

Departmental Teaching Guidelines Awaiting approval of Undergraduate Committee, 2014

1. Procedures for registering for classes prior to the first day of the semester are described in the class schedule. The department monitors enrollment and makes every effort to ensure that all students can register for the classes they need. If you hear of students being unable to register for your class bring this to the attention of the Associate Chair.

2. The math department enforces prerequisites. Some students will need a permission code to register because, for example, their prerequisites are not recognized by the system (in the case of transfer work) or because a course is full. Please direct these students to the math department website (www.math.utah.edu) where there is a link to the permission code request form. Also, please follow whatever instructions the undergraduate advisor emails instructors regarding permission codes for students to add your class.

3. Many of our courses, particularly on the low levels, are overseen by course coordinators. Their responsibilities include:

- Determine the specific curriculum for the courses in their care and maintain syllabi, sample exams and homework, and other materials, for use by instructors.
- Establish course objectives and grading criteria and communicate these to the instructors, particularly new instructors.
- Choose the textbook for the courses in their care, consulting with individual instructors as appropriate.
- Consult closely with new instructors and ensure that they understand course objectives and standards, and adhere to them.
- Assist department administration in responding effectively to student complaints.

If you are new to teaching in our Department, or new to teaching a specific course, consult with the course coordinator about expectations, standards, and grading schemes that are appropriate for your course.

4. Before you begin teaching your class you need to decide on a grading scheme, involving projects, homework, exams, quizzes, and the final exam. Be sure to communicate this scheme clearly to your students at the beginning of the semester. Grades range from A through E. Note that there is no A+, E+, or E-. Consider the following points:

- Your students should have sufficient opportunity to show their ability and should receive ongoing feedback during the course. So your grade should be composed of sufficiently many different items.
- A minimum grade of C is required for math majors, as well as for all students who will use the course as a prerequisite for further math classes. Giving a lower grade (even a C-) is likely a serious matter for the student. You should not do it lightly, but you also should not hesitate to do it when it is appropriate. Usually this means that the student is not sufficiently prepared to take classes for which your class is a prerequisite. If in doubt consult the associate chair or your course coordinator.
- Occasionally instructors use only a subset of the grading scale, like A, B, C, D, E. This is inappropriate since by crossing the border between two such grades a small performance difference in the class makes a huge difference to the student's record and grade point average. Use the scale from A through E fully. This may also reduce the intensity of grading disputes you may have with your students.
- If a student is signed up for your class but has not participated in it at all, assign an EU grade rather than an E. This is an "unofficial withdrawal" which makes it easier for the student to withdraw retroactively.

5. Grading should be based on established criteria. These criteria vary from course to course and are specific in terms of the subject matter of the course. Details are announced by the course

coordinators. If you are new to a certain course you should consult with the course coordinator for specific guidelines. University policy defines letter grades as follows:

- A: Excellent performance, superior achievement.
- B: Good performance, substantial achievement.
- C: Standard performance and achievement.
- D: Substandard performance, marginal achievement.
- E: Unsatisfactory performance and achievement.

Based on your best judgment about a student's performance in the current class, someone receiving the grade of A, B, or C should, with the same amount of effort, be able to continue on in a class for which this one is a prerequisite. This implies that the student understands the subject of the current class well enough so that with the appropriate instruction and effort on the student's part the subject of the following class can be understood by that student, without having to go back to the current class. If on that basis a student will not be able to comprehend the subject matter of a subsequent class it is crucial that he or she receive a grade of C- or lower. Don't be moved by false sympathy. Not the student, nor other students in the next class, nor anybody else, will benefit from a student passing a class unless this is fully justified by the student's performance. Consider that in particular the student him or herself is better off repeating the current class rather than going on to the next one, only to flounder more thoroughly.

