syllabus in Blackboard can be found [here](#).

**Posting Grades:** Students should be able to monitor how they are doing in a course. The most consistent way (and easiest for you—fewer emails!) is to post grades on Blackboard. You can add assignments or tests as well as use it for grading tasks. You can also manually add grades into the Blackboard gradebook. Finally, you can configure the gradebook for total points or weighted points according to your class structure. Contact [Cyberlearning](#) for more information on using Blackboard. (Note that all resources are for Blackboard Ultra; for Blackboard Original instructions contact Cyberlearning).

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## EXPECTATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION AND RETURNING WORK

**Communication Expectations:** Let students know how you prefer to be contacted—prefer they only email you? Only message you in Blackboard? Let them know and ask that they use that format. In addition, let them know what turnaround to expect when they email you with a question, such as 48 business hours. Depending on your work style, you may let them know when you do and don’t respond to emails (after a certain time in the evening? Not on weekends? Only on Sunday evening of the weekends? Etc.)

**Returning Assignments:** It is important that you decide on and explicitly set expectations with students regarding when they can expect to see their assignments returned. You may also wish to explain why the intellectual labor of grading takes more than a few hours, such as the importance of providing thoughtful feedback. Note that while you can set one turnaround time (e.g., within two weeks), you could also consider differentiated return times depending on the type of assignment.

An example syllabus grading statement could say something like: *“I believe quality feedback on your assignments provides the opportunity for you to learn and grow as a student; therefore, I require sufficient time to provide feedback to all my students. For homework assignments and weekly quizzes, I will return grades in about one week. For tests and paper assignments, you can expect to receive feedback and grades returned within two weeks.”*

For a few examples of how faculty have worded response time expectation setting (for both grading and email), see this [article](#) from the University of Central Florida.



## SECTION 4: USING EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING PRACTICES

Here are a variety of strategies that can help students feel involved and take more responsibility for course content. Adopting even one or two changes can go a long way.

1. Use classroom assessment techniques ([CATS](#)).
2. Teach students about a [growth mindset](#).
3. Have students engage in metacognition and self-assessment of their learning.
4. Review a host of specific strategies for [STEM classes here](#).

Student-centered teaching can create closer relationships and less distance between students and teachers. Students are much more likely to feel more involved and motivated and to have memorable experiences in your classroom.

### EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING

The scholarship of teaching and learning has produced evidence-based teaching practices – we know what works! We will give you a brief primer on some of the central concepts of best teaching practices.

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### STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

Implicit in all the literature on learning is putting students first. **Student-centered teaching** is an approach that can serve as a lens through which to operationalize the TEACH principles. A student-centered approach can help you see your class experience from a student perspective and can give students more agency in your classroom. This approach *shifts attention and activities to the students*, thus giving them greater involvement and motivation. It also helps students feel more confident and validated for their uniqueness.

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### ENGAGING STUDENTS

As an expert in your field, you certainly have a lot of knowledge and skills that are valuable for your students to learn—but of course, you must have their attention to share your expertise! One thing to consider is how you can create an environment in which students are engaged and eager to learn. While this is an expansive topic, here are a few ideas where you can easily foster engagement:

#### Physical environment:

- Where possible, arrange the classroom/desks in a nontraditional way to encourage student collaboration.
- When possible, sit/walk among students rather than in front.

#### Co-create course structure:

- Work with students to develop course assignments and policies.
- Allow students to help decide point distributions.
- Choose assignments that relate to students' lives, other courses, communities, etc.

#### Student autonomy:

- Allow students to choose assignments from a course assignments menu.
- Use cooperative assignments and group work.
- Give students options for demonstrating knowledge and/or creativity (e.g., paper, poster, website, podcast, play/demonstration, speech, or lecture, etc.)

For more detail and models of student motivation, check out this [guide](#) on student motivation from the Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching.



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## ACTIVE LEARNING

Students learn more when we *lecture less* and help students actively engage in content. When many of us think back to our college classrooms, we recall vibrant (and not so vibrant) lectures from professors, punctuated by occasional exams. Research has since shown that there are superior ways to help students learn and that the “old school” method of classroom lecture is simply ineffective in that regard. Active learning is one of the best – and fun, and easiest – ways to involve students with course material. Active learning is anything that is not passive; in other words, anything that does NOT involve students sitting and merely observing something (lecture, video, etc.). When engaged in active learning, **students are doing things like moving, talking, touching, writing, and creating.**

Many studies have demonstrated that active learning helps students remember information and get better grades. Does this mean you need to stop lecturing? NO. But lectures are more effective when briefly (ten minutes, for example) interrupted by active learning experiences. In the largest and most comprehensive meta-analysis of undergraduate STEM classes, [Freeman et al.](#) found that just 10-15% of class time devoted to active learning resulted in better retention and test performance and that “active learning confers disproportionate benefits for STEM students from disadvantaged backgrounds and for female students in male-dominated fields.”

