

Academic Life

Many international students find they need some extra help with adjusting to academic life at MassArt. It is often very different from what you are used to in terms of the way you learn. There are multiple resources available to all students to help them adjust to their learning environment. While we have created this list of top tips to help you, it is important to realize that every instructor has different expectations and styles of teaching. If you are confused about what is expected of you, make sure you seek clarification from your academic advisor, your instructor, your classmates, or another faculty member as soon as possible.

TOP TIPS FOR ADJUSTING TO ACADEMIC LIFE

Understand MassArt's credit system before you sign up for classes and extracurricular activities.

- Each MassArt course typically carries a workload of nine hours per week, on average, divided between in-class and out-of-class work.
- If you enroll in 15 credits you should plan to spend 45 hours per week on course-related work and studying. For 12 credits, you should expect to spend 36 hours per week on course-related work and studying.

GRADING SYSTEM

Be sure you understand MassArt's grading system.

- MassArt uses two different grading systems; for some classes you will receive a letter grade and for others you will receive either "Pass" or "No Credit".
- Unlike many other U.S. universities, MassArt does not use a GPA (grade point average) system.
- ****Exchange Students**** If you require a letter grade in order to receive credit from your home institution, you must notify your MassArt faculty at the beginning of the semester and submit a completed "International Student Exchange Course Evaluation Form" available from the Office of Academic Advising.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Know what it means to participate in class. Your grade depends on it.

- Students are expected to attend all classes. Professors have the right to fail or deny credit to a student who attends less than 80 percent of the meetings of any course.
- Students are expected to come to class on time and to stay for the entire class.
- Participating in class means sharing your ideas, asking questions, and seeking clarification from the teacher or other students when you do not understand.

Understand the relationship between participating in class and completing outside work.

- Every instructor gives assignments which are expected to be completed outside of class. Students must complete the outside work in order to effectively participate inside the classroom.
- Students' grades are based on their work done both inside and outside the classroom in addition to any other criteria set forth by the instructor.

CRITIQUE

Understand the critique process and its importance in your coursework and learning.

- Students' work is regularly evaluated by members of their class as well as their teacher. This process often occurs in a large class setting so that students can benefit from seeing many different works of art.
- You will be expected to contribute to critiques of other students work as well as accept critiques of your own work.
- Sometimes students receive advice or feedback that is difficult to accept. At times you may even disagree with the feedback. However, this is an important part of your learning process. Students will find the process easier if they are able to separate themselves from their work; understand that it is your *work* and not *you* that is being evaluated.
- While an open dialogue among students and faculty is encouraged throughout the critique process, the course instructor is ultimately responsible for determining each student's grade.

PLAGIARISM

Understand the definition of plagiarism and the importance of using your own original work.

- Many countries have varying definitions of what constitutes plagiarism. It is important to familiarize yourself with MassArt's working definition before you begin your coursework. Students who do not comply may be penalized.
- Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of another's work as one's own.
- In creative work, plagiarism is the inappropriate and unethical representation of another's work as one's own. In those instances where a significant portion of a creative work is intentionally "appropriated," plagiarism is the failure to note, orally or in writing, the source of the appropriation.
- In expository or academic writing, whenever your work incorporates someone else's research, images, words, or ideas, you must properly identify the source unless you can reasonably expect knowledgeable people to recognize it. Proper citation gives credit where it is due and enables your readers to locate sources and pursue lines of inquiry raised by your paper.
- Academic Standards at MassArt dictate that all students who do not use their own original work are subject to disciplinary action in addition to possible failure of a course.
- If you are unsure about the definition of "plagiarism" or need any clarification, please contact your faculty advisor or your academic advisor. For further information, please read the [MassArt Code of Conduct](https://massart.edu/community-standards) (<https://massart.edu/community-standards>).

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Visit the [Academic Resource Center](https://massart.edu/academic-resource-center) (<https://massart.edu/academic-resource-center>) before submitting your first paper.

- The Academic Resource Center is located on the 8th floor of the Tower building. Our writing coaches and tutors offer friendly, expert one-on-one instruction in writing, reading, and other academic tasks. The service is free to anyone in the MassArt community.
- Appointments can be made in person, by phone, or online. The ARC is located on the 8th floor of Tower in suite 811. Appointments with advisors or Student Accessibility Services can be made by phone at 617.879.7280, or email academic.resource@massart.edu. Appointments with coaches and writing specialists can be [made online](#).

Understand the commitment MassArt has to helping [students in need of accessibility services](http://inside.massart.edu/x934.xml) (<http://inside.massart.edu/x934.xml>).

- It is important for all students to disclose their disability to the Academic Resource Center (arc@massart.edu or 617.879.7280) in order to take advantage of multiple resources and accommodations.
- Many students who arrive at MassArt from non-US educational settings may have never been tested for a learning disability. In the U.S. education system it is common to test for learning disabilities if a student is struggling academically. MassArt accepts that all students learn differently. International students are encouraged to speak to your academic advisor if you are struggling academically and to disclose if you

think you might need to be tested for a learning disability. We applaud all students who are able to take this step to achieve their highest learning potential.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE RESOURCES

- Although you have had to show proficiency in English in order to study in the U.S., there may be a time of transition to using English as your primary language. This period of transition is very normal and nothing to be concerned about.
- You may find the transition easier if you seek extra assistance in certain areas of language development. Many students need help understanding American slang, technical writing, and how to write papers for classes. Please visit the [Academic Resource Center](https://massart.edu/academic-resource-center) (<https://massart.edu/academic-resource-center>) for assistance (see above description).
- If you are struggling with the language or would like to find others who you can speak your native language with, please consider these options. (MassArt is not affiliated with any of the following groups) [Boston Language Institute](#), [Boston Public Library](#), [APPROACH International Student Center](#), [ESL Café](#), [SHOWA Boston](#).