

Expectations and Guidelines for Faculty Conduct at American University

Preamble

The purpose of these Expectations and Guidelines for Faculty Conduct at American University (“Expectations and Guidelines”) is to clarify understandings for the professional conduct of the American University faculty. These Expectations and Guidelines are intended to be consistent with and amplify the [Faculty Manual](#) and existing University policies, rather than supplant the [Faculty Manual](#) or any policy. To the extent the information in this document conflicts with the [Faculty Manual](#), [Academic Regulations](#), or other University policies, then the [Faculty Manual](#), [Academic Regulations](#), or other University policies will be controlling.

These Expectations and Guidelines for Faculty Conduct articulate standards of professional conduct derived from general professional consensus about acceptable faculty behavior and university policies. Conduct that departs from these principles is unacceptable because it is contrary to the mission of the University and is inconsistent with professional consensus.

This document is organized into four sections:

- I. Expectations for the Administration of Classes
- II. Guidelines for Interactions with Students
- III. Guidelines for Interactions with Other Faculty, Staff, and the University
- IV. Guidelines for Scholarship and Research

If these expectations and guidelines are not satisfied by a faculty member, concerns may be initially addressed at the unit level. If applicable, additional support and resources will be provided to faculty members. In some cases, informal methods of resolution or disciplinary procedures may be enacted per the university’s [Faculty Manual](#).

I. Expectations for the Administration of Classes

Each faculty member is charged with the full responsibility for the conduct and control of the classes to which they are assigned. This responsibility is to be guided by policies and regulations of the university and the college or school in which a course is offered.

A faculty member should follow the general course description and objectives as provided by the college, school or department where the course is offered; administer examinations or other appropriate evaluative methods and otherwise provide adequate and objective measure of student performance; and maintain good order and enforce university regulations in classes at all times. All faculty members are encouraged to avail themselves of the resources provided by the Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning which include a [Template for Course Syllabi](#), a [Best Practices Guide](#), and a [New Faculty Guide](#).

The following are procedures for faculty to follow in administering their classes.

A. Syllabi

A syllabus describing the general nature and scope of each course should be prepared and shared before the start of each and every semester during which the course is offered. This syllabus should be consistently updated and made available to the appropriate academic or teaching units, course or department chair, and/or program director.

All syllabi should include learning outcomes, the methods by which course grades are determined, and policies regarding attendance, participation, and the submission of incomplete or late work--provided these policies are not contrary to those of the university or the college or school in which the course is offered.

All faculty members should also establish reasonable rules within their syllabi with respect to unexcused absences with the understanding that students cannot be penalized for officially excused absences. In addition, faculty members are encouraged to create and include a syllabus policy about the classroom use of electronic devices (cell phones, laptop computers, e-readers and tablets, any device that records video or audio, etc.). Faculty members should also note that if there is an ASAC accommodation pertaining to the use of auxiliary devices in the classroom, the accommodation creates an exception to the policy stated in the syllabus.

All syllabi should provide the faculty member's contact information and office hours, relevant information about teaching assistants, and the required passages provided within the Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning's [Syllabus Template](#).

Customarily, substantive syllabus changes should not be made while the course is being taught. Non-substantive changes, such as alternate readings, minor alterations to course assignments, and schedule changes should be clearly communicated within a republished syllabus.

The syllabi for courses for which many sections are taught should seek to demonstrate substantial consistency across sections. This consistency is not intended to inhibit flexibility on the part of the faculty member or place limits on the prerogative of adapting a course in the way it seems most suitable. The university is well aware that each faculty member will place emphasis in a course according to the professor's conception of the subject matter covered. However, all syllabi should provide a clear summary of what the course is intended to achieve, the content it covers, and some indication of the breadth and depth of coverage and the basic assignments and examinations required of students. In addition, all major course assignments and examinations should relate to the learning outcomes stated within the syllabus.

B. Social Media Guidelines

The creation and use of technology and social media are constantly evolving. Faculty should determine their policy regarding the recording or sharing any class content. Ultimately, given issues regarding privacy, ownership, ethics, and related matters, faculty members are encouraged to incorporate the Social Media Syllabus Language guidelines, created by the Social Media Policy Committee, and the Faculty Senate's Social Media Tips and Guidelines into their syllabi. Both of these documents are available on the [Senate Reports webpage](#).

C. Office Hours

Learning is not limited to the classroom; engaging with students in and outside of the classroom is important. All faculty members are expected to be available to communicate with students outside of class sessions during every term in which they teach.