There are countless ways to incorporate active learning into your classes. The University of Michigan shares a [document](#) that offers a long list of strategies, as well as faculty examples; The K. Patricia Cross Academy has great [toolkits](#) on a variety of active learning strategies and the materials are downloadable for your use.

- **Clarification pauses** – stop lecturing to let students ask questions.
- **Writing activities such as a “minute paper”** – give students one or two minutes to write everything they remember about a concept covered during class.
- **Large-group discussion** – prepare a list of questions for class discussion.
- **Think-pair-share** – students work individually on a problem or question, then compare answers with a partner, then share out with the class.
- **Peer review** – students turn in an assignment to the instructor and another student. The student offers a critical review in addition to the instructor’s review.
- **Brainstorming** – Give individuals or groups a topic or problem and a minute to write as many solutions as possible.
- **Case studies** – have students apply classroom knowledge to real-life stories.
- **Muddiest point** – ask students to jot down one thing from the lecture that they found hardest to understand.

Some [other ideas](#) include student-led reviews, student debates, student-generated exam questions, a class research symposium, journaling, newsletters, and concept mapping. There’s no end to the list of active learning – be creative!

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## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Group work is effective in that it builds community, teaches students to work cooperatively, and fosters an appreciation of diverse viewpoints. Collaborative learning is empirically linked to student engagement, and ultimately learning and success (NSSE). Groups can also accomplish big and complex projects that individuals can’t, and it can be great fun when done right. Conversely, we can all relate to the nightmare group project that we’ve certainly all experienced, and students frequently complain about having to work together. However, learning to work effectively in groups is an essential skill for students' futures ([Riddle, 2016](#)). It takes some strategic thinking and technology integration, but group projects in remote environments can be just as valuable as group projects in face-to-face courses.

Here are some best practices for assigning group work (information adapted from the [Eberly Center](#) at Carnegie Mellon University).

---

## DESIGN THE ASSIGNMENT



- Only use groups if the assignment requires multiple people and diverse opinions and/or will lead to greater engagement and value.
- Create clear outcomes, tasks, and assessments as you would for any other assignment. Share rubrics in advance. Divide the task up into smaller graded steps and estimate the amount of time and effort required for each stage. Be sure that you provide both access and instruction in whatever technology you use.
- Determine group size, three to five is ideal, but consider your learning outcomes. Groups of two are a dyad (not a small group) and groups of more than five become unwieldy. Groups of three can result in the “odd person out,” whereas groups of four or five create more space for slackers. There is no perfect recipe for determining group size, and you know your class best.
- Determine group configuration. Students are more satisfied with self-selected groups, but you might want to mix students based on specific characteristics or motivations. Consider a hybrid approach where students self-select but with limitations (e.g., must be mixed gender, must have at least two different majors, etc.)
- Create interdependence (e.g., create assignments that require discussion/input or mutual reliance, assign roles that mimic real life, assign roles that differ by function such as organizer, note taker, devil’s advocate, etc., require groups to provide periodic feedback).
- Stress individual accountability. Grade the group, but also assess individual contributions to the task, journals, reflections, synthesis of group experience, peer critique, etc.
- Gather feedback from students after the project to improve it.

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## DEVOTE TIME TO TEAMWORK SKILLS

- Allow time for students to get to know each other. Ask groups to share contact information, plan their communication, responsibilities, and work schedule, and discuss how they will constructively handle potential problems (e.g., free-loaders, schedule conflicts, slow work, etc.). Set ground rules for competent group behavior.
- Set expectations for students by sharing resources on how to work in a group. Here are a couple of resources, including [group work tips](#), [group writing](#), and [teamwork skills](#).
- Monitor the groups and give feedback. Congratulate them on good work or intervene if you notice any troubling trends or behaviors. Use private communication with a specific member if warranted.
- Be nimble with strategies to handle changes such as students dropping, ghosting, or being unavailable.
- See the Eberly Center site for some great [group project tools](#) (e.g., group contracts, team roles, self and peer assessments).

## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: USING THE TEACH PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Although our understanding of effective teaching is ever-evolving, YSU has endorsed a set of [Principles of Good Practices in Teaching](#) (referred to as the TEACH principles). When we TEACH at our best, we use evidence-based practices and a student-centered approach. ITL developed a series of TEACH Resource Guides which may be viewed here or accessed through the links below:

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## TRANSPARENT

The teacher...

- [Provides and follows the course syllabus](#)
- [Clearly defines grading and attendance policies](#)
- [Posts syllabus and grades](#)
- [Offers a clear and organized course structure \(calendar, consistent expectations\)](#)
- [Sets expectations for returning student work](#)
- [Connects course activities and learning goals](#)



- Explains what success looks like (e.g., gives examples, rubrics)
- 

## EVIDENCE-BASED

The teacher...

- Uses a variety of student-centered strategies
  - Designs instruction to help students see connections to prior understanding
  - Helps students apply metacognition to their learning
- 

## ASPIRATIONAL

The teacher...

- Participates in professional development related to teaching and learning
  - Stays current in their field of study and its pedagogies
  - Reflects on and continuously improves own teaching and materials
  - Engages in course/dept. assessment of student learning
  - Stays up to date on YSU teaching/classroom policies
- 

## COMMUNICATIVE

The teacher...

- Is available during scheduled student support (office) hours
  - Effectively presents information, and checks for and responds to student understanding
  - Is approachable to students outside the classroom
  - Gives regular and meaningful formative feedback
  - Is an active listener and open to diverse viewpoints
- 

## HUMANE

The teacher...

- Recognizes students' lives impact their role as learners
- Relates subject matter to life outside the classroom
- Inspires and motivates students to learn
- Is encouraging, supportive, and approachable
- Believes that all students can succeed
- Is welcoming and accommodating to all students



## SECTION 5: TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR FACULTY

A key part of being prepared for your first day of classes is to have all your technology tools in place. The following sections are authored by the excellent technology support offices on campus, [IT Training Services](#), and the [Department of Cyberlearning](#).

### DESKTOP & HARDWARE SUPPORT SERVICES

#### SERVICE DESK

The IT Service Desk serves as initial contact for over 15,000 students, faculty, and staff, providing first-level technical support for PCs (both Windows and Mac-based systems), software, printers, smartphones, and tablets.

The IT Service Desk is located on the first floor of Kilcawley Center. Walk-up counter services are 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM, Monday - Friday. Phone support may be obtained by dialing (330) 941-1595, 24/7.

#### TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT PORTAL

YSU's [Technology Support Portal](#) hosts resources available to students, faculty, and staff for technology support. The links hosted include:

- [Submit a Ticket](#)
- [Schedule a Consultation with IT Training Services](#)
- [Classroom Help Quick Links](#)
- [Office Move or Renovation Requests](#)
- [YSU Website Update Request Form](#)

Faculty can also use the Search feature in the Technology Support Portal to search for Knowledge base articles.

#### KNOWLEDGE BASE

YSU's [Knowledge Base](#) is a self-serve online library of information for students, faculty, and staff about the technology and software used on campus. The knowledge base articles are written by university employees and subject matter experts. In addition to general instructional steps, Knowledge Base articles can also include instructional videos and downloadable documents.

### ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

#### BANNER SELF SERVICE

Banner is YSU's enterprise software that hosts the [Penguin Portal](#) and Banner Self-Service. The faculty tab in Banner Self-Service hosts pages important to YSU's Faculty including (but not limited to):

- [PenguinPASS](#)
- [CRM Advise and the Faculty Academic Alert System](#)
- [Class List](#)
- [Faculty Detail Schedule](#)
- [Final Grades](#)

Also located in Banner Self-Service is the page to [modify directory information](#). Faculty should ensure their contact information is correct and up to date.

#### Related Articles:



[Log Into the Penguin Portal](#) / [Reset your YSU password](#) / [Modify Directory Information](#) /

[View Your Class List](#) / [Submit Final Grades](#)

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## EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Banner also hosts the [Employee Profile](#). The Employee Profile hosts important employee information such as contact information, financial documents, and accrued time off balances.