6. Students have a right to expect that grading in different sections of the same course, or the same course taught during different semesters, is reasonably consistent. To achieve this consistency please observe the following:

- If you are teaching a course for the first time, consult with the course coordinator before the semester starts and obtain all materials and the initial guidance you need.
- Your expectations must be consistent with the stated course objectives, the numbering level of the course, and the prerequisites of your course. Consult with the course coordinator about specific expectations before you teach a course for the first time.
- The average grade in all of our classes, of all students who enroll in the class and do not formally withdraw by the end of the semester, is somewhere between a B and a C. Note that this figure does include students who are no longer participating in your class, but who have not withdrawn. These averages vary between courses and course levels, and tend to be somewhat lower for the 1000-level classes.
- If it becomes apparent that the average grade in your class is going to be a B or better, or a C or worse, consult with the course coordinator, to see if you need to adjust your grading. We do not encourage artificial normalization of grades but it sometimes happens that a first-time instructor will need guidance from the course coordinator to avoid grading too harshly.

7. You may be asked by a student to give an I, for "incomplete." That grade is reserved for students who do passing work up to almost the end of the semester and then are prevented from finishing the course work by circumstances beyond their control. Typically this means someone is sick during the final exam or has an accident. If you give an incomplete, you and the student need to agree on a procedure by which the student can make up the incomplete, and you should record that agreement in an email to the student, which you should also save. Incomplete grades are sometimes abused and overused. An Incomplete grade does not mean that the student can retake the course for free. If you are new or the matter is at all doubtful, the grade of Incomplete requires approval of the Associate Chair. In your discussion with the student you can make things easier for yourself by pointing out that you don't have the authority to give an Incomplete on your own and referring the student to the Associate Chair.

8. By the first day of classes, give your students a syllabus. Your syllabus should include the following: course title and credit hours, prerequisite information, your contact information, office hours, grading scheme, exam dates, course description, required textbook (including ISBN), course outline, tentative course schedule, grading policy, information about Tutoring Center, ADA statement, calculator policy, and any additional items you think are relevant.

This link <http://ctle.utah.edu/doc/syllabus-guidelines.pdf> gives more details about what should be included in the syllabus according to University policies. Stick to the procedures you outlined in your syllabus and make sure you treat all students equally. The most difficult complaints for us to resolve are those that involve changes in procedures and criteria during the semester, or application of different procedures to different students. For example, do not say you won't accept late assignments, refuse some, and then accept others.

9. Final exams sometimes lead to arguments between students and their instructors. To avoid any arguments, follow this policy:

- Comprehensive written final exams should be given in all undergraduate classes (through the 5000 level). "Comprehensive" means that the exam covers the entire semester, not just the latter parts of it.
- In-class final exams must be given at the official university scheduled time.
- Take-home final exams are not allowed in any lower-level courses (1000 through 3000 level courses).
- Final exams in graduate classes are given at the discretion of the instructor. They may be written or oral, in class or take-home. If they are written in class during examination week they must take place at the officially scheduled time.
- Students unable to attend the final exam may be given a make-up exam at the discretion of the instructor. The make-up exam may be oral or written. Instructors should accommodate students' reasonable requests.

10. Students with a disability certified by the Center for Disability Services may require certain accommodations. When there is a problem with physical access we change rooms. Otherwise accommodations typically take the form of letting the student spend more time for a test, or take the test in a quiet room, at the Center for Disability Services. Such accommodations are prescribed by the Center and we simply follow their instructions. Students with a disability must be given the same treatment as other students in all material respects. Exams must be identical, and any requirements (e.g., calculator/no calculator, open/closed books or notes) must be spelled out and applied equally to all students. If you give hints or clarifications during a test you need to inform the Center for Disability Services so they can give the same information to the student with a disability.

11. Arrive on time and dismiss class on time. Students have paid for your time, and they have to go to another class after yours. In case of illness or emergency find a replacement instructor. If there is no time for this, call the main math department front desk or the front desk of your satellite campus so that someone can dismiss your class.

12. Treat students with respect. Realize that they really don't understand yet what you are trying to teach them. Be well prepared for each class: for your lecture, to answer questions and to discuss homework.

