UNIVERSITY OF WESTFORD HANDBOOK



Westford Public Schools

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INTRODUCTION:

Westford Public Schools is committed to the ongoing professional growth of its staff, recognizing that professional development is essential for adapting to our rapidly changing world. To support this, we encourage employees to pursue courses that not only enhance their teaching skills but also broaden their knowledge in new areas that benefit students. This includes a variety of methods, such as college courses, travel, and independent study.

The University of Westford (UW) was established to offer professional development opportunities that directly align with the district's goals. Courses within this program ensure that participants gain current and relevant knowledge in areas like educational pedagogy, curriculum, instructional practices, and technology. This unique program allows educators to both expand their skills and reflect on their own teaching values.

This handbook serves as a guide for all Westford Public Schools faculty, detailing the policies and procedures of the University of Westford. It is designed to assist you in selecting a course or proposing a new one. For any questions not covered in this document, please contact the Office of the Assistant Superintendent.

PURPOSE:

The University of Westford was created during teacher contract negotiations in 2003 as an in-house, cost-free alternative to traditional graduate courses.

While teachers may still take courses at accredited colleges with prior approval, the University of Westford provides a flexible option for professional growth. Its credits can be applied toward a salary lane change from the Master's to the Master's plus 30 column. Please note that University of Westford credits cannot be used to move from the Bachelor's to the Master's column.

The purpose of these courses is to provide professional development that is inclusive, collaborative, and personally meaningful. The program's goal is to offer a supportive structure and resources that maximize the benefits of professional growth for all staff.

COURSES AND CREDITS:

The University of Westford offers courses that align with the goals of the Westford Public Schools. These courses provide current and essential knowledge in educational pedagogy, curriculum, instructional practices, technology, and program evaluation. Participants will expand their professional knowledge and examine their own educational beliefs and values.

Westford's Understanding Learning: Teaching All Students (ULTAS) is a required prerequisite course for all Unit A staff members. During the first three (3) years of employment, all non-professional status teachers and any person employed within the Unit A contract, excluding nurses, will take a course which incorporates the essential components of teaching and learning in the Westford Public Schools. Westford has developed modules that compose the Understanding Learning: Teaching All Students (ULTAS) course. Educators are required to complete the following:

- Introduction/Closure module
- Educating The Whole Child
- Module 3 (educator's choice)
- Module 4 (educator's choice)

University of Westford offers up to three semesters each year: summer, fall, and spring. Offerings are contingent on instructor availability and funding sources. Credits are awarded based on the number of contact hours:

- 1 UW credit: 12.5 contact hours
- 2 UW credits: 25 contact hours
- 3 UW credits: 37.5 contact hours
- 4 UW credits: 45+ contact hours

All courses require a minimum of 12 participants and are provided at no cost.

Participants will be evaluated on the quality of their work through class participation, projects, papers, and individual and group research. A letter grading system will be used, and a minimum grade of C is required to earn credit.

GRADING AND COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Students who miss more than 10% of the contact hours for a course will not receive credit.

Cancellations: If Westford Public Schools are canceled due to weather or other circumstances, all University of Westford courses are also canceled.

Course Expectations: A course syllabus with expectations and assessment methods will be provided and reviewed at the first class meeting. All courses use multiple forms of assessment.

Incompletes: An incomplete grade (I) must be resolved by the end of the following semester. If not resolved, the student is automatically withdrawn from the course.

Grading Scale:

- **A** = 4.0
- **B+** = 3.5
- **B** = 3.0
- **B-** = 2.5
- **C** = 2.0
- **F** = Any grade below 2.0
- **I** = Incomplete
- **W** = Withdrawn

COURSE REGISTRATION:

Courses are announced through email. Staff members are asked to apply online and fill out the Course/Workshop Approval Form.

HOW TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL:

To ensure course offerings align with the Westford Public Schools' goals, faculty suggestions for new courses are welcomed.

Proposal Requirements: Faculty wishing to offer a new course must submit the following items using Appendix A - Course Proposal:

- Course Name
- Credit Hours, Dates, and Times
- Prerequisites
- Instructor Name and Contact Information
- Course Description
- Required Texts
- Room Requirements/Location
- Course Syllabus
- Grading Rubric

Approval and Decisions: All course offerings require Assistant Superintendent approval. Decisions for a given semester will be based on the needs of the district, faculty demand, and current budgetary constraints.

INSTRUCTOR'S REQUIREMENTS:

All instructors are expected to complete and submit the instructor's attendance/grade sheet (Appendix B), completed evaluation forms (Appendix C), and request for payment (Appendix D) to the Assistant Superintendent within 30 days of the last class meeting.

If an instructor is absent, they are expected to find a competent substitute. If this is not possible, the instructor is required to notify class participants and the Assistant Superintendent regarding a make-up date.

Instructors are required to submit a detailed syllabus that includes a course description (including course title, dates and times, location, and prerequisites), instructor contact information, course requirements and assessments, the grading policy (including the weight of each assessment), the make-up policy, course schedule, and topical outline.

APPENDICES: INSTRUCTORS FORMS

APPENDIX A: Course Proposal Form
Instructors: Download this fillable form

APPENDIX B: Sample Instructor's Attendance and Grade Sheet Form
Instructors: This form will be provided to you, along with a roster

APPENDIX C: Course Evaluation
Instructors: This Google form will be provided to you

APPENDIX D: Instructor's Payment Request Form
Instructors: Download this fillable form