### Related Article:

[Employee Profile](#)

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## PASSWORD RESET SELF-SERVICE

To reset your YSU login password, use the [Password Reset Self-Service](#). This online tool helps users reset forgotten passwords. For additional help resetting your password, contact the IT Service Desk at (330) 941 – 1595.

### Related Article:

[Reset your YSU password](#)

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## PARKING PERMITS

Faculty should navigate to Banner Self Service's Personal Information tab to [purchase/request a parking permit](#).

### Related Article:

[Request a parking permit](#)

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## NEOED

[NEOED](#) is a suite of Human Resource (HR) applications that streamlines and automates many HR functions including recruiting, onboarding, and performance management. In addition to hosting YSU's vacancies, NEOED hosts the hiring procedures to include the search committee process.

### Related Articles:

[Sign in to NEOED](#) / [Navigate the Dashboard](#) / [Onboarding](#) / [Search Committee Process](#)

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## WATERMARK

[Watermark](#) tracks teaching, research, and service activities for faculty and publishes up-to-date faculty profiles in the campus directory. Watermark also expedites workflows for reviews, promotion, and tenure.

### Related Articles:

[About Watermark](#) / [Access Watermark](#) / [View student evaluations](#) / [Add CV Data into Watermark](#) /

[Intent to Apply](#) / [Review, Promotion, and Tenure \(RPT\)](#) /





## TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES

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### IT TRAINING SERVICES

In addition to the support services listed previously, faculty can receive training and support from IT Training Services. IT Training Services offers in-person, virtual, and hybrid [workshops](#) for campus participants. Faculty can also schedule 1-on-1 in-person and virtual [consultations](#) with a member of IT Training Services.

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### CRM ADVISE AND THE FACULTY ACADEMIC ALERT SYSTEM

[CRM Advise](#) is the tool used by YSU advisors to track student advisement needs and offer academic support. The [Faculty Academic Alert System](#) lets advisors know when a student's academic behavior/performance may require immediate attention. The use of the Faculty Academic Alert System encourages students to use academic and student support services offered by YSU and reinforces that YSU cares about each student's success.

#### Related Articles:

[Access CRM Advise](#) | [YSU Advising Dashboard](#) | [Viewing Your Advisees](#) |

[Access the Faculty Academic Alert System](#) | [Sending Alerts](#)

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### PENGUINPASS

[PenguinPASS](#) produces an audit of students' completed work, requirements, and in-progress courses based on the student's declared major, minor, and/or program and catalog year. PenguinPASS benefits students, advisors, and other interested parties by providing a visual checklist of completed and outstanding requirements. PenguinPASS also explains course prerequisites and lists courses that can satisfy the listed requirements.

#### Related Articles:

[PenguinPASS](#) | [What-If Analysis](#)

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### YSU APP CLOUD

The [YSU App Cloud](#) is available for faculty and students who wish to virtually use software found on campus lab computers. The YSU App Cloud is available 24/7 if the user has a computer with a supported web browser and a stable internet connection.

#### Related Articles:

[Access the YSU App Cloud](#) | [Using OneDrive in the App Cloud](#)

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### MICROSOFT 365

YSU provides all students, faculty, and staff with 5 licenses to [Microsoft](#). Microsoft can be used via desktop apps, online, or Microsoft Teams. Faculty should use their YSU email address to conduct YSU business and should utilize their OneDrive to store work-related documents.

#### Related Articles:

[Access OneDrive](#) | [Upload files to OneDrive](#) | [Collaborate in OneDrive](#) |

[Outlook](#) | [Bookings](#) | [Stream](#) | [Teams](#)



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## LINKEDIN LEARNING

Faculty can develop and enhance hard and soft skills using [LinkedIn Learning](#). Faculty can also link LinkedIn Learning courses (or individual videos) into their Blackboard courses for students to watch and/or complete.

### Related Articles:

[LinkedIn Learning](#) | [Integrate LinkedIn Learning in Blackboard](#)

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## WATERMARK SUITE (FACULTY SUCCESS/ COURSE EVALUATION & SURVEYS)

Watermark Suite is used to manage student evaluation of teaching; curriculum vita (CV) activities; and workflows for academic processes such as chairperson review of faculty, pre-tenure review, promotions, tenure with promotion, research professorship, and sabbatical/faculty improvement leave applications. All faculty are requested to maintain their CV data in Activities in preparation for academic reporting cycles and annual reviews, promotion, and tenure.