13. Give students a chance to ask questions, and encourage them to do so. Plan time for this activity. If necessary, repeat questions so the whole class knows what the question is and can benefit from your answer. After you've answered a question, in some way check in with the student to ensure you answered it. Never imply that a question is stupid.

14. Don't just lecture to the class; periodically check students' understanding by asking questions yourself. Then, be willing to wait until they answer. If the wait is long, this could mean that you need to review that topic more.

15. For your time management have more material planned than you think you will cover, so you don't run out of things to say. Leave optional material to the end where you can just omit it if you run out of time.

16. It is not a good idea to give individual hints during an exam, for fairness to all students. Corrections and clarifications should generally be given to the entire class. If you make a mistake

on a test, be generous in grading the relevant problem and give students extra credit if they recognize and point out the error.

17. The performance record of individual students in your class is protected by the Educational Rights and Privacy Rights Act of 1974, and must not be revealed to anybody other than the student. Thus it is illegal to post grades in a manner that reveals the students' identity. You may post grades in a manner that protects students' privacy, e.g., by using code numbers or words. However, it is recommended that you use the university's approved classroom software, Canvas (which you can access via Campus Information Systems), or some other software, like WebWork, WebAssign, MyMathLab, to post grades in a timely fashion throughout the semester. This way your students can confidentially stay informed of their scores/grades. Exams must be returned to students in a way that protects confidentiality. Don't leave them in a pile outside your office for the students to pick up.

18. Make yourself available to students, by holding office hours, and by being open to making appointments. Many of us welcome students just dropping in. Scheduling one of your "office hours" as a problem session in a reserved classroom encourages more students to attend. It is recommended to hold at least 2-3 office hours per week.

19. At the end of each semester, students complete online course evaluations. You should read the students' comments and numerical ratings when they are made available to you several weeks after the semester ends. If the same suggestion or comment occurs from a significant portion of the responders, it may be indicating something you did exceptionally well or something that can be improved. Course evaluations are kept on file in the front office and are available for perusal by the public. Students use them to find out about their instructors or to decide which courses to take. Students can also access the numerical ratings online through Campus Information Systems (CIS). Course evaluations are also used for various departmental purposes including deciding on teaching assignments and awards, retention, promotion, and tenure decisions.

20. Very occasionally, students complain. If possible, a complaint should be raised and resolved between the student and the instructor. If that stage fails, or is inappropriate because the student is concerned about confidentiality, complaints should be directed to the Course Coordinator and/or the Associate Chair. He/she may visit your class, unannounced or after consulting with you, to gather information in response to a complaint. All formal complaints will be discussed with you.

21. Absence from campus during times your classes are scheduled for professional purposes such as attending conferences or job interviews is usually possible, subject to the following requirements:

- Your class is your primary responsibility and you need to ensure that your class is covered and your students do not suffer disadvantages from your absence.
- It is your (and not the department's) responsibility to arrange for someone to teach your class in your absence. Usually this means that you ask a colleague and at some convenient time return the favor.
- Absence from your class, and your proposed replacement, requires prior notification and approval by the department.
- In particular you must inform the main math department front desk (and the front desk of your satellite campus for off-campus courses) and the Associate Chair of your plans so that we can inform students in the case that something goes wrong and they come to us to find out what happened to their instructor.

22. If you have any problems with academic misconduct, please refer to the separate document (that you should receive in TA training or via email from the Associate Chair or appointee of the Associate Chair) that outlines explicitly the departmental/university guidelines to follow.

23. Teaching in this department is focused on understanding concepts and principles, not on rote learning of procedures for solving narrowly defined mathematical problems. Students should

learn to think for themselves, and to apply the mathematics they have learned to problems in different subject areas. They should understand the mathematics as well as the procedures. This means that they can make multiple logical connections between mathematical facts and concepts, and they can determine how to apply the mathematics to a broad assortment of problems and applications. Your assignments and tests should contain an appropriate mixture of simple skill testing problems and more complex problems. Some of these problems should require several steps for their solution and make it necessary for the student to recognize what those steps are.

24. Have fun in your teaching!