

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 the following information:
 - your course learning outcomes
 - 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 location, 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 and please include the following link to the policy:
<http://www.umassd.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbookintroduction/academicregulationsandprocedures/>
 - available academic support services, including services for learning ([Academic Resource Center](#)) and physically disabled students (available through the [Center for Access and Success](#)). A [sample student disability statement](#) can be found here:
<http://www.umassd.edu/nfi/teachingandadvising/coursesyllabus/sampledisabilitystatement/>

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. Notify students of the University's Incomplete Policy: An incomplete grade may be given only in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the instructor and at the student's request no more than 48 hours after the final exam or class. The student must be passing the course at the time of the request or be sufficiently close to passing that the instructor believes that upon completion of the work, the student will pass the course. If the work is not completed within one year of recording the I, the grade will become an F(I). Each instructor should include an incomplete policy in his/her syllabus. The Office of Faculty Development has provided a [sample incomplete statement](#).

6. 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](#). All grades except *I* are considered final when filed with the University Registrar at the end of a term. An instructor may request a change of grade only when a computational or procedural error occurred in the original grade assignment. No final grade may be changed as a result of re-examination or, with the exception of the *I* grade, by the re-evaluation of work submitted before or after the end of the term, unless all students are afforded the same opportunity. A grade change must be approved by the chairperson of the instructor's department and by the dean of the college within one year of the original grade record.

7. 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.