

Course Policy Proposals

Approved by Senate May 19, 2021 with approval
to make technical edits

Final Edit as approved by Academic Council and
Senate – May 25, 2021

The following academic policies are proposed to bring more uniformity to fundamental expectations related to courses and course delivery.

CANVAS USE

Rationale:

- It is current policy that faculty use only university-approved FERPA-compliant software and cloud-based services for course activities involving the storage and transmission of student data (handy checklist here: <https://service.uoregon.edu/TDClient/2030/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=113454>)
- Students benefit from having all of their course materials on one platform
- The pandemic-related Academic Council requirement that all courses have a Canvas site means that most if not all faculty now have a basic level of experience with Canvas, and that students have a higher expectation that courses will be on Canvas.

Proposed Policy:

For all undergraduate classes (including 400/500 level courses) with more than 5 students, instructors shall publish at least one Canvas site by the first day of each term's classes that is used at a minimum for the communication of course information including:

- Course syllabus
- For classes where progress is not communicated individually to students through other means, provide available information on student progress to date. This information is meant to help students make decisions about the course, such as continuing in the course or changing the grade option. As such, this shall be done by at least two student decision points of the term:
 1. By the end of Week 6 (prior to deadline to withdraw from a class or change grading option which is end of Week 7)
 2. Prior to the final exam
- Other essential course information

Graduate classes with more than 5 students are encouraged to have a Canvas site that is published by the first day of each term's classes and be used at a minimum for the communication of course information, as listed above.

SYLLABI

Rationale:

- It is assumed this is an implicit expectation that faculty already understand but there is no central policy requiring a syllabus or outlining the minimum required elements of a syllabus.

- Accreditation standards require publication of course information for students.
- UOCC frequently sees syllabi that are missing basic information and/or have incorrect language.
- A syllabus helps students understand the course expectations and can help resolve student grievances

Proposed Policy:

Instructors shall provide a syllabus for all university undergraduate courses (including 400/500 level courses). It is strongly recommended that instructors provide a syllabus for graduate courses. The syllabus must be made available to students (hard copy or online as a downloadable document) on the first day of class or sooner. The following information, at minimum, should be included in the syllabus:

1. **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:** instructor's name, office/room number, uoregon e-mail address and any other means of contact desired
2. **OFFICE HOURS:** office hours and a statement indicating how to contact the faculty member for an appointment outside office hours
3. **COURSE OBJECTIVES:** overall course objectives and expected learning outcomes as approved by the UOCC and documented in CourseLeaf
 - a. if course meets any Core Education requirements, a statement describing which of the following requirements it meets and why
 1. Area of Inquiry (Social Science, Natural Science, or Arts and Letters)
 - a) Also include which Methods of Inquiry are covered
 2. Difference, Inequality and Agency OR Global Perspectives
 - a) At a minimum, include Core Education Council approved statement and learning outcomes
4. **GRADE POLICIES:**
 - a. grade policies – describes the standards for each level of work (including A+ - see <https://registrar.uoregon.edu/current-students/grading-system>)
 - b. grading criteria and expectations, for example grading rubrics
5. **ABSENCES:** clear absence policy that is pedagogically appropriate for the specific course. Policy should make clear how absences affect grades and the conditions under which assigned work and/or tests can be made up. Remember that University Health Services, which includes Counseling Services, does not provide excuses for students who miss class due to illness or injury so consider this in determining course policy (see <https://health.uoregon.edu/faqs#sick-note-policy>). Instructors also need to understand university policies for absences related to religious observance, student participation in university-sponsored events, mandatory first class attendance, AEC accommodations, and the Dean of Students "Emergency Academic Notification" process (see Appendix)
6. **MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES:** lists of any required readings, assignments, examinations, special materials, and extracurricular activities
7. **CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:** statement on expected classroom behavior (e.g., use of cell phones, recording devices, etc.)
8. **UNIVERSITY POLICIES:** statement on or link to policies on (see [Office of the Provost approved language](#)):
 - a. academic misconduct
 - b. accessible education and accommodations

- c. to mandatory reporting obligations
- d. Emergency policies – weather, fire, active shooter

Note: The Office of the Provost is working with IS and the Registrar on automatically populating Canvas sites with some of this information such as University Policies and basic information about the specific course. If that happens, this policy can be amended to reflect those changes. Until that happens, this information is important for students to have access to.

INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

Proposed Guidance Unit-level policies are already required by the collective bargaining agreement between United Academics and the university to address communication and contact with students. As such, the following is offered as guidance, not policy, to inform unit policies.

Office Hours:

Instructors of in-person, online, or remote undergraduate and graduate courses should provide live, synchronous options for students to meet with them (e.g. office hours) for a minimum total of 2 hours per week during their teaching terms. This should be a mix with both scheduled times and by-appointment times. Flexibility can be offered when an instructor's course(s) that term already include high contact and engagement with all students, or in terms where an instructor's teaching load is lower than normal.

Other Availability Guidance:

Instructors should make themselves available to students via email and/or other appropriate onlinemedia.

