

Getting Started Teaching at Fairfield University

Fairfield University values excellence in teaching and provides a great deal of support for instructors. An overview of available resources can be found at the [Center for Academic Excellence](#). The following document assembles policies that everyone teaching at Fairfield needs to know, along with some suggestions for how to implement those policies. The entire collection of policies jointly approved by the Faculty and Administration can be found [here](#), in the Journal of Record.

THE SYLLABUS

University policy is explicit on the matter of course syllabi; In all classes, students are to be provided a course syllabus setting out the course outline, readings and grading policy including the number of tests, method of evaluation, and weight of each evaluation.

Specific policies regarding required syllabus content

Class Attendance

All students are expected to attend every regularly scheduled class session. The impact of attendance on grading is specified in the syllabus for each course. Unexcused absences may be reported to the appropriate academic dean. Faculty members should have a policy for dealing with student absence on the syllabus for each course. If a student will miss a class due to an illness/injury, the professor should be notified according to the policy on the syllabus. If a student will miss an exam, quiz or in class presentation due to illness/injury or another type of emergency, the professor should be contacted beforehand. A faculty member may request that the student provide verification of the absence from a health care provider. If a faculty member considers it necessary to seek verification from a health care provider (e.g., the Student Health Center, Counseling & Psychological Services, or the student's independent medical provider), then the faculty member should address the request to the student and the student must consent to having the health care provider disclose information as to the student's treatment. It is within the purview of the faculty member to determine when or whether a student absence will be excused. Neither the Student Health Center nor Counseling & Psychological Services is able to excuse a student from class, examinations or other class-based requirements; the ultimate decision to excuse a student from class/class work rests with the faculty member.

In situations where the Student Health Center, Counseling & Psychological Services or an outside provider determines that the student's health is severely compromised, (e.g., in need of immediate medical treatment or other recommended activities to alleviate symptoms/contagion) or when the student must otherwise be absent from class for more than three days, the student should inform the appropriate faculty of the absence. On occasion, the Academic Dean's Office will advise professors that a student has notified the University that he or she will be absent for a specific period of time. This notification is provided as a courtesy and does not constitute a verification or excuse (unless it is determined that the student's condition constitutes a health or safety emergency, in which case the Office of the

Dean of Students reserves discretion to restrict a student from attending class). When able to return to class or campus, the student will work with the necessary faculty and/or follow the procedure/guidelines outlined in the faculty member's syllabus for making up missed work.

Released Time or Excused Absences for Students

A student participating in a university-sponsored event has the right to be excused without penalty or grade jeopardy from exams, student presentations, attendance and other classroom events during that time, provided the student makes up the required work in the fashion mutually agreed upon by the professor and the student.

Students participating in such university-sponsored events will be allowed to make up any major exams, tests, or quizzes which they miss in a course, when they are involved in a scheduled event, provided that participating students, or the faculty moderator, inform all their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, or as soon thereafter as possible, once scheduling is confirmed.

University sponsored events covered by this policy are defined as follows:

1. Athletics
 - a. all varsity sporting events; to include post-season tournaments
 - b. all club sporting events
2. Others
 - a. concerts, plays or other group performances where the absence of a member would detract from the overall performance.

Not included in this policy are clubs formed on a departmental basis such as Biology Club, Psychology Club, etc.

Course-Related Field Trips

The provisions for make-up of missed work outlined in the policy stated above on released time for students do not apply to absences due to course-related field trips.

Final Examinations

University Policy on Final Exams

1. Each instructor should be given wide latitude, so as to provide for a degree of creativity and flexibility in how the students will be tested. The form of evaluation should be in keeping with the goals and purposes of the course.
2. In every case the form of the final, end-of-semester comprehensive evaluation (such as written examination, take-home, oral exam, paper, or a combination of these) must appear on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester.
3. No form of final evaluation is to be due prior to the date assigned by the Registrar for that course's final examination. [The final exam schedule can be found under the Registrar's link in my.fairfield.]

