

Syllabus Requirements and Other Academic Matters for College of Education Faculty and Instructors

This packet contains helpful information at-a-glance on Penn State University course policies and other requirements for faculty and instructors in the College of Education. Contents are not intended to supersede any official documentation of policy. More details and additional informational resources are available in the **Faculty Handbook** on the website of the Executive Vice President and Provost, <https://sites.psu.edu/provost/files/2016/08/2016-17-Penn-State-Faculty-Handbook-August-2016-2m5tgmf.pdf> . A more complete catalog is available in **Penn State's Academic Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual**: <http://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/index.html>

Expectations for Syllabi

As per Senate Policy 43-00, a syllabus available on a tangible medium of expression (which may include electronic communication) must be distributed to all students within the first ten calendar days of every course. This policy does not prevent faculty from adjusting early planning to respond to class needs. However, modifications to course policies, examinations, basis for grades, or other information provided in the initial syllabus must be distributed to students in a timely manner through a tangible medium of expression.

A course's syllabus may be treated by the University as a binding contract between the instructor and students. As such, **it is recommended that every syllabus should contain a statement that syllabus contents and policies are subject to change** in line with University policies (e.g., "This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes to the syllabus shall be distributed in writing, which may include electronic communication."). To comply with University policies, College of Education instructors should ensure their syllabi contain the following 5 entries. Sample language is provided when possible, and instructors are welcome to cut-and-paste or adapt the language as appropriate for their courses.

1) Academic Integrity

As per Senate Policy 49-20 and AAPP G-9, every syllabus must provide a statement clarifying the application of academic integrity criteria to the course. (More details on the College of Education's academic integrity procedures are available on the College of Education website, <http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/current-students/academic-integrity>.)

Sample Language: This course adheres to University Senate Policy 49-20: "Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner, serving as a basic guiding principle for all academic activity. Academic integrity includes a commitment not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others." Unless explicitly directed otherwise by the instructor, all assignments are expected to be the student's own original work completed individually without

collaboration. Violations of this code of conduct can result in reduced grades and can be reported to the College or University for further action.

2) Statement of Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

Every syllabus must provide information on procedures related to academic adjustments identified by the Office of Disability Services (more details are available on the ODS website, <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/>).

Sample Language: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 814-863-1807 (V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit the Office for Disability Services website at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/>. In order to receive consideration for course accommodations, you must contact ODS and provide documentation (see the documentation guidelines at <http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/guidelines>). If the documentation supports the need for academic adjustments, ODS will provide a letter identifying appropriate academic adjustments. Please share this letter and discuss the adjustments with your instructor as early in the course as possible. You must contact ODS and request academic adjustment letters at the beginning of each semester.

3) Attendance

As per Senate Policy 42-27 and AAPP E-11, every syllabus should explain class expectations regarding attendance. Students who will miss a class should, where appropriate, present a class absence form to the faculty member as soon as possible and, except in unavoidable situations, at least one week in advance of a planned absence. In the case of illness, students are not required to secure the signature of medical personnel. Students should be provided with a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. Ordinarily, it is inappropriate to substitute for the missed assignment the weighting of a semester's work that does not include the missed assignment.

Sample language: Religious observances are not counted as absences, though observing students must inform the instructor in advance that they will not be present. Official university activities are excused absences if the student informs the instructor in advance and provides appropriate paperwork. Absence due to sickness does not require a doctor's note, but it is the student's obligation to inform the instructor promptly and to bring to the instructor's attention extended medical absences as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the absent student to catch up on any missed material and do any make-up work required by the instructor.

4) Course Assignments/Examinations

As per Senate Policy 47-20 (Basis for Grades), every syllabus must include a description of the assignments/examinations that will be used to assign students a final course grade. This should include such information as the number and types of exams and other graded assignments, their approximate dates, and their percentage or point values relative to the final grade.

5) Contact Information and Office Hours

Every syllabus should contain information on how students can contact the instructor (such as office location, telephone number, and email address) as well as the instructor's regular office hours for the semester.

Other Recommended Features of a Well-Crafted Syllabus

- Instructor's accessibility (e.g., hours when permissible to call)
- Teaching assistants' names, phone numbers, and office addresses
- Class meeting times
- Required special events
- Dates for major assignments/exams/quizzes
- Grade weights or values for major assignments/exams/quizzes
- Topic outline for the course
- Textbook title, author(s), edition (see AAPP R-1 at <http://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/R-1-textbook-lists.html>)
- Availability of textbook in library or on reserve
- Supplementary readings, required or recommended
- Supplementary readings location (library or bookstore)
- Internet materials

Statement Regarding Discrimination

Though not specifically mandated by University policy, instructors may wish also to include in their syllabi the University's policy against discrimination as per the University Bulletin: <http://bulletins.psu.edu/undergrad/generalinformation/Admission1>

Sample Language: As an institution of higher education, The Pennsylvania State University is committed to making post-high school education available to all who possess a high school diploma or its equivalent without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications. The Pennsylvania State University does not discriminate against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status.