- Instructors should respond within a reasonable time frame to appropriate student emails.
 - Instructors should provide individual responses to questions pertaining to specific students.
 - Responses to general questions may be achieved by announcements to the class via email or Canvas.
 - Questions on issues that are already clear from the syllabus or other course communications may be addressed with a simple communication pointing students to the appropriate resource.

APPENDIX: University-level policy related to class absences

The following are clarifications regarding existing University policies that intersect with this proposal under the section on absences.

Religious Accommodations

The university's Discrimination policy (<https://policies.uoregon.edu/discrimination-0>) in Section GG states "Any student who, because of religious beliefs, is unable to attend classes on a particular day shall be excused from attendance requirements and from any examination or other assignment on that day. The student shall make up the examination or other assignment missed because of the absence."

This policy is operationalized through the "Student Religious Accommodation Request" process found on the University Registrar website (<https://registrar.uoregon.edu/calendars/religious-observances>). The Office of the Provost website provides a syllabus statement on this subject here: <https://provost.uoregon.edu/syllabus-guidelines>.

Absences Related to University-Sponsored Athletic Events

Instructors are not required to "excuse" all student-athlete absences and/or provide special accommodations for them.

The governing rule here pertains to "Academic Extra Benefits" which, under NCAA rules, is "substantial assistance or the granting of an exception that is not generally available to an institution's students, which results in the certification of a student-athlete's eligibility to participate in intercollegiate athletics or receive financial aid." In lay terms, the Office of the Provost has communicated the following "bright line", "**Student-athletes may not be given special treatment simply because they are student-athletes.** Student-athletes can only receive accommodations that are the same or similar as accommodations offered to other students.

In addition, under "Student-athlete travel and class attendance/participation" it states that "faculty are strongly encouraged to make pedagogically sound and justifiable accommodations that will enable student-athletes to be successful in the classroom" and that "In classes with substantial class participation, project or lab work, appropriate accommodations may not be possible. In those instances, the student-athlete should be informed that the course is not a good fit in a term with significant travel. Under no circumstances should the instructor offer an accommodation that is pedagogically unsound or that would be unavailable to other students." (See <https://provost.uoregon.edu/academic-misconduct-and-academic-extra-benefits-involving-faculty-student-athletes-3>)

Finally, in terms of post-season contests, the communication from the Office of the Provost states that these are "university-sponsored events" and as such, provide a legitimate excuse for student participants to be absent from regularly scheduled final exams." It also provides some options that "faculty are authorized to use" to accommodate make-up exams. The use of the term "legitimate excuse" here pertains only to final exams. (See <https://provost.uoregon.edu/post-season-contests>)

In addition, students who are not student-athletes also participate in these events. They should provide the same documentation for expected absences at university-sponsored events and be afforded similar consideration from faculty.

“Mandatory” Attendance

The only university-level policy on mandatory attendance is the “Mandatory First Class Attendance Policy” which states:

“Academic departments may designate courses (not individual sections) as “Mandatory First Class Attendance”, which requires enrolled students to attend the first official meeting, as indicated in the UO Class Schedule, of designated courses. Attendance will be taken at the first official meeting of all courses with this designation. These courses are identified in the Class Schedule.

Enrolled students who do not attend the first official meeting of these courses will be dropped from the course.” (see the following for more: <https://registrar.uoregon.edu/current-students/registering-for-classes#mandatory-first-class-attendance-policy>)

Beyond this, faculty can require attendance through their absence policy and impose appropriate consequences for missed classes.

Dean of Students “Emergency Academic Notification”

Students who have extended absences due to crisis, serious injury or illness can follow a process with the Dean of Students to have an “Emergency Academic Notification” email sent to instructors.

Instructors can help students that are unable to attend classes for an extended time due to a crisis, serious illness or injury, or hospitalization by including a link to the Dean of Students “Emergency Academic Notification” process: <https://dos.uoregon.edu/dos-faq> and by proactively reaching out to students if the Instructor is concerned and wishes to offer help. Information on signs of student crisis and ways faculty can help are located here <https://dos.uoregon.edu/assisting-students-concern>. For students who follow this process, the Office of the Dean of Students will notify the student’s faculty members by email that the student is experiencing an emergency and steps the faculty member can take.

Accessible Education Center (AEC) Accommodations

In some cases, students can be approved through AEC for flexibility in attendance and/or assignment deadlines. The AEC website states:

“Students with disabilities are approved for flexibility in attendance and/or assignment deadlines when strong medical documentation warrants the accommodation(s). These accommodations provide students opportunities to demonstrate mastery of course knowledge, even when disability limits their ability to attend class and/or meet deadlines. Accommodations are not intended to sacrifice essential course goals or to place an undue burden on instructors. Rather, these accommodations ask instructors to:

- understand when grade penalties for class absences and/or missed assignment deadlines may be inappropriate for students with disabilities
- consider alternative assignment formats to allow all students to demonstrate course knowledge”

See <https://aec.uoregon.edu/guidance-flexibility-attendance-and-assignment-deadlines> for more information.