### Related Articles:

[Faculty Success by Watermark](#) | [Office of Academic Affairs Website](#) | [Course Evaluations and Surveys](#)

## BLACKBOARD LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The designated Learning Management System (LMS) at YSU is Blackboard, a versatile platform for online teaching, learning, community building, and knowledge sharing. Blackboard serves as an effective tool for both fully online classes and traditional classroom support.

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## ENHANCING YOUR COURSE WITH BLACKBOARD

To optimize your use of Blackboard, consider implementing the following strategies:

- Centralize course materials by posting your syllabus and recorded lectures, creating a comprehensive resource hub.
- Utilize the gradebook for personalized feedback and transparent grade presentation.
- Efficiently manage assessments by generating assignments and tests within Blackboard, streamlining submission, collection, and grading processes.
- Foster communication and collaboration through announcements, messaging, and discussion boards.

## COURSE SETUP PROCESS

Every course, regardless of modality, will have a Blackboard shell. To access your course shell, you must be listed as the primary instructor in Banner. This listing process is typically managed by designated department personnel such as the Department Chair or Academic Operation Specialist. For guidance on adding instructors to Banner courses, consult the [ITS Knowledge Base](#).

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## COURSE SHELL ESTABLISHMENT

During each academic term, the creation of Blackboard course shells adheres to the following schedule:

- Course shells are automatically generated 8 weeks before each term.
- Student enrollment occurs 2 weeks before the term starts. Allowing for pre-start announcements to be sent out.
- Course content becomes available to students on the term's first day unless otherwise requested by the instructor.



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## COURSE TEMPLATES

Upon creation in Blackboard, each course shell will be given one of two standard templates:

- **Campus-wide:** A basic template featuring Blackboard orientation and essential resources for courses that are not in a fully online format.
- **Fully online:** A comprehensive template with weekly modules and assessment examples, tailored for fully online (web-based) courses.

## RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

For Blackboard assistance, reach out to the Instructional Design and Development Center (IDDC) in the Department of Cyberlearning at x1535 or via email at [iddc@ysu.edu](mailto:iddc@ysu.edu).

### Common services provided by the IDDC:

- Support in designing and developing courses.
- Training for effective usage of Blackboard and online teaching methodologies.
- Assistance with course copying, merging, and exam creation.
- Technical support for Blackboard-related issues.
- Document accessibility guidance.

For easy reference, consult these Quick Start Guides, offering fast, simple, and easy-to-use instructions for Blackboard Ultra: <https://ysu.edu/department-cyberlearning/blackboard-guides>

Discover a range of upcoming and previously recorded training sessions on Blackboard by the Department of Cyberlearning: <https://ysu.edu/department-cyberlearning/training>



## SECTION 6: YOUR ROLE IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS' SUCCESS

Students attend Youngstown State University with a wide range of life experiences and backgrounds. It is important to recognize the impact students' lives have on their experiences and learning in your classroom. You can do several things as faculty to recognize the way life outside the classroom impacts learning: support overall wellness for your students, build flexibility in your course design, teach with your students' strengths in mind, and connect your students to support.

A survey of [75,000+ college graduates](#) "found that alumni who strongly agree that a professor 'cared about them as a person' are more engaged in their work, more emotionally attached to their alma mater, and experience higher levels of well-being" ([Matson & Clark, 2020](#)). As faculty, you have regular interaction with your students over a semester and can play a critical role in helping connect students to support on campus.

### YSU FACULTY ACADEMIC ALERT SYSTEM

A critical piece to helping support students' success is connecting students to resources when they are in need. As a faculty member, **you have daily interactions with students and may be one of the first people in a position to notice when a student is struggling academically or with other issues outside the classroom.**

YSU has the Faculty Academic Alert System to help connect students with resources. The system allows you to "raise a flag" for student concerns and will notify their advisor as well as any support offices that may be able to help. These staff follow up with the student and may provide information back to you about alert resolution. It is very quick and easy to raise an alert. The **Faculty Academic Alert System** is accessed through your Penguin Portal; step-by-step instructions and videos can be found [here](#).

It is critically important that you use the YSU Faculty Academic Alert System if you notice any of the following:

- Recent or chronic absences
- Poor assignment performance
- Not turning in assignments
- In need of academic tutoring (e.g., writing, math, language)
- Lack of engagement
- Other signs specific to your course/context

Providing the opportunity and support for students, especially early in the semester, provides opportunities for students to "course correct" or get assistance before problems become significant. You can submit an alert at any time in the semester.