Rescheduling of Class Meeting Times

As per Senate Policy 34-83, changes in regular class meeting times must be approved by the dean of the college or the chancellor.

Expected Workload for Courses

As per Senate Policy 42-23 (<http://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/42-00-acquisition-of-credit/#42-23>), each credit represents about 40 hours of work including classroom time and outside preparation. For a 15-week Fall/Spring course, this means about 2 ½ hours per week in class and about 5 ½ hours per week outside of class.

Final Examination Policies

There are two Universities policies that affect formal **exams** as well as **alternative summative assessments** (such as term papers in lieu of a final test) at the end of a semester. Though the policies are articulated by the Division of Undergraduate Studies (DUS), the Graduate Council expects that instructors of graduate-level courses will use the same guidelines.

10% Rule for Assessments in Last Week of Classes

As per Senate Policy 44-20, no end-of-semester examinations or alternative integrative and evaluation means (e.g., term paper, final project report, take-home examinations, or studio projects) worth more than 10% of the course grade are to be scheduled or required to be submitted during the last week of classes. Quizzes, narrowly limited tests, and other assignments in support of classroom instruction worth no more than 10% percent of the semester grade may be given during the last week of classes. End-of-semester examinations or alternative integrative assessments worth more than 10% of the course grade are to require submission no earlier than the first day of the final examination period scheduled by the University registrar.

Final Exam Conflicts

As per Senate Policy 44-25, students should follow the procedures described in the policy (<http://handbook.psu.edu/content/examinations>) when they have two or more final examinations scheduled at the same time, or three or more final examinations scheduled on any one calendar day or in three consecutive examination periods.

Graduate Student Exams and Transcript Grades

The Graduate School enforces a policy that no examinations (candidacy, comprehensive, or final defense) can be conducted if the student has a DF (deferred) or NG (no grade) on record. Make sure to review your graduate students' transcripts and resolve these grade issues before scheduling candidacy, comprehensive, or final defense examination.

Gradebook Content and Last Day of Attendance for Failing Students

As per the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost (email May 15, 2014):

Penn State requires instructors to enter a **last date of attendance** on LionPath when assigning an "F" grade to a student. This requirement stems from regulations governing federal financial aid.... Documentation used to determine the last date of attendance for a student must be retained and be available for auditors to review upon request. This documentation often includes gradebook content, whether in paper or electronic form. **The U.S. Department of Education has indicated that gradebooks are adequate documentation of a student's last date of attendance [participating in any "academically-related activities"].... Gradebook entries must include a clear description of each activity as well as the date of the assignment submission, the taking of an exam, participation in an online discussion about academic matters, etc.** In addition, gradebooks must be maintained under a consistent and timely practice so that...a student's last date of attendance cannot be brought into question.

Confidentiality of Student Records

The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>) of 1974 identifies the rights of students and their families with respect to student educational records kept by institutions. As part of the requirements of FERPA, the University has a Policy on Confidentiality of Student Records (see AD-11 at <http://guru.psu.edu/policies/AD11.html>). Information from records, files, and data directly related to a student may not be disclosed by any means (including telephone) to individuals or agencies outside the University (including parents) without the prior written consent of the student. Information contained in such records may be shared within the University with “university officials” having “legitimate educational interest” in such information. It is important for instructors to protect student confidentiality when listing class exam grades, returning class papers or projects, and writing letters of recommendation. (More details are available in the Faculty Handbook available on the Executive Vice President and Provost website at: <https://sites.psu.edu/provost/files/2016/08/2016-17-Penn-State-Faculty-Handbook-August-2016-2m5tgmf.pdf>)

If a student requests a **letter of recommendation** which contains grades or other confidential data, a form must be submitted to the faculty member or instructor by the student to authorize the release of data:

https://www.registrar.psu.edu/student_forms/request_for_recommendation_form.cfm

Course Textbook Orders

As per the Office of the Vice President and Dean of Undergraduate Education: To implement the provisions regarding course materials in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, the Textbook Lists policy (AAPP R-1, <http://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/R-1-textbook-lists.html>) was revised in Spring 2010. Deadlines for instructors to provide textbook lists to the Penn State Bookstore were established to coincide with the beginning of the registration period for the semester: March 1 for fall semester, September 1 for spring semester, and February 1 for summer session (*see your department staff for the actual due-dates set by your department*).