Recognizing that some academic departments and units may have higher expectations, the guidelines that follow serve to establish a minimum. Customarily, tenured, tenure-track, and term faculty hold 2-3 office hours per week; adjunct faculty hold 1-2 office hours per week. For classes that take place in-person (i.e., not online), at least 50% of this scheduled time should come in the form of standard office hours—i.e., time reserved for face-to-face interactions, ideally across different days and time periods to accommodate various student schedules. The remaining time may be distributed across meetings by appointment and online communication, both scheduled and unscheduled.

Office hours should be noted on syllabi. In addition, at the start of every academic term, faculty members should post their office hours outside their office doors (if applicable) and provide their academic units with information about their selected office hours.

D. Textbooks and Class Materials

In the interest of creating an inclusive environment for learning, faculty members should give consideration to diversity when choosing textbooks and course materials.

Faculty members who expect that students will acquire textbooks, other books, or specialized materials such as art paper, must ensure that the campus store is informed of their needs at least two months prior to the beginning of the course to ensure availability at the start of the semester. Faculty members or the appropriate teaching unit should also advise the campus bookstore as to whether books not sold for a given course should be returned to the publisher or retained in stock for sale when the course is offered again.

Desk copies of textbooks for faculty members should be secured directly from the publishers following the guidelines provided by the publisher. They will not be available through the campus store.

The University Library can place course materials on reserve either in the library or online. See the [Library's Reserves website](#) for more information and deadlines.

Faculty members are expected to coordinate with the Academic Support and Access Center (ASAC) as needed regarding alternate formats of materials and captioning for any registered students with approved accommodations.

E. Class Norms

Accommodations. Any student requesting accommodation for a disability who does not have a letter of approved accommodations from the Academic Support and Access Center (ASAC), should be referred to the ASAC. All faculty are expected to provide reasonable accommodation in consultation with the ASAC. In addition, all syllabi must include the ASAC's "Students with Disabilities" statement. This statement is provided within the Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning's [Syllabus Template](#).

Atmosphere. All faculty members teaching classes at American University, whether they are full-time or part-time faculty, will observe the highest possible academic and professional standards in their own performance and in the performance they demand of their students. Faculty members should be committed to practicing intellectual honesty, to encouraging the free pursuit of learning and the free expression of ideas among their students, to promoting high scholarly standards, to respecting students as individuals and to treating them

appropriately in and out of class, to evaluating students' work in a fair and timely manner, and to adhering to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors of students.

Management of Disorderly Students. Primary responsibility for managing the classroom environment (including meetings with students during office hours) rests with faculty. A faculty member may remove any disorderly student for the remainder of the class or end a meeting early, and, if necessary, call upon public safety for assistance. If circumstances require a longer suspension from class or dismissal from the University or other sanctions, these disciplinary measures must be preceded by the process outlined in the Student Conduct Code.

Diversity and Inclusion. All faculty should respect and embrace diversity and inclusion in the classroom. In its online resource, "[Making Excellence Inclusive](#)," the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), defines diversity as "individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations)." Inclusion, as defined by the AAC&U, is "the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions."

Faculty members should be mindful of diversity and inclusion when planning course content, choosing course materials, developing assignments, and facilitating class discussion. Creating an inclusive environment for learning is an essential component of the educational experience of our students and an important indicator of our success as an academic community.

Trigger Warnings. The University's stance, which supports academic freedom for faculty and students, is outlined within the Faculty Senate Resolution on Freedom of Expression, the full text of which is available on the [Senate Reports webpage](#).

F. Cancellation of Class Meetings

Each faculty member, in accepting an appointment to teach for the university, assumes an obligation to be present for the full length of all meetings of each class to which they are assigned. Faculty members are expected to conduct classes as scheduled and on time.

Students cannot be expected to wait for a tardy instructor for more than fifteen minutes and no faculty member may penalize a class that exercises its prerogative of disbanding when the instructor is late.

Class Cancellations. When university cancellations are announced publicly, faculty should make alternate arrangements for missed office hours, class sessions, and related events. For example, face-to-face classes will not meet but may take place online. Faculty members may consider cancelling class sessions and/or office hours due to illness or other extenuating circumstances. Fulltime faculty members are eligible for sick leave, as outlined within the [Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Policy](#). The university also provides in-home care for sick dependents via its [Back-Up Care Advantage Program](#). When possible, faculty members should avoid cancellations by making arrangements for a suitable substitute. These alternate arrangements should be communicated to their academic department and/or dean. Ideally, other faculty members will volunteer to cover classes as a means of fostering collegiality and supporting students. When this is not possible and cancellations are absolutely necessary, faculty members should notify their academic department and their students. Students are expected to adhere to the course schedule despite the cancellation while professors are expected to ensure that all substantive materials and assignments will be covered.

