



## **MSW Online Program Faculty Resource Guide**

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## Instructor Checklist

### Before Courses Begin

**Blackboard checklist:** Kris Singh (Instructional Support Specialist – Wiley Education Services [gmu@wileyeducationsservices.com](mailto:gmu@wileyeducationsservices.com)) will copy master course shells to each term.

- Make sure all information is accurate and up to date, and consistent between the syllabus and Blackboard.
- Check to ensure links are working.
- Edit deadlines (due dates) according to new semester.
- Ensure that no live section announcements or deadlines have carried over.
- Update the course schedule.
- Update the course syllabus.
- Review Instructor Resource tab.

### **Checklist sent by Wiley Education Services:**

1. You will need to update your Instructor Bio and contact information in the course and also update the Syllabus to the most current version.
2. Update the Faculty Profile area with your bio and **add** a photo of yourself.
3. Insert your information (Name, e-mail, and virtual office hours information) into the Syllabus and/or Getting Started pages.
4. Update Course Schedule with the date and time for Synchronous Sessions. **(It is a good practice to offer at least one optional synchronous class session in your course).**
5. Set assignment due dates.
6. If your course utilizes a technology tool, review any instructions provided.
7. Review each week of content in your course to ensure accuracy and consistency with what is in the course syllabus.
8. Check that all links and downloads function correctly. This should be done in the student preview mode. You can enter the student preview mode from the home page in your course and at the top of that page you will see an icon that looks like arrows with a circle in it. You can click on that icon to enter student preview mode.
9. If your course has eReserves, **verify** eReserves are loaded and complete before the course starts, reach out to the librarian, Kathy Butler ([kbutle18@gmu.edu](mailto:kbutle18@gmu.edu)) if necessary.
10. Post a Welcome Announcement. **When you post the Welcome Announcement, post it under the Announcement tab in the course and email it to students as well by clicking on the box at the bottom of the page where you create the announcement to have the announcement emailed as well.**
11. Make your course(s) available to students one week prior to the term start.

Courses are currently marked as unavailable to students, but you are still able to get into the course and review. Please make the course available to students one week prior to term start. You can make the course available by clicking on the lock at the top of the opening page in the course. Set the availability of your course for term availability. You can do this by going to the **Customization** tab in the course. From that tab, you will click on **properties**. Under **properties**, you will see the heading **set availability**. You want to select **use term availability**. You can also set the duration of the course. You can do this under the heading **set course duration** and selecting **use term duration**. Remember to turn Edit Mode on when reviewing the course to see hidden tabs. You should see an Instructor Resource tab, hidden from students, containing information to help with managing the course.

If you have any questions or need assistance, you can email [gmu@wileyeducationservices.com](mailto:gmu@wileyeducationservices.com) and can expect a response during normal business hours Monday through Friday.

## **During Semester**

**Announcements:** send weekly announcements on the first day of the module including the following:

- Welcome
- Quick Recap/Overall feedback (this helps minimize the individual feedback a little bit)
- Preview of what's coming up or due in that module. Connect the topic for that module to social work practice or the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Office hours for that week
- **When posting your weekly announcement, post it in the course and email a copy to students.**

**Office Hours:** Hold at least 1 hour of office hours a week or 4 times over the 8-module course via Blackboard Collaborate or GMU Zoom (within Blackboard-for instructions see below). Set expectations for office hours and how they will be used. Communicate this to students.

**Ask the Professor Discussion Board:** Strongly encourage students to use "Ask the Instructor/Professor" discussion board and respond to questions throughout the week (*may be a good idea to set a reminder to check this daily AND click "subscribe" at the top so you can get notified via email*).

**Emails:** Students should only be emailing the instructor for individual situations; any questions are encouraged to be posted on the discussion board so all students can benefit from the response.

**Class-wide emails should be sent as announcements** (click the button at the bottom stating "Email a copy of this announcement immediately"), this process ensures that students can access the information via email AND blackboard's announcement page (students have had a problem in the past receiving emails, but when it's in two spots, they don't miss important information).

Finally, all emails should be from and to **GMU email addresses**, please remind students to ONLY use GMU email addresses.