Unless otherwise directed by your department, textbook information for all your courses is due to the Penn State Bookstore and should be submitted online using Faculty Enlight:

<http://www.facultyenlight.com/?storeNbr=435>

Basis for Grades and Grade Mediation

As stated in Senate Policy 47-20 (<http://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/47-00-48-00-and-49-00-grades/#47-20>), the basis for grading is “the instructor's judgment of the student’s scholastic achievement...” Occasionally, a disagreement arises in the assignment of a grade. A student who wishes to question or challenge the grade assigned in a course must first discuss grading practices and assignments with the instructor. It is expected that the student and instructor will try to eliminate any misunderstandings and will attempt to work out any disagreements over grades.

On the rare occasion that a student and instructor fail to resolve the grade dispute through informal means, the student may request that the head of the academic program offering the

course review the issue and take appropriate action to mediate and seek resolution. If this does not resolve the dispute, the student may seek further review from the associate dean for undergraduate or graduate education, or the director of academic affairs for the college offering the course. The student may initiate this process by completing the Grade Adjudication Petition Form (available at <http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/grademed.pdf>) and returning it to the associate dean or director of academic affairs responsible for undergraduate education, or the associate dean for graduate studies. The request form must be submitted no later than ten weeks following the end date of the course (as it appears in the schedule of courses).

Resolution of Classroom Problems

As per Senate Policy 20-00, faculty membership carries with it the freedom to bring the breadth and depth of scholarship to the classroom in furtherance of teaching students to (as stated in University Policy HR 64, Academic Freedom) “think for themselves” through exposure to appropriate materials and pedagogies. Courses may properly include controversial matters so long as faculty members are of “fair and judicial mind” and “set forth justly, without suppression or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators.” Faculty membership also carries the obligation to refrain in the classroom from substituting indoctrination for scholarship. Academic freedom in the classroom applies to scholarship, but does not create a right to give voice to topics or opinions outside of appropriate academic subject matter or curricular objectives or that are irrelevant to a course or beyond the instructor's scholarly charge.

A student who believes that the instructor in a course in which she or he is currently enrolled has acted beyond the limits of academic freedom may seek a faculty conference to discuss in person, by phone, or relying on another mutually agreeable medium, her or his concerns with the instructor. The student and instructor will try to eliminate misunderstandings in a manner in which each recognizes the value of the other's point of view and in which the goal is to understand the rationale and intended value—and the appropriateness or inappropriateness—of the classroom or teaching and learning event(s) giving rise to the student's concern. On the rare occasion in which a student is uncomfortable approaching a faculty member directly, or in which a student and instructor fail to resolve the student's concern through informal means, the student may request that the head of the academic program offering the course act as a mediator. World Campus courses, which can involve students and faculty living far from each other, may utilize appropriate and reasonable substitutions for face-to-face discussions.

If no resolution can be reached, a student may initiate a final request to intercede to the campus chancellor or college dean to whom the instructor reports by filing a Classroom Freedom of Expression Form (<http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/R-6MediationForm06.pdf>), which requires the student to provide specific details of the original classroom event(s) giving rise to his or her concern, and explaining why she or he believes the situation remains unresolved.

Reporting Child Abuse

All Penn State employees are required by University policy to report the sexual abuse of children (minors under age 18). This policy applies even to employees who may not be technically

considered “mandated reporters” under the law. The online training required by Penn State can be found at <http://psuohrlearning.skillport.com>. Please save a copy for your records.

Additions and Revisions in the 2015 Edition:

Class Materials Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

As per the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost (email October 29, 2014):

For some students, accommodations will minimize or eliminate the impact of a disability. Examples of accommodations include closed captioned videos for a student with a hearing loss, audiobooks for a student with sight loss, or different ways for a student with a learning disability to respond to exam questions. Academic accommodations are determined on a case-by-case and course-by-course basis. Modifications need not require alterations of any essential elements of a course or program.... Faculty, in coordination with, and with advice from, the Office for Disability Services, are expected to work with students to provide reasonable accommodations. In order to make videos, textbooks and other course packet materials accessible, the Office for Disability Services needs to know well in advance of the start of the semester the course materials that will be used so that materials can be prepared for students in a timely manner.

*Office for Disability Services, 116 Boucke Building, 814-863-1807, equity.psu.edu/ods
Disability Liaisons at all Penn State Campuses, <http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/disability-coordinator>
ODS Handbook for Faculty, equity.psu.edu/ods/faculty-handbook
For accessible websites and course materials, <http://accessibility.psu.edu/>*

Short document on how to check whether an existing PDF is accessible:

<http://www.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/accessibility/products/acrobat/pdfs/A9-using-access-checker.pdf>

Documentation on how to convert a Word file into an accessible PDF:

<http://www.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/accessibility/products/acrobat/pdfs/A9-accessible-pdf-from-word.pdf>