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MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 22, 2011
TO: College Deans
FROM: Diane Alperin, Interim University Provost and
Chief Academic Officer
SUBJECT: Clarification of Guidelines for Course Syllabi

It has come to my attention that there is confusion, for some, about certain sections of the Guidelines for Course Syllabi (attached), distributed by the Provost on February 5, 2010 and approved by the University Faculty on January 22, 2010.

Item 8, Course Evaluation Method, clearly states that all course syllabi must have a section that advises students of how they will be evaluated – “a breakdown of the graded course components and their weight in determining the overall course grade”.

Item 9, Course Grading Scale (Optional), was not meant to negate Item 8. The intent here is to advise faculty that it is their option to implement a unique course grading scale or curve. The equivalent letter grade in the course is the decision of an individual faculty member. If a faculty member plans to exercise the option to use a unique grading scale or curve, that needs to be stated in the syllabus.

While this may seem obvious to most, students are entitled to know how they are progressing in a course based on the individual grades received. For example, a student with a 95% average understands this is to represent A (4.0) work, 85% B (3.0) work, etc... Faculty who opt to deviate from this must simply communicate with the students.

The University Catalog does include a numerical equivalent of each letter grade given as a final grade in a course. These are not optional and are used to calculate each student’s grade point average for the institution.

Cc: Ed Pratt, Dean, Undergraduate Studies
Barry Rosson, Dean, Graduate College
Tim Lenz, President, University Faculty Senate

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 5, 2010
FROM: Diane Alperin, University Provost and
Chief Academic Officer
TO: College Deans
SUBJECT: Guidelines for Course Syllabi (**Revised**)



A comprehensive syllabus facilitates clear communication between students and faculty about a course and is an important component of effective instruction. Syllabi inform students about what is expected of them to meet course requirements and must be disseminated to students in all courses in an appropriate written form, e.g. hard copy or electronic version, at the beginning of the semester. A copy must also be made available to the Department Chairperson/School Director.

It is understood that the format of syllabi may vary by academic unit but that certain information is essential. The attached *Guidelines for Course Syllabi* were developed by a Syllabus Committee, which was composed of representatives from the Undergraduate Programs Committee and the Graduate Programs Committee. Ed Pratt, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and Gail Wisan, Director of Assessment, served as ex-officio members of the committee. These *Guidelines* were approved by the University Faculty Senate on January 22, 2010.

It is understood that the format of the syllabi may vary by academic unit. Colleges and departments/schools may have additional syllabi requirements. A professional Code of Ethics statement may be important in some units. The use of a plagiarism prevention services, such as SafeAssign, may be important to note as well.

It is recognized that while an instructor makes every effort to honor the syllabus as originally presented, circumstances may dictate a need to change the organization or content of the course. If there is a compelling reason to change the grading policy for the course after the syllabus has been distributed, students should be informed of this change in writing (e.g. hard copy or electronically).

Cc: John Pritchett, President
Provost's Advisory Council
Tim Lenz, President, University Faculty Senate

Guidelines for Course Syllabi

A well-crafted syllabus benefits student and instructor alike by minimizing misunderstandings about course requirements and expectations. The syllabus provides students a clear understanding of course objectives and learning outcomes. It also offers students a roadmap for how those objectives and learning outcomes will be met. The syllabus should not only include information on course content, readings, assignments and activities, exams, and the grade weighting of course components but also should state what students are expected to learn or be able to do as a result of taking the course. Expectations should be clear, especially in terms of assignments and due dates. In extraordinary circumstances, the Office of the Provost will issue instructions on how to handle missed classes.

1. Course title/number, number of credit hours
2. Course prerequisites, corequisites, and where course fits in program of study (if applicable)
In addition to listing prerequisites and corequisites, note if the course meets a particular requirement, such as WAC (with grade of “C” or higher), Intellectual Foundations Program, required course for entry to particular program of study, etc.
3. Course logistics
 - a. Term
 - b. Notation if online course
 - c. Class location and time (if classroom-based course)
4. Instructor contact information
Instructor’s name, office address, office hours, contact telephone number, and email address
5. TA contact information (if applicable)
TA name, office address, office hours, contact telephone number, and email address
6. Course description
The course description should be consistent with the description found in the University Catalog.
7. Course objectives/student learning outcomes
Provide the students an understanding of what they will be expected to learn as a result of successfully completing the course.
8. Course evaluation method
Include a breakdown of the graded course components and their weight in determining the overall course grade (e.g. Midterm exam--20%, Essay #1--15%, Attendance and Participation--10%, etc.). If you have a policy about unexcused class absences resulting in failure in the course, clearly state your policy. Please note that the University Provost, in order to identify and assist students at academic risk, requests that courses with freshmen have graded assignments well before midterm. If applicable, also note the minimum grade required to pass the course (if not a “D-“).
9. Course grading scale (optional)

Many faculty include in their syllabi some type of grading rubric: what constitutes “A” work in the course or in particular assignments, “B” work, what constitutes a “Pass” or “Fail,” etc.

10. Policy on makeup tests, late work, and incompletes (if applicable)

If you do not accept late work or apply penalties to late work, state so. Please note that students may not be penalized for absences due to participation in University-approved activities, including athletic or scholastics teams, musical and theatrical performances, and debate activities. Instructors must allow these students to make up missed work without any reduction in the student’s final course grade. Reasonable accommodation must also be made for students participating in a religious observance. Also, note that grades of Incomplete (“I”) are reserved for students who are passing a course but have not completed all the required work because of exceptional circumstances. If your college has elaborated on this policy, state so here.

11. Special course requirements (if applicable)

State if any requirements are associated with the course, such as mandatory field trips or film viewings, special fees, or purchase of course-related materials.

12. Classroom etiquette policy (if applicable)

If you have a particular policy relating to student behavior in the class, such as relating to tardiness or on the use of electronic devices in the classroom, state so here. University policy on the use of electronic devices states: “In order to enhance and maintain a productive atmosphere for education, personal communication devices, such as cellular telephones and pagers, are to be disabled in class sessions.” Many faculty elaborate on or refine this policy to meet particular needs.

13. Disability policy statement

Suggested statement: *In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) -- in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Davie, LA 240 (954-236-1222); in Jupiter, SR 110 (561-799-8010); or at the Treasure Coast, CO 117 (772-873-3441) – and follow all OSD procedures.*

14. Code of Academic Integrity policy statement

Suggested statement: *Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see [University Regulation 4.001](#). If your college has particular policies relating to cheating and plagiarism, state so here or provide a link to the full policy.*

15. Required texts/readings

16. Supplementary/recommended readings (if applicable)
17. Course topical outline, including dates for exams/quizzes, papers, completion of readings
 - Include a breakdown of topics covered (generally, by class day or by week), deadlines for course assignments/requirements, and dates of exams and quizzes.

Approved by University Faculty Senate on January 22, 2010.