

POLICY ON COURSE SYLLABI AND GRADING

PREAMBLE

Faculty members' right and responsibility to evaluate their students' academic performance are some of the most strongly held values in the University. Faculty are accorded much latitude and freedom in setting standards, establishing expectations, evaluating performance, and assigning grades. Similarly, faculty enjoy broad discretion as to the manner in which they conduct their courses but are expected to carry out their responsibilities in a manner that is fair and without arbitrariness or capriciousness.

Of central importance to successful instruction is the formulation of a binding educational compact between instructors and students. Students have a right to know what is expected of them in a course including criteria for evaluation of their performance. Faculty have the right to expect an appropriate level of effort and performance from all their students. The most satisfactory outcomes for both faculty and students can be achieved only when the conduct of a course is grounded fully in both disclosure and understanding on the part of all parties to the classroom educational process. The following policy is established to facilitate and formalize the communication and application of equitable, non-prejudicial course requirements and grading practices in a large, institutional setting.

PRINCIPLE OF THE POLICY

Faculty should fully inform students of all course requirements and make such requirements available to them with a comprehensive printed course syllabus at the beginning of the semester but no later than the last day to drop classes without a serious and compelling reason. For web-based courses see Policy on Technology Mediated Instruction. The syllabus serves as the defining document in clarifying

- 1) the nature of the course and its delivery and
- 2) the basis upon which an instructor evaluates student performance and assigns the appropriate grade.

FAIRNESS IN GRADING/EQUITY

Once the semester (or course) has concluded, students shall NOT be assigned additional work or be allowed to revise previous assignments in order to improve a final grade.

COURSE SYLLABI

The faculty shall include in the syllabus at least the following information pertaining to the course. (http://academicaffairs.csufresno.edu/undergrad_studies/develop_assess.htm)

- 1) name of instructor, office location, telephone number, office hours, and e-mail address (if available)
- 2) course number and title, number of units, prerequisites and a brief course description, and fees, if any
- 3) summary outline of course and tentative schedule of topics covered
- 4) required text books and other supplemental materials together with a schedule of assigned readings
- 5) student supplied equipment and materials necessary for course activities

- 6) course calendar including projected dates, deadlines, and/or periods of time for readings, field trips, projects, exams, etc.
- 7) brief description of and instructions for significant course assignments (e.g., papers, field trips, and projects)
- 8) instructor course goals and student learning outcomes
- 9) grading policy, which includes the weighting of assignments and examinations as well as the criteria for assigning grades, and the grading scale, identification of all requirements and due dates for course completion and eligibility for a final passing grade
- 10) course attendance and make-up work policies (including final exam meeting), and any implications for grading
- 11) instructor's policies regarding administration of the course (e.g., late paper penalties, tape recording lectures, and guidelines on the use of electronic devices)
- 12) reminder directed to students with disabilities about their responsibility in identifying themselves to the University and the instructor so reasonable accommodation for learning and evaluation within the course can be made
- 13) statement referring to the University's policies regarding conduct of courses, including cheating and plagiarism, copyright, and computer usage; these may be satisfied by a statement that the University policies are located in the *Catalog* and the Class Schedule
- 14) safety issues where appropriate

Faculty may also wish to include statements on instructional philosophy and pedagogical methods, non-enrolled visitors or guests, General Education requirements met by the course, and other information of importance and concern to the instructor. Reference can also be made to University policies judged to be of particular importance to the conduct of the class (e.g., disruptive behavior). Faculty should be certain that any such statements are consistent with University policy. Faculty are encouraged to discuss the syllabus and the University and course policies during the first class meeting.

Faculty should realize that the syllabus might be viewed as a legal covenant between the instructor and students. Therefore, a statement such as the following is recommended: "The above schedule and procedures for this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances." The instructor shall be sure that any changes in the syllabus are clearly presented and are not unfair to students already committed to the class. When there are substantive changes in the syllabus that affect grading, issuance of a revised syllabus is strongly recommended.

RECORD KEEPING

- 1) Faculty members shall maintain a complete record (i.e., a grade book or equivalent) of the various scores and marks used to determine student grades. This record shall be retained for at least five years and must be given to the department chairman if the faculty member will be away from the University for purposes such as sabbatical leave or retirement. All materials not returned to students shall be retained by faculty members for one semester. Course grades are reported according to the Policy and Procedure on Assignment of Grades.

- 2) The course syllabus together with any amendments shall be kept on file in the department office for two years. These documents will constitute the official syllabus of the course.

GRADING DATA

Each semester, the University shall provide the department chairpersons with data on grading for the University, the COLLEGES/schools, the departments, and their respective faculty. In turn, department chairpersons shall provide their faculty with grade distributions (within categories of courses) for their own departments.

GRADING PRACTICES

All department chairpersons shall review, on an annual basis, grading practices of individual faculty members. Grading practices that appear inappropriate shall be discussed by chairpersons with the faculty members concerned.

APPEAL RIGHTS

Students who believe they have been evaluated incorrectly and/or unfairly should first request a review by the instructor and the department chair before appealing to the Student Academic Petitions Committee according to procedures established in the Policy and Procedures for Reviewing and Appealing an Assigned Grade.

Approved by Academic Senate
Approved by the President
Amended

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10/85; 5/92; 6/93; 6/97; 12/99; **May 14, 2004**