In addition to ad hoc alerts, the system also sends out a survey twice in the semester asking you to take stock of all the students in your class. It is important to complete those surveys, even if you have no student performance concerns, and there is the option to say, "no concerns that this time."

### ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

When students are struggling to meet expectations in your course, reach out for help through the Faculty Academic Alert System to alert student support staff (advisors, tutoring centers, etc.) to reach out to students as outlined in the previous section.

In addition, you can provide information on learning support services on campus to help students acquire the necessary skills to succeed in your course:

- [Resch Academic Success Center](#): Provides academic coaching (i.e., study skills, time management), course-specific tutoring, and support for students with disabilities.



- [Math Achievement Center](#): Offers in-person drop-in study sessions, tutor-guided study groups and support for improving math placement, and resources like textbooks and computer workstations.
- [Writing Center & Language Learning Resource Center](#): Provide writing consultations for any discipline, linguistics tutoring, and tutoring for world languages.

**Maag Library** also provides a wide range of resources and services that will help students succeed in your courses. Students can [check out textbooks, request help on how to do research, check out equipment](#) (medical models, exercise equipment, tools, video cameras, etc.), and [utilize individual or group study spaces](#). Maag Library also has a [Family Study Room](#), which may serve as an essential resource for your students who are parents.

## NON-ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

An easy first step in making students aware of campus support is linking to the [Common Syllabus Student Resources Page](#) in your syllabus. This page is maintained so that students have up-to-date information about what is available to them. Beyond linking to the [Student Resources Page](#) in your syllabus, ITL recommends you have knowledge of the following two “hubs” for information on campus:

- [Penguin Service Center](#): The Penguin Service Center is a single place to receive essential information, find guidance, and resolve enrollment-related concerns in the areas of financial aid, records and registration, and student billing. Students can call the Penguin Service Center at **330-941-6000** or visit the website to [Ask a Question](#).
- [Office of the Dean of Students](#): The Office of the Dean of Students exists to serve students by acting as a centralized point of contact to discuss extenuating situations and concerns they may have, particularly those related to mental and physical health, hospitalization, food, and housing insecurities, challenging family situations, issues with faculty or staff, and any other barriers that may be impeding success. Students can contact a case manager to find support, or faculty can refer a student through the [Penguin of Concern Form](#).

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## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- [Student Counseling Services](#): short-term counseling services, as well as some outreach programs.
- [Community Counseling Clinic](#): training clinic for students in the Counseling program, offers free services.

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## PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES

- [Wick Primary Care](#): student health services are paid through the health fee. Note that you can use this too as it is also a walk-in/urgent care clinic (though you must use your insurance or self-pay, not covered by the student health fee).
- [Andrews Student Recreation and Wellness Center](#): offers a variety of activities free to students. Note that they have affordable [faculty/staff memberships](#)!
- [Dental Hygiene Clinic](#): staffed by the Dental Hygiene program, offers some dental services free to students, faculty, staff, and the public.
- [Penguin Pantry](#): provides food, hygiene items, cleaning supplies, and business attire to meet students' basic needs.
- [Student Escort Services](#): provides safety escorts as well as transportation assistance for injured students.

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## TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

- [IT Service Desk](#): offers 24/7 phone support, as well as walk-up counter support hours, for first-level technical issues, including support for your computer, software, printers, smartphones, and tablets.
- [Computer Labs](#): locations of computer labs and installed software. Students can also put an app, [Lab Finder](#), on their computer with this information.
- [BYOD Labs](#): where students can use their personal computers for coursework, rent computers, and/or print.



There are also additional support offices for student employment, career development, and student parents included on the Common Syllabus [Student Resources page](#).



## SECTION 7: KEY POLICY KNOWLEDGE

### FEDERAL LAWS

#### FERPA

**The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act** is a law that protects students' educational records:

- *Personal information* such as Student ID number, race, gender, country of citizenship, or religion
- *Academic records* such as course schedule, academic transcript, grades, GPA, credit hours, academic standing, academic holds, and test scores

Educational records are the student's private information and should be shared only (a) with the student, (b) with third parties only with the student's written consent, and (c) with university employees who have a legitimate educational interest.