**Grading:** Grade weekly in a timely manner so students can continue to receive and build on feedback, ideally early in the week. When grading, adhere to grading rubrics, in addition, feedback is intended to be developmental so provide qualitative, substantive feedback on students' strengths and weaknesses.

**Evaluation:** At the end of the semester, encourage students to complete course evaluations sent by GMU.

## **After Semester is Over**

**Final Grades:** Submit final grades in Patriot Web within 72 hours of the course ending. There is some flexibility with this time frame for courses in the online program that do not have students that are planning to graduate in that semester. Please contact the MSW Online Program Director with questions regarding submitting final grades.

Steps: <https://registrar.gmu.edu/facultystaff/tools/grading/final-grades/>

**Final Grades:** As a reminder, all syllabi grading notations should be as listed below so please double check all grades before entering letter grades in Patriot Web. If Blackboard's letter grade option is giving you something different, please let both the Instructional Support Specialist and the MSW Online Program Director know so it can get corrected.

**100 = A+**  
**94-99 = A**  
**90-93 = A-**  
**87-89 = B+**  
**83-86 = B**  
**80-82 = B-**  
**70-79 = C**  
**<70 = F**

## Setting up GMU Zoom within Blackboard

To add a Zoom meeting via the Blackboard LTI, you'll go into the area in a course where you would like to create an embedded Zoom meeting (you could put this in a particular week for a project-specific meeting, or you could do it in a general location like Syllabus or Getting Started for a recurring meeting like virtual office hours).

In the content area, you hover over "Tools," scroll down to "More Tools" and click on that (Image 1 below). Then, among the "more tools" you'll see a link for Zoom (Image 2 below). Select that, add any instructions or details for your students, hit submit, and then the Zoom item will appear in your content area. Finally, you can slide it up or down your content area to place it where you wish.

Image 1:

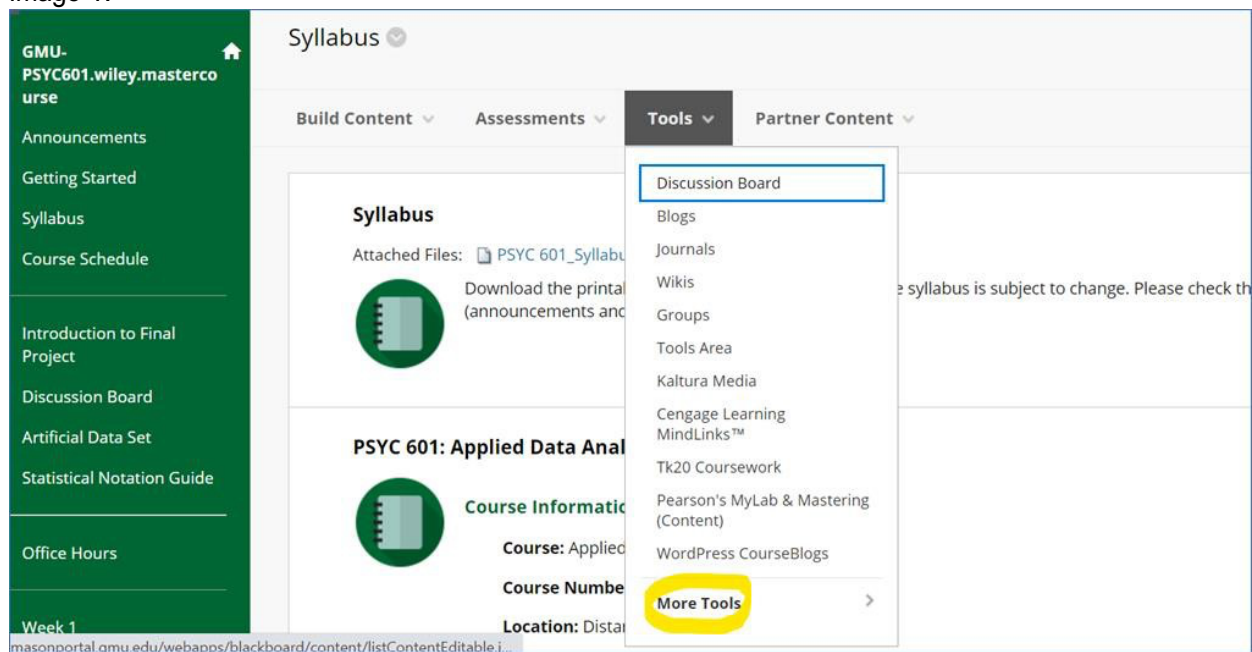


Image 2:

The screenshot shows the Blackboard interface for a course titled "GMU-PSYC601.wiley.mastercourse". The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with items like "Announcements", "Getting Started", "Syllabus", "Course Schedule", "Introduction to Final Project", "Discussion Board", "Artificial Data Set", "Statistical Notation Guide", "Office Hours", and "Week 1". The main content area is titled "Syllabus" and includes sections for "Attached Files" (with a file named "PSYC 601\_Syllabus") and "PSYC 601: Applied Data Analysis". The "Tools" menu is open, displaying a list of available tools. The "Zoom" tool is highlighted with a yellow circle. Other tools listed include "Discussion Board", "Blogs", "Journals", "Wikis", "Groups", "Tools Area", "Kaltura Media", "Cengage Learning MindLinks™", "Tk20 Coursework", "Pearson's MyLab & Mastering (Content)", "WordPress CourseBlogs", "Announcements", "Attendance", "Blackboard Collaborate Ultra", "Blackboard Help", "Calendar", "Contacts", "Course Messages", "Email", "Goal Performance", "Library Subject Guide", "Media Gallery", "My Grades", "Piazza", "Portfolios", "Purchase Course Materials", "Tasks", "WileyPLUS eTextbook", and "WordPress CourseBlogs". A "More Tools" button is visible at the bottom of the menu.

The screenshot shows the "Create Link: Zoom" form in Blackboard. The form is titled "Create Link: Zoom" and includes a note: "Indicates a required field." The "LINK INFORMATION" section contains the following fields: "Link Name" (with the value "Zoom"), "Color of Name" (set to "Black"), and "Link Tool" (set to "Zoom"). Below these fields is a rich text editor with a toolbar showing various formatting options. At the bottom of the form, there is a "Click Submit to proceed." instruction and two buttons: "Cancel" and "Submit".

## **Contact List**

Name	Role	Contact Information
Daphne King	MSW Online Program Director	<a href="mailto:dking9@gmu.edu">dking9@gmu.edu</a>
Emily Ihara	Social Work Department Chair	<a href="mailto:eihara@gmu.edu">eihara@gmu.edu</a>
Jeanne Booth	Director of Field Education	<a href="mailto:jbooth7@gmu.edu">jbooth7@gmu.edu</a>
Le Anne Wisnieski	Student Services Coordinator	<a href="mailto:lwisnies@gmu.edu">lwisnies@gmu.edu</a>
Vannary Khov	Administrative Support (orders textbooks, prepares contracts for adjunct faculty)	<a href="mailto:vhkov@gmu.edu">vhkov@gmu.edu</a>
Kris Singh	Instructional Support Specialist	<a href="mailto:gmu@wileyeducationservices.com">gmu@wileyeducationservices.com</a>
Nick Guittar	Program Strategy Manager	<a href="mailto:nguittar@wiley.com">nguittar@wiley.com</a>
Jasmine Mitchell	Student Success Coach Manager	<a href="mailto:jmitch30@gmu.edu">jmitch30@gmu.edu</a>
Sarah Foley	Success Coach	<a href="mailto:smejia6@gmu.edu">smejia6@gmu.edu</a>
Blackboard Questions, Issues, Requests	Kris + Team available 24/7	<a href="mailto:gmu@wileyeducationservices.com">gmu@wileyeducationservices.com</a>