Make Up Classes. A faculty member who wishes to hold a class meeting in lieu of one cancelled may not schedule it on holidays, during vacation periods, or at other times when classes are not meeting regularly. No make-up classes may be offered during the final exam period, regardless of whether this time would conflict with another final examination for any of the students. Make up classes may be held on the designated study days, but must be scheduled in advance with Academic Scheduling. A special class meeting should be at a time that is mutually satisfactory to the instructor and students. Any student who cannot attend this special meeting will not be penalized for nonattendance. If a make-up class is scheduled online, the faculty member must ensure that the class is accessible to any student with approved accommodations that require ASL interpreting, CART service, or visual descriptors.

Substitutes. If needed, substitutes must be carefully selected and given enough information about the course content and student assignments to enable them to carry out their work satisfactorily and in accordance with the faculty member's syllabus.

G. Guest Lecturers and Class Visitors

Guest lecturers must be carefully selected and given enough information about the course content and assignments to enable them to carry out their work satisfactorily and in accordance with the faculty member's syllabus.

Occasionally visitors to the university wish to attend classes as observers. Such visitors may include friends, prospective students, faculty colleagues, and scholars interested in educational developments and methodology. Those visits must be approved by the instructor and, when appropriate, pre-arranged with the academic or teaching unit. Otherwise, faculty members are expected to deny a place in the class to any person who has not been formally registered.

H. Grades and Examinations

The proper evaluation of students is a major concern of faculty members. Faculty should provide students with prompt, objective assessments that make full use of the grading scale. Many of the expectations outlined below are consistent with policies and procedures outlined in the university's [Academic Rules and Regulations](#).

Communication of grades to students. Faculty are expected to provide timely feedback that is frequent, objective, and fair in response to student work throughout the academic term. Final course grade records are maintained by the Office of the University Registrar and are made available to students as early as possible. Instructors may release final course grade results to their students in any manner that preserves the confidential nature of grade information.

Early warning reports. The university encourages faculty members to assign and assess student work within the first three weeks of the semester. In response to this work, faculty should provide timely feedback and constructive support to students. Faculty are also expected to submit early warning reports for any student registered in an undergraduate-level course whose progress in the course is in question due either to academic performance or to non-attendance. Early warnings conveyed by the course instructor to the Registrar will be reported to students and their teaching units.

Exam administration and grading. Each faculty member may decide the frequency of examinations in his or her courses. Each faculty member (even if assigned a teaching assistant) is responsible for the preparation and timely grading of his or her own examinations and for keeping them in a secure place until they are administered. Faculty members are also responsible for the appropriate administration of exams. Some students with approved accommodations may choose to schedule formal assessments via the Academic Support and Access Center.

Final examinations are scheduled by the Office of the University Registrar or via the Academic Support and Access Center. During the final exam period, all classes will meet at the designated time to either conduct a final examination or, if no final examination is planned, to conduct the normal classroom activities. No class

meetings will be cancelled during the final exam period except in unusual circumstances, in which case the prior approval of the dean or department chair is required.

Take home exams. Instructions for take home, online, or other remotely administered examinations, including level of collaboration or consultation of references, should be clearly communicated to students before the examination is given. Faculty members may require that students taking examinations outside a proctored classroom sign a statement of compliance with the stated examination policies and/or the Academic Integrity Code.

Final course grade submission. Faculty members must report grades to the Office of the University Registrar within 72 hours after the scheduled final examination period in each course.

Changes to final course grades. A request from a faculty member to change a final course grade that has been reported to the University Registrar may be honored only under the following conditions:

- When there is certification in writing to the University Registrar that the original grade was a clerical or computational error on the faculty member's part. Such certifications will be routed through the teaching unit head and that unit's dean to the University Registrar.
- When a grade of I (Incomplete) has been given, the instructor may change the grade to A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, P, F, or ZF (but not to W) upon completion or failure to complete the requirements of the course within the time allowed, as described above. A request from a faculty member to change a grade that has been reported cannot be considered, unless it is received by the University Registrar before the closing date of the session after the one in which the course was offered.

Grades reported by faculty members are entered on the student's permanent record and, once entered, may not be removed or changed after one year, except when there is certification in writing to the University Registrar that the original grade was a clerical or computational error on the faculty member's part. In the event a grade change is authorized in accordance with university regulations, the new grade will replace the former grade on the student's cumulative record. Any comments or notes entered on the transcript to explain a grade change may not be removed at a later time.