Here are some general guidelines:

- Don't talk with a student about grades in the presence of anyone else.
- Never post grades or leave graded material in a public place for pickup.
- Politely refer to the law if contacted for information by a student's parent, significant other, friend, etc.
- Get written permission from the student to put personal information in a recommendation letter.
- Don't gossip with colleagues, family, friends, etc. about a student's private information.
- Only use YSU technology to communicate with students.

For more information about how to handle students' private information such as grades, schedule, test scores, transcripts, etc., see: [Understanding FERPA for Faculty and Staff](#)

#### TITLE IX

**Title IX** covers a host of topics such as sexual harassment, gender equality, and bystander intervention. If you observe, experience, or suspect any of the following, contact Dana Lantz, 301 Tod Hall, 330-941-4629, [dclantz@ysu.edu](mailto:dclantz@ysu.edu):

- Sexual harassment (quid pro quo, unwelcome conduct, sexual assault)
- Dating or domestic violence or stalking
- Sexual exploitation or voyeurism

Title IX also mandates that pregnant and lactating students must be given accommodations such as excused absences, reasonable adjustments, and continued participation in classes.

For more information about how to help students and report issues, see: [Title IX Policies and Procedures](#)

#### ACCESSIBILITY AND COMPLIANCE

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. YSU [Accessibility Services](#) helps to ensure fair treatment for all students. Faculty will receive an email notification about any student with a disability who is registered with the office. The notification will specify accommodations a faculty member must comply with to help the student succeed. It is not the faculty member's place to inquire about a specific disability; it IS the faculty member's responsibility to comply with the specified accommodations. For questions or concerns about classroom accommodations, contact Gina McGranahan at [glmcgranahan@ysu.edu](mailto:glmcgranahan@ysu.edu)



**Accessibility** of electronic documents is ensured to people with disabilities. The Digital Accessibility Lab, part of YSU's Department of Cyberlearning, provides faculty with one-on-one training in federal ADA Compliance standards for electronic communication and course materials. E-mail or call the lab ([eit@ysu.edu](mailto:eit@ysu.edu) x2762) to schedule an appointment to set up one-on-one training.

Faculty can also sign up for [self-paced ADA compliance training](#) in Blackboard. To see more about how to make your documents accessible, see the information for faculty on the [Digital Accessibility](#) page.

## YSU POLICIES

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### GRADING

First, see the YSU [Grading Method and Procedures](#) page. There, you will also see policies for grades of incomplete, as well as the YSU policy for excused absences from class. Here are a few highlights:

- YSU requires faculty to provide to each student at least one (1) written grade report on a class assignment (test, examination, essay, etc.) at least three (3) weeks before the deadline for student withdrawal from the course.
- A grade of incomplete should be allowed ONLY when a student is passing the course and a situation beyond the student's control prevents them from completing all requirements for the course when grades were submitted.
- There is a distinction between a grade of F and NAF. A final grade of NAF (non-attendance F) is necessary for financial aid reporting. A grade of NAF indicates that the student was not in attendance for 60% or more of the course. See more details [here](#).
- Faculty must excuse absences and allow students to make up work in the case of the following:
  - Participation in University-sponsored activities (e.g., athletics, artistic performances, R.O.T.C. functions, academic field trips, professional conferences, and special events connected with coursework).
  - Government-required activities, such as military assignments, jury duty, or court appearances.
  - Religious observances that prevent the student from attending class.
  - Death of an immediate family member, including father, mother, sister, brother, spouse, children, stepchildren, stepparent, parent-in-laws, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, grandparents, foster parents, foster children, legal guardians, any person who stands in the place of a parent (*loco parentis*), or a domestic partner.
  - Documented personal illness.

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### ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

[The Student Code of Conduct](#) outlines the rules and offers guidelines about what to do when you encounter any form of cheating. Academic misconduct can occur in a wide variety of ways, plagiarism being only one of many:

- Plagiarism, which includes the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement, the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials, or the misrepresentation of another person's work as one's own (also AI systems such as Chat GPT).
- The use of any unauthorized assistance or tools.
- The acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the university faculty or staff.
- Engaging in any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion.
- Inappropriate collaboration, including working together on assignments or projects to an extent not permitted by the instructor.
- Multiple submissions of the same work, including submitting the same or parts of the same assignment for multiple classes without permission from the instructor.