## Student Resources

Name of Service	Website
Library	<a href="https://infoguides.gmu.edu/socialwork">https://infoguides.gmu.edu/socialwork</a>
Writing Center	<p>Writing center main page  <a href="https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/">https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/</a></p> <p>Online tutoring  <a href="https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/tutoring/email-tutoring">https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/tutoring/email-tutoring</a></p> <p>Video tutoring  <a href="https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/tutoring/video-tutoring">https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/tutoring/video-tutoring</a></p>
Graduate Student Life	<a href="https://gradlife.gmu.edu/">https://gradlife.gmu.edu/</a>
Counseling and Psychological Services	<a href="https://caps.gmu.edu/">https://caps.gmu.edu/</a>
Timely MD	<a href="https://ulife.gmu.edu/timely-care/?utm_source=ulife&amp;utm_medium=email&amp;utm_campaign=TimelyCare">https://ulife.gmu.edu/timely-care/?utm_source=ulife&amp;utm_medium=email&amp;utm_campaign=TimelyCare</a> .
Student Support Resources	<p><a href="#">Student Support and Advocacy Center</a>: 703-993-3686</p> <p>Visit the <a href="#">I Am Concerned About a Student</a> page</p>

## **Faculty Resources**

### **Best Practices for Teaching an Online Course**

#### **George Mason Online – Master of Social Work**

Intro: The online Master of Social Work program seeks to foster a collaborative, open, and flexible learning environment. As faculty, we want to create a supportive working relationship with students and help them to successfully complete the program and competently enter the field of social work. Below are best practices to assist you in supporting our learners:

##### **Presence in Course**

1. Use various communication tools: announcements, discussion boards, recorded lecture videos, and forums.
2. Hold weekly (or at least 4 times during the course for an 8-week course) virtual office hours for students. This is a way to foster a deeper connection with students and provide support to them academically.
3. Be active in the course at least 2-4 times per week.
4. Stay active in the discussion board and provide substantive responses in the discussion. Also, monitor the discussion board to ensure appropriate interactions between students and to assess students connecting their responses to the discussion questions back to course reading materials.
5. Post a weekly welcome message in Blackboard to start each week of the course and as a way to highlight for students the topic, assignments and readings that will be due in that week.

##### **Communication**

1. Respond to student emails within 1-2 business days and communicate that to students. Include in that time, what the response will be if the email is received over the weekend.
2. Relay to students that the GMU email address is the required method of communication.

##### **Grading**

1. Grade assignments within one week of the assignment due date so that students have an idea of the progress they are making in the course.
2. Adhere to grading rubrics in the course for each assignment when grading.
3. For discussion posts, grading should not occur until after Sunday when students have had a chance to respond to the posts of their classmates.
4. Final grades should be submitted within 72 hours of the last assignment in the course. Final grades are submitted in Patriot Web.

### **Creating a Supportive Community**

1. Start the class with a personal intro posting where you and students share professional experiences, personal info (family/friends/photographs), and teaching philosophy as a way to get to know one another.
2. Post an introductory video during the first week of the course and as part of weekly course announcements to keep students informed on class assignments and updates.
3. Use both synchronous and asynchronous activities: optional virtual class sessions and pre-recorded video lectures.
4. Plan a good closing and wrap up message for the course: remind students what's next, remind when assignments and readings are due, and wrap up the course with positive experiences in the course.

### **Making Minor Edits/Revisions (For Current Instructors)**

If, while reviewing your course shell, you notice an error, typo, or mistake of any sort, please reach out to our Instructional Support Specialist at: [gmu@wileyeducationservices.com](mailto:gmu@wileyeducationservices.com) even if you are able to correct it yourself. This is so that the error can be corrected in the course master and not replicated for future sections. Note: all other course revisions are implemented by the Faculty Developer or Course Champion for a given course. If you have suggestions for course revisions, please contact the MSW Online Program Director or Social Work Department Chair to share your insight.

## **Online Teaching Standards (Enhanced)**

The standards detailed below represent recommended *minimum* performance requirements for instructors of online courses. These standards are not in and of themselves representative of best practices for teaching online; the most successful instructors exceed what is listed here.

### **Course Management**

1. Refrain from altering the color scheme and/or Blackboard “teaching style” for the course—your program and university maintain a consistent, branded appearance across all online courses.
2. If you experience technical problems or issues with course content, please contact the 24/7 Personal Technical Support team section of this Program Management Guide.
  - a. Instructors teaching live sections of a course should notify the MSW Online Program Director in case they have content-related questions.
3. Log into each of your course sections individually at least 2-4 times per week.
4. Indicate availability to students during the course, including response time and best mode(s) of communication (email, course wall, the Ask the Instructor discussion board, etc.)
  - a. Research indicates that it is particularly important that you satisfy whatever communication expectations you commit to your students (i.e., if you say “daily,” you must log in daily).
5. In advance of term start, configure the Syllabus tab with your name, title, and contact information. This includes updating the header as well as the attached downloadable syllabus.
  - a. Details on how to update your course can be found in the Instructor Resources tab on the left-hand menu of your course (Note: this tab is *not* visible to students)
6. If you’re attaching specific due dates to your coursework: In advance of term start, configure Calendar with all due dates (including mid-week discussion posting deadlines). Every assignment in the course must be individually referenced; either one entry for each assignment, or one entry on days with multiple assignments due, wherein each assignment is separately listed.
7. Leave all modules visible to students throughout the entire course (e.g., do not hide previous weeks or future modules—students in online-only program like to look back at material and look ahead to future material and plan their busy schedules accordingly).
  - a. If you have a pedagogical reason for hiding content in future weeks, please consult the MSW Online Program Director.

### **Communication**

1. Respond to student questions posed in both Course and email within 24 hours.
2. Frequent communication is essential, but it is equally important that you satisfy whatever communication expectations you commit to your students (i.e., if you say you will respond within 24 hours, you must do so else you risk student disengagement and lower student survey scores).
3. Post fresh announcements 2x/week via the Announcement tool.
  - a. It is also helpful to schedule announcements ahead of time, so that they are released periodically as reminders of upcoming due dates or even as feedback after a piece of coursework is due.
  - b. If you plan to teach the same course periodically, we recommend keeping drafts of all announcements in an MS Word document to enable easy editing for future use.
4. Respond to questions posed in Ask the Instructor discussion forum and any other communication mechanisms used in your course within 48 hours of student posting.
5. For each week’s discussion forum, contribute at least three substantive postings. This excludes posts to previous weekly discussion forums, as well as posts to Ask the Instructor and Student Lounge.

- a. Depending on your pedagogical approach to facilitating discussions, you may prefer to make your own original posts, or you may prefer to post replies to students' posts.
6. In advance of term start, post a substantive instructor introduction in the Announcement, and/or Student Lounge discussion.
7. Respond to every student introduction individually in Student Lounge. This sets a positive, personal tone going forward.
8. All changes in assignment parameters (due dates, requirements, etc.) must be communicated both via the Announcement tool and a Course email message. Updated syllabi may be needed as well.
9. Faculty should remain cognizant of the typical online student's preference for asynchronous communication—thus, required meetings and other synchronous communication should be kept to a minimum.

### **Assessment and Grade Management**

1. Provide substantial, specific, constructive, and qualitative comments along with grades on every graded assignment (including weekly discussions).
2. Work is to be graded and returned within one week of the assignment due date. In cases where providing effective feedback is not possible within one week of the submission deadline, instructors should post an explanatory announcement to students to that effect (especially if other coursework will be due prior to students receiving their grades). Instructors may even extend the grading period until the Friday immediately following the assignment submission deadline. In any such case, the instructor should notify students of the need to extend the turnaround time, using the communication features available in the online platform.
  - a. At the very least, work must be graded (and feedback provided) prior to any related (similar) work being due (e.g., if a student performed poorly on a discussion, they are owed that feedback prior to the next discussion being due—else they will likely not improve).
3. When graded work is returned to students, enter zeroes for all assignments and/or quizzes due but not submitted (even if you have made arrangements for late submission by one or more students).
4. After grading and returning an assignment, double-check accuracy of scores in the Gradebook.
5. Create an announcement in response to each major piece of coursework that students are asked to complete in the course. This announcement should be centered on any patterned issues or themes that emerged during the grading of said coursework. Such announcements help maintain constant engagement with the students while reducing the need for redundant one-on-one feedback.
6. Faculty should submit final grades to the Registrar within one week of the last assignment due date.

### **Faculty Resources at GMU**

The Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning is a hub for promoting teaching excellence and innovation. Housing the staff from Digital Learning and Teaching Excellence, the Center is a one-stop destination for all George Mason faculty. Use the link below to access the website at The Stearns Center.

<https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/>

**Updated 7/27/23**