SPECIAL REPORT

of the

ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL

concerning

COURSE PROCEDURES

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MEMORANDUM ON COURSE PROCEDURES

Each year an inordinate number of complaints and disputes about grades and course procedures come to department heads, deans, the Provost's and Ombuds Offices, and the Student Center for Educational Research and Advocacy (SCERA). The great majority of those disputes could be avoided if faculty members took note of the minimal guidelines suggested below.

These guidelines suggest possible ways of minimizing some of the confusions and misunderstandings that lead to grievances. All courses cannot and should not be conducted identically. These guidelines are meant to be helpful. They are suggestions, not prescriptions. They do not intend to limit faculty freedom or to determine course structure and modes of evaluation.

GUIDELINES

1. Make available to each student an up to date syllabus that will provide students with the following information:
   - your course objectives
   - your expectations and any special requirements for papers, projects, lab reports or exams
   - your attendance policies
   - your grading criteria and the approximate weight of each course requirement in the final grade
   - your examination schedule and any make-up or rescheduling policies
   - your policies on academic honesty
   - your office, phone and mailbox numbers.

Try to avoid major changes as the semester progresses.

2. Since grading policies often tend to be a focus of confusion or misunderstanding, take special care to articulate your grading criteria and invite students to discuss related questions with you early in the course.

3. Avoid further misunderstandings by reminding students of their responsibilities in your course. For instance, remind them that it is their responsibility to take exams at the scheduled times and know the location of their exams, to make alternative arrangements in advance if they have a legitimate reason for not being able to take an exam, and to provide appropriate explanation and documentation if they miss an exam without making prior arrangements. Remind students also of your policies and official University policy on make-up exams.

4. Announce field trips and other special meetings, preferably in class and in writing. If these require activity on holidays and/or weekends, state this clearly.

5. Unless it is your custom to return exams, lab reports, papers and projects, retain all of your grading materials for timely review with students both during the semester and after final grades. Students have the right to discuss their grades with faculty: they should be apprised of your grading policies, see their work, and hear your evaluation of their work directly.
Two years ago the Ombuds Office circulated a memorandum to University faculty suggesting procedures for courses which would help in avoiding mis-communications, disappointments, antagonism, and conflict between teachers and students. These suggestions arose from legitimate grievances that had been brought to the Ombuds Office over the years.

Last Spring, the Academic Matters Council revised the memorandum from the Ombuds Office and circulated it among students and faculty. The comments we received were favorable. Accordingly, we now submit this memorandum to the Faculty Senate for endorsement, and we request the Senate to direct the Secretary of the Faculty Senate to distribute this memorandum to the faculty at the beginning of each semester. Therefore it is

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate endorse the memorandum on Course Procedures contained in Sen. Doc. No. 85-021 and that the Secretary of the Faculty Senate be directed to distribute copies of that memorandum to all faculty members at the start of each semester.