4. The final comprehensive evaluation should reflect integration of course materials discussed during the semester.

Weighting of Course Components for Grading Purposes

There is no single formula for the weighting of course components, but in all classes, students should receive feedback on their work at multiple points during the semester. In classes for which the final assessment is an in-class examination, that exam should not count for more than 1/3 of the course grade.

Suggestions:

A well-designed syllabus can eliminate many student misunderstandings about the instructor's expectations for performance in the course. It is recommended (and in some cases, required) that all of the following items be included in the syllabus in a manner appropriate for the learning environment, e.g., lecture, seminar, laboratory, clinic, studio, fieldwork, or independent study:

1. Basic information: Course number, title, and credit hours
2. Course goals and objectives including cognitive and/or behavioral outcomes and the relation of assignments to the proposed outcomes. Some faculty include explicit reference to the relevant objectives from the IDEA evaluation form (see below).
3. Assignment schedule including lecture topics, textbooks, reading and writing assignments, due dates, required out-of-class work, e.g., field trips, group projects, review sessions, and examination dates.
4. Evaluation criteria including the components of the final grade, weights of various grades, the relationship (if any) of class participation and attendance to the final grade, grading criteria, and other information relevant to the evaluation process. (See above for policies regarding the final assessment and the weighting of course components.)
5. Instructor policies including policies on attendance, excused absences (see above) late work, group projects, requests for extensions, missed exams, make-up exams, materials allowed at examinations, and retention of materials submitted to meet course requirements.
6. Academic Honesty statement including a definition of behavior that would constitute misconduct in the course (see below), and an invitation to students to seek advice if they have any doubts about actions or procedures which might constitute academic misconduct e.g., plagiarism.
7. Statement indicating that the instructor will work with Accessibility to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities.
8. Instructor information and resources including office address and phone number, email address, preferred way to contact instructor, office hours, course or lab assistant, and tutoring availability.

9. Student evaluation statement indicating the expectation that all students will participate and complete the IDEA course evaluation at the end of the semester.

Important Policies that may or may not be spelled out in the syllabus

Academic Honesty

All members of the Fairfield University community share responsibility for establishing and maintaining appropriate standards of academic honesty and integrity. As such, faculty members have an obligation to set high standards of honesty and integrity through personal example and the learning communities they create. Such integrity is fundamental to, and an inherent part of, a Jesuit education, in which teaching and learning are based on mutual respect. It is further expected that students will follow these standards and encourage others to do so.

Students are sometimes unsure of what constitutes academic dishonesty. In all academic work, students are expected to submit materials that are their own and to include attribution for any ideas or language that is not their own. Examples of dishonest conduct include but are not limited to:

- Falsification of academic records or grades, including but not limited to any act of falsifying information on an official academic document, grade report, class registration document or transcript.
- Cheating, such as copying examination answers from materials such as crib notes or another student's paper.
- Collusion, such as working with another person or persons when independent work is prescribed.
- Inappropriate use of notes.
- Falsification or fabrication of an assigned project, data, results, or sources.
- Giving, receiving, offering, or soliciting information in examinations.
- Using previously prepared materials in examinations, tests, or quizzes.
- Destruction or alteration of another student's work.
- Submitting the same paper or report for assignments in more than one course without the prior written permission of each instructor.
- Appropriating information, ideas, or the language of other people or writers and submitting it as one's own to satisfy the requirements of a course, commonly known as plagiarism. Plagiarism constitutes theft and deceit. Assignments (compositions, term papers, computer programs, etc.) acquired either in part or in whole from commercial sources, publications, students, or other sources and submitted as one's own original work will be considered plagiarism.
- Unauthorized recording, sale, or use of lectures and other instructional materials.

In the event of such dishonesty, professors are to award a grade of zero for the project, paper, or examination in question, and may record an F for the course itself. When appropriate, expulsion may be recommended. A notation of the event is made in the student's file in the academic dean's office. The student will receive a copy.

