

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Students and Teachers—Working Together

“Civility is not a sign of weakness.”—John F. Kennedy

At a university, good student-teacher relationships come from mutual respect, trust, and honesty. Learning takes place when teachers and students treat each other with politeness and civility, rather than anger, ridicule, or confrontation. Indeed, a classroom conducive to teaching and learning is the right of all University of Wyoming students and faculty, and it is the responsibility of both parties to achieve and maintain it—even though specifics will vary from course to course. This sheet provides some guidelines for carrying out that responsibility.

A teacher (that is, *anyone* who teaches) should do his or her best to provide a disciplined yet comfortable and supportive classroom environment. Teachers’ material should be well organized, their procedures clear and fair. They should encourage questions and questioning, although students should remember that insight often comes from struggling with a problem rather than being given the answer.

The ultimate responsibility for learning lies with the individual student. Although faculty members will teach and guide, and university staff will assist and encourage, learning is the responsibility of the student. Learning is hard work, and full-time students should consider “studenting” to be a full-time job.

Course Requirements

It is strongly recommended that teachers provide students with a syllabus for each course. This gives students a written record of the requirements, schedule, assignments, grading, and other policies of the course—which they should read and understand. The syllabus should also state the goals of the course and how the completion of the work outlined in the syllabus fulfills those goals. Syllabi are like a contract between the student and the teacher. Like a contract, a syllabus should make clear the expectations and requirements the parties are expected to fulfill to the best of their ability. Given that the syllabus is a projection of activities that will take place over several months, however, the teacher can modify it to fit unforeseen circumstances. All changes should be clearly announced in class.

Course Preparation—Studying!

Students must be prepared for class. They cannot expect a good grade in a course without putting in several hours of studying for each hour of scheduled class time. Extra-curricular activities, including jobs, should not be allowed to interfere with a student’s preparation.

Teachers should use their expertise and experience to prepare and present the subject of a course in the best possible way.

Attendance

Students should attend all required meetings of their courses. They are responsible for the instruction and the announcements in all class meetings. If absent from class, students can assume they have missed something important and should take steps to make it up. This is done first by getting notes from another student and doing any assignments. If they do not understand the material, students should then approach the teacher with questions. They should not expect the teacher to reteach the class. If students choose not to attend class, they should expect the consequences.

Students must attend all scheduled examinations. Leaving early for vacations or breaks does not constitute a valid reason for absence.

If students must be absent from a class or cannot complete assigned work on time, they should consult beforehand with the teacher whenever possible. Except for valid reasons, teachers are under no compulsion to accept late work, especially if no prior arrangements have been made. Valid reasons for excused absences are medical, University-authorized activity (e.g., athletic), or those approved by the Office of Student Life. Students with such absences must make up any missed work. They remain responsible for the material covered while they were gone.

Teachers have the right to set the attendance policy for their courses. The policy must be announced to the students, and may be included in the course syllabus.

Responsibility in Teaching and Learning

The main purpose of a university is to promote student learning. This means that teachers direct all matters dealing with their courses. That does not mean that teachers bear sole responsibility for students’ education. Students need to follow a teacher’s guidance—study, do homework, prepare for class—to master the information and skills being taught.

If a student is uncertain how to address a faculty member, “Dr.” or “Professor” is usually a respectful approach.

Assignments

Students have a responsibility to turn in assignments on time. By the same token, teachers have a responsibility to grade and return assignments promptly. Papers should be clearly marked so that students can understand their mistakes. Grading is not based on effort but on the *results* of effort—such as getting the right answer, solving a problem correctly, or writing a good paper. Teachers should grade equitably, so that students with comparable results receive comparable grades.

Student Access to Teachers

Students should be able to meet with their teachers during the teachers' office hours. If this is not possible, they should arrange an appointment with the teacher. The most opportune time for students to arrange such an appointment with a teacher is usually before or after class. Appointments should be kept by both parties; if circumstances prevent this, students should call the teacher in advance to cancel or re-schedule. If teachers cannot make their office hours, they should announce this in class if possible; if due to last-minute problems, they should leave a note on their door.

Teachers should announce in class their policy about being contacted at home; students should then follow it. Late evenings are rarely a good time to call a teacher.

Classroom Deportment

All interactions within the classroom should be honest and respectful. Teachers should set the tone and demeanor of their classes. They should encourage discussion and questions where appropriate. Questions and comments by students ought to be thoughtful and relevant. Questions should be answered in a respectful and courteous manner. Unsanctioned talking, eating, sleeping, spitting, wearing hats, and reading unrelated material during a class are often rude and disruptive. Foul and abusive language is inappropriate. Teachers should begin and end classes promptly, in accordance with the published class schedule. Students should arrive on time and not leave, or prepare to leave, until the class has been dismissed.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty develops trust and respect between faculty and students, ensures fair and effective grading, and creates an environment which values learning. The University Regulations discuss academic honesty in detail. Here are a few specific examples:

1. Students and teachers have the responsibility to be honest, and the right to expect honesty from others. Dishonesty is morally and legally wrong; it can result in expulsion from the University.
2. Students must not cheat on tests, papers, exams, or other assignments; they should not fabricate, falsify, or misrepresent data on lab reports or research projects; they should not plagiarize other peoples' work. Whenever relevant, they should give credit through proper documentation.
3. To prevent misunderstanding, teachers should make clear their policies on the use of educational aids—such as calculators, "note sheets," and so on—and on matters of documentation.
4. Teachers should discourage dishonesty when designing and proctoring exams, implementing make-up policies and so on.
5. Both teachers and students should report suspected violations of standards of academic honesty to the teacher, department head, or dean.

Advising

Both the advisor and the advisee should keep appointments with each other, be on time, and be prepared.

Advisors should be familiar with each advisee's record and with the University and College system. In particular, they should know the requirements for University Studies and for the student's Major concentration. Advisors should learn the student's interests and goals, and within that framework help the student find courses which fulfill graduation requirements. However, once advice has been offered, both the final choice of and the responsibility for courses lies with the student. Advisors may need to teach freshmen and transfer students how to plan their progress towards graduation.

Students should respect advising and registration schedules. They should know the requirements for graduation, including those for their major(s), their minor(s), and for University Studies. Students should prepare for advising meetings by selecting a short list of courses they are interested in taking—including courses that fulfill University or major requirements.

In choosing courses, students should respect the prerequisite requirements for each course.