- Fabrication of data, including presenting fictitious data relating to experiments, changing of data obtained from sources, and citing non-existent sources.
- Bribes, threats, or intimidation, including exchange of payment for assignments or parts of assignments, and threats to entice others to engage in violations of the academic integrity policy.
- Impersonation, pretending to be another person in the completion of a quiz, exam, or other assignment.
- Altering or destroying the work of others unless given permission.
- Lying to obtain an academic advantage, which includes falsification of documents or other information used to request makeup work.
- Assisting another person in any of the behaviors mentioned above is itself academic dishonesty.
- Asking others to engage in any of the behavior described above is academic dishonesty;
- Attempting to engage in any of the above behaviors is academic dishonesty.

If a faculty member concludes the student was responsible for any of the above, he or she may impose a sanction which may include, but is not limited to, one of the following:

- warn the student
- lower the grade on the exam, paper, or assignment related to the incident
- lower the student's final grade for the course
- request additional action from the Student Academic Grievance Subcommittee, such as removal from a course, University suspension, or expulsion

An [Academic Integrity Form](#) should be completed even in the simplest cases (e.g., if you merely issue a warning). When the Office of Student Conduct receives two forms about the same student, the student is called in for a conversation.

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## FACULTY EVALUATION

**Chair Evaluation:** All full-time faculty are evaluated by the department chair and the dean. Details of the process can be found in the OEA Agreement, [section 14.6](#). It's important to keep careful notes regarding your activities and accomplishments in the areas of teaching, research, and service for end of year reporting. Generally, non-tenured faculty are evaluated every year; tenured faculty are evaluated every other year except tenured full Professors, who are evaluated every four (4) years. It's wise to meet regularly with your chair to discuss your activities and set goals.

The documents for faculty evaluation can be found through the YSU Portal (see the Human Resources menu, Faculty Forms).

**Student Evaluation:** Students have a voice in your evaluation as well. Most courses are subject to student course evaluation questionnaires toward the end of each term. Ask your department chair for a list of the survey questions.

## SECTION 8: LIFE IN YOUNGSTOWN

### WHERE TO GET MORE INFO ON YOUNGSTOWN

We wanted to provide you with some information about Youngstown and links to find out more about what the Mahoning Valley has to offer. This isn't an exhaustive list, so let us know if there are any additional topics/links you'd like to see!

1. [Mahoning County Convention and Visitors Bureau](#) has upcoming [events](#) and also has a great series of [guides](#) to orient you to the area, including:
  - Visit Youngstown
  - Youngstown Golf
  - Outdoor Recreation
  - Self-Guided Tours
  - Wineries & Breweries
2. [Mahoning Matters](#) is a news outlet that also has a [community events page](#).
3. [Metro Monthly](#) is a news and events magazine for the Mahoning Valley and is available in print or online. They have area events and local interest stories.
4. [YourArts](#) is a calendar and ticket hub for many of the local arts and culture events, including DeYor Performing Arts Center, Stambaugh Auditorium, Youngstown Playhouse, and more.
5. The City of Youngstown has a [visitor's page](#) with links to many of the area attractions.
6. [Mill Creek Metroparks](#) is our biggest park system, with facilities throughout the area, including Fellows Riverside Garden, and Ford Nature Center
7. [The Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County](#)
8. Additional Youngstown area news outlets:
  - [WKBN](#) (CBS)
  - [WFMJ](#) (NBC)
  - [WYTV](#) (ABC)
  - [WNEO](#) (PBS)
  - [WYSU](#) (NPR) 88.5FM YSU's own station!
  - [The Vindicator](#)
  - [Business Journal](#) (had a recent [article](#) on Youngstown's ranking as a "Best Places to Live")
9. Area museums:
  - [Butler Institute of American Art](#)
  - [Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor](#)—YSU managed.
  - [Mahoning Valley Historical Society](#) has the Tyler History Center and Arms Family Museum
10. For kids:
  - [OH WOW! The Roger & Gloria Jones Children's Center for Science & Technology](#)
  - [SMARTS](#): free art classes for kids!
  - [Ward Beecher Planetarium](#)-YSU's own planetarium! Temporarily closed due to fire damage.

### YO! APP

Did you know there are over 135 local Youngstown businesses to shop and earn immediate rewards from on the YO! app? Download the YO! app and start earning rewards from your favorite spots and explore new spots along the way. Sponsored by the City of Youngstown, the YO! app rewards residents and visitors for shopping at Youngstown's local businesses. Rewards come in the form of City Bites, the City's local reward points. Each City Bite equals \$1 and can be used at participating redeeming businesses. [Find out more](#).