Honor Code

Fairfield University's primary purpose is the pursuit of academic excellence. This is possible only in an atmosphere where discovery and communication of knowledge are marked by scrupulous, unqualified honesty. Therefore, it is expected that all students taking classes at the University adhere to the following Honor Code:

"I understand that any violation of academic integrity wounds the entire community and undermines the trust upon which the discovery and communication of knowledge depends. Therefore, as a member of the Fairfield University community, I hereby pledge to uphold and maintain these standards of academic honesty and integrity."

Proper Faculty Response to Incidences of Academic Dishonesty

If a faculty member believes that a student may have committed an act of academic dishonesty, he/she should meet with the student as soon as possible to discuss the matter. It is recommended that a third party be present for that meeting. If, after the meeting, the instructor still believes that an act of dishonesty has occurred, he/she should file a written report (plus supporting materials such as a plagiarized paper and the source from which it was copied) with his or her Dean, indicating reasons for believing the student has committed an academic offense, and indicating the proposed academic sanction. The student will receive a copy. (If the student is in a school other than that of the faculty member, a copy will be sent to the Dean of the student's school.)

Appeal Procedures

Students have a right to appeal academic dishonesty charges under the standard academic grievance procedure. The appeal must be initiated by the end of the subsequent fall or spring semester after the event that is the subject of the grievance. The appeal procedure includes informal and formal processes, all of which are spelled out in the [Journal of Record](#), Appendix 21.

Additional policies regarding final exams

Students are not required to take more than two exams in any final exam day. [Typically if the student invokes this policy, the middle exam would be the one to move.]

Final examinations (blue books, etc.) and term papers or other written assignments used by the professor for determining the final course grade are to be retained by the professor until the end of the following term, so as to be available for student inspection.

Evaluation of Teaching

Fairfield University uses the IDEA form and system for online student evaluations and a separate narrative assessment conducted on paper for every course. All Faculty are contacted by the Provost's office via email throughout the semester with prompts to guide them through

the process. In preparing your syllabus, you may want to consider which 3-5 of the 12 IDEA objectives are most relevant to your course, and make sure that your assignments and assessments are designed accordingly. The objectives and links to additional information can be found [here](#).

Missed Classes and Weather Delays/Closings

All instructors should begin and end their classes on time as a courtesy to their students and fellow instructors. When, for any valid reason, they are unable to meet their classes, they should notify the appropriate Dean and, if possible, make arrangements for conducting the class.

In the event of inclement weather, when the University remains open, faculty members should make every reasonable effort to meet their regularly scheduled classes. The final judgment on what is reasonable effort, and therefore whether to hold class, resides with the individual faculty member. Faculty members should try to notify their students of a decision to cancel class in a timely manner.

Note: [ITS](#) can help you with resources for conducting classes and/or office hours through web conferencing.

Inclement Weather Notification

The operations and activities of a residential, comprehensive university, such as Fairfield University, necessitate that the campus remain open with essential services available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Therefore, the University never fully closes or ceases operations. The default position in the event of inclement weather is that classes and all other activities will continue as scheduled, and cancellations or delays will be kept to an absolute minimum. Students, faculty, and staff should plan in advance accordingly.

In the event of extraordinary inclement weather conditions that affect the normal operations of the University, the information regarding the changes will be disseminated in three ways:

- 1 Outgoing message on the University's main line: (203) 254-4000 or ext. 4000
- 2 Posting on the University's website, www.fairfield.edu
- 3 Utilization of the StagAlert emergency notification system

Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct

Fairfield University's Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy is in the [Journal of Record](#), Appendix 18.

Additionally, Fairfield University requires all employees, including faculty, who are not otherwise governed by confidentiality rules or laws, to report incidences of sexual harassment including sexual misconduct. To assist faculty, the following language was developed and approved by the Academic Council for inclusion (at the discretion of the faculty member) in the course syllabus:

Fairfield University seeks to provide an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have been the victim of sexual harassment, misconduct or assault,

we encourage you to report it, knowing that if you report this to a faculty member, she or he must notify Fairfield University's Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may choose whether you or anyone involved is identified by name). For more information about your options at Fairfield please see the Student Handbook: <https://www.fairfield.edu/handbook/policiesprocedures/ - SexualMisconduct>