

## MEMORANDUM ON COURSE PROCEDURES

Each year an inordinate number of complaints and disputes about grades, evaluations, and course procedures come to department chairs, deans, the Provost's Office, and the Registrar's Office. The great majority of those disputes could be avoided if faculty members took note of the minimal guidelines suggested below.

These guidelines suggest possible ways of minimizing some of the confusions and misunderstandings that lead to complaints. All courses cannot and should not be conducted identically. These guidelines are meant to be helpful. They are suggestions not prescriptions. They are not intended to limit faculty freedom or to determine course structure and modes of evaluation.

### GUIDELINES

1. Make available to each student an up-to-date syllabus, no later than the first class meeting, that provides him or her with the following information:
  - your course objectives
  - your expectations and any special requirements for papers, projects, lab reports or exams, with a clear statement of the consequences of a late submission
  - your attendance policies, with a clear statement of the consequences for violating your attendance policy
  - your grading and/or evaluation criteria and the approximate weight of each course requirement in the final grade or evaluation
  - a clear statement on your policy with respect to incompletes. In this respect, please note the university's policy on incompletes in the undergraduate catalogue.
  - your examination schedule and any make-up or rescheduling policies
  - your office, office hours, phone and e-mail address
  - a list of all required books and readings
  - a brief statement about the university's policy on academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, stating that the policy appears in both the undergraduate catalogue and the student handbook
  - available academic support services, including services for learning and physically disabled students (available through the Disabled Student Services office)

Avoid any major changes as the semester progresses. However, should a major change become necessary, it should be communicated clearly in writing.

2. Since grading and evaluation policies often tend to be a focus of confusion or misunderstanding, take special care to articulate your criteria and invite students to discuss related questions with you early in the course.
3. Avoid further misunderstandings by reminding students of their responsibilities in your course. For instance, remind them that it is their responsibility to take exams at the scheduled times and to make alternative arrangements in advance if they have a **legitimate** reason for not being able to take an exam, and to provide appropriate explanation and documentation if they miss an exam without making prior arrangements. Indicate what you consider a legitimate reason for not taking an exam at the scheduled time or handing in an assignment after the deadline.
4. Announce field trips and other special meetings, preferably in class and in writing. If these require activity on holidays and/or weekends, state this clearly.
5. If you do not return exams, lab reports, papers, and projects to your students, be sure to retain, for a reasonable period of time (i.e., at least one semester), all of your grading and evaluation materials for timely review with students both during the semester and after final grades or reports. Students have the right to discuss their grades and evaluations with faculty; they should be apprised of your grading policies, see their work, and hear your evaluation of their work directly. This is consistent with the university's Grade Appeal Policy.
6. Please remember to keep written records, especially on matters concerning academic dishonesty, and in cases of the latter, students **should be notified as soon as possible** of the discovery of the alleged violation. It might be useful in all 100 and 200 level courses to spend time at the beginning of the course explaining and discussing what plagiarism is and why it must be avoided.

