

Guidelines for Textbook Assignments

University of Mississippi

It is the responsibility and right of the faculty to select textbooks and other required materials for courses. At the same time, the University recognizes the requirements imposed by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 regarding the timely assignment and posting, for student view at the time of registration, of required course materials. To comply with the HEOA to the “maximum extent practicable” and to be consistent with the IHL Board of Trustees’ Textbook Policy, the University establishes the following guidelines and practices.

1. Overview of Posting System: For courses for which course materials are generally required (e.g., lecture, laboratory, lecture/lab, recitation/discussion, and some seminar courses), the University will display to students the assigned course materials at the time of registration. This posting will include isbn numbers and whether the materials are required or recommended. The posting will also include a link to the campus associated bookstore to enable students to view prices of materials for individual courses. In cases where there is a change in the assignment of course materials for a course after registration has begun, the University will inform students registered in those courses of such changes.

2. Assignment Deadlines: The University will announce to instructors a deadline for submitting assigned course materials, both those that are required and those that are recommended, immediately after the course scheduling process (known as Event Planning) has been completed. This announcement to faculty will occur during the first week of October for upcoming Spring and Winter terms and during the first week of March for upcoming May, Summer, and Fall terms. The announced deadline for assigning course materials will be the day before priority registration begins (October 31 and March 31) for these two Event Planning seasons.

If, after a the timely assignment of course materials, an instructor chooses to change the assignment (e.g., adding, deleting, or substituting the materials), the instructor may do so up to thirty days before the beginning of the semester. Reasons for such changes may include discontinuance of a title, superseding of a specified publication, or availability of better teaching materials. Students who have registered for courses will be notified electronically of the change/update in assigned course materials.

Department chairs or program directors are responsible for ensuring that all courses under their authority have course materials assignments by the above deadlines. This includes course sections for which no instructor has been assigned.

3. Faculty will be provided an online interface for entering course materials, along with ways to recall their previous assignments and to search for new materials (e.g., via an isbn number).

4. Textbook Adoption Goals: Consistent with the IHL Textbook Policy, the University’s Guidelines for Textbook Assignments includes the following recommendations:

- For lower division courses, departments are strongly encouraged to adopt textbooks for a minimum three-year period.
- For upper division courses, departments are strongly encouraged to adopt textbooks for a minimum two-year period.
- The above recommendations apply to textbooks that have a resale value (generally, hardback texts), as opposed to one-time or personal usage materials (e.g., workbooks, paperback materials, or materials that are intended to be kept by students for future academic use), which have limited resale value. The above recommendation also does not apply to course materials that involve time limited access to software, databases or web sites.
- Exceptions to the above minimum adoption periods may be approved for cases when editions go out of print or adequate copies cannot be provided by the campus bookstore, when less expensive textbooks are identified, when substantive changes are made in either the course description or the textbook, or when there is a significant change in the body of knowledge pertinent to the course. It is recognized that upper division courses will have more advanced and changing content, that students often wish to build a personal library of books in their major, and that there is a more limited potential for establishing a favorable local buy-back market for such upper division textbooks. For these reasons, the minimum two year adoption period for upper division courses should be balanced by the desire to enable academic flexibility and to trust faculty judgment regarding contemporary scholarship. Exceptions for upper division courses may be approved by the department chair or program director, with periodic review of exceptions by the school/college and Provost Office. Exceptions to the three year adoption period for lower division courses should be requested to the school/college.
- Departments are strongly encouraged to adopt the same course materials for all sections of a multi-section course. Exceptions to this recommendation include cases where different sections are taught at different locations or in different modes (e.g., in person versus online).

5. Additional Concerns: When reviewing new textbooks or instructional materials for adoption, instructors are encouraged to ask the publisher for information about the availability of digital versions of the materials and the accessibility of the materials to students with disabilities. If they are available in digital format, instructors should consider assigning that version or indicating the digital version as an option. This type of demand from faculty may create an incentive for publishers to provide digital and more accessible materials in the future.

Faculty members teach a diverse student body, and students with disabilities contribute to the diverse mix on our campus. Providing accessible instructional materials is an important aspect of our commitment to teach all students. Best Practices recommend that faculty be pro-active in insuring that instructional materials are accessible. Retrofitting materials for accessibility is far more time-consuming than planning for accessibility as the materials are created.

6. Assessments and Measures to Ensure Adequate Postings:

- Each school/college will assign someone in the school's office to oversee the extent to which instructors post course materials assignments by the announced deadline.

- The institutional executive officer will name a textbook coordinator, who will be responsible for communicating with the IHL Board Office regarding various textbook reports, and working with University offices, schools/colleges, and the campus affiliated Bookstore to implement the components of these Guidelines.
- Reporting tools will be made available for school/college administrators and department chairs to monitor the course materials assignment process.
- E-mail notices will remind instructors of the requirement and deadline.
- Department chairs and school/college offices will review the cases where instructors fail to meet the announced deadlines. If the delinquent or missing assignments are not approved, the dean will work with the department chair to take appropriate action to ensure timely postings. In compliance with the IHL Textbook Policy, these actions may include administratively assigning for the course those materials used for recent offerings of the course.
- At the end of each year, a summary report of the extent of compliance, at the department and school/college level (not at the course or instructor level), with the above course materials assignment guidelines will be prepared by the Provost's Office for review by the Council of Academic Administrators, Faculty Senate, and other groups. The summary report will be made available for public viewing on the Provost's web site or other appropriate web site.
- Surveys will be performed of student satisfaction and faculty satisfaction with the usefulness and availability of textbooks. The University shall provide students and faculty with the results from these surveys.

6. Dissemination of Information:

The University will work with the affiliated campus bookstore to provide information to faculty regarding prices of textbooks and the availability of alternative formats for course materials (e.g., separately available components of a bundled textbooks and electronic versions of course materials).

The university will work with the affiliated bookstore to provide "tips" to incoming students regarding purchasing of textbooks, including the availability of electronic versions, the availability of unbundled textbook components, buy- back and exchange policies, and price-matching policies. The University will provide this information, including an explanation of the significance of isbn's, to entering freshmen during orientations or within 30 days of the beginning of Fall semesters.