II. Guidelines for Interactions with Students

Faculty and student interactions constitute the heart of the life of the university. The faculty member exemplifies the search for truth by means of the free exchange of arguments, ideas, and evidence, and aims to encourage the same ethos in students. Thus, the faculty member should treat all students with respect,

evaluate students without bias, and avoid actions that interfere with the activity of inquiry inside or outside the classroom. Faculty members should also serve as campus resources to their students; in doing so, they should be knowledgeable about [academic regulations](#) and the wide variety of [support services](#) available to students. Training on pedagogical matters is provided by the [Center for Teaching, Research & Learning](#).

A. Advising and Counseling Students

An important part of the teaching function is consultation with students on their progress in particular courses and on their academic goals, programs of study, and career objectives. Faculty members are also encouraged to document any concerns they may have about students via the university's [CARE Network](#), a streamlined reporting tool for the sharing of concerns about student behaviors. A faculty member may also refer a student to the staff of the [Counseling Center](#) if a student's difficulty appears to involve personal issues or to the staff of the [Academic Support and Access Center](#) if the difficulty appears to involve academic issues.

Full-time faculty members are prohibited from entering into privately negotiated remunerative arrangements for special tutoring of students in any American University courses.

B. Ethical Considerations

All faculty members should observe these ethical standards:

- To encourage students in the search for truth by means of the free exchange of arguments, ideas, and evidence
- To exhibit the highest scholarly standards of the disciplines
- To demonstrate respect for students and encourage a spirit of respect inside and outside the classroom
- To create an inclusive environment for all students regardless of their political belief, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, or other factors extrinsic to the roles of teacher and student
- To evaluate students fairly and without bias
- To protect the academic freedom of students inside and outside of the classroom, including by both respecting the free speech of students and fostering respect for the diversity of views
- To maintain students' privacy rights in their education records
- To apprise themselves of university policies and statutory obligations concerning reporting accusations of serious misconduct and criminal acts

Similarly, all faculty members should avoid the following sorts of unacceptable behavior in their role as teacher and mentor:

- Use of the classroom for political purposes, including participation in political campaigns or lobbying efforts for specific causes
- Use of the classroom for personal purposes; class time should be devoted to the professional and academic study of matters related to the course
- Failure to respect students as fellow inquirers inside or outside the classroom
- Evaluation of students by criteria irrelevant to performance in class
- Failure to abide by professional standards with regard to the administration of classes, including the circulation of syllabi, returning graded work in a timely fashion, and the like
- Failure to exercise discretion with regard to sharing student information
- Failure to respect norms of confidentiality with regard to student disability, accommodations, private information, and related matters
- Conducting a consensual sexual relationship with any student or individual for whom the faculty member has a professional or supervisory responsibility, as outlined within the [Faculty Manual](#)
- Discrimination against students on the basis of political belief, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, or other factors extrinsic to the roles of teacher and student; any behaviors, conduct, or statements that violate the university's [Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

III. Guidelines for Interactions with Other Faculty, Staff, and the University

Faculty members at American University, while they may be employed under different types of contracts, are part of the same learning community. They and university staff all work toward a common purpose and share a core set of institutional values including inclusion, diversity, and integrity.

To that end, the below reminders are important to follow:

- Faculty members should keep confidentiality when requested and when appropriate
- Faculty members should not make evaluations of the professional competence of other faculty members or staff by criteria not reflective of professional performance or as outlined by the [Faculty Manual](#) or other university policies
- Faculty members should encourage the expression of and respect the opinions of others.
- Faculty members should not use their positions to intimidate, humiliate, bully, or coerce other faculty members or staff. They are aware that their obligations as colleagues extend to various electronic forms of communication including social media and e-mails as well as face-to-face communication
- Faculty members should not engage in any behaviors, conduct, or statements that violate the university's [Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy](#)

Finally, all faculty members should adhere to the procedures and policies as outlined within the [Faculty Manual](#). Potential violations will be investigated, as outlined within the [Faculty Manual](#). All faculty should also review and abide by the other university procedures and policies, many of which are listed on the [University Policies Webpage](#).

IV. Guidelines for Scholarship and Research

The value and reputation of any intellectual community necessitates academic rigor and scholarly integrity.

All faculty members should adhere to professional scholarly practices and be familiar with the [Scholarly Misconduct Policy](#) and the [Scholarly Misconduct Procedures](#). Potential violations will be investigated, as outlined within the [Faculty Manual](#).

Faculty members who need or want research-related support should consult the appropriate resources, several of which are listed below.

- [Center for Teaching, Research & Learning](#)
- [Faculty Research Home Page](#)
- [General Research Home Page](#)
- [Human Subjects Research and International Review Board](#)
- [Office of Institutional Research & Assessment](#)
- [Office of Research Integrity](#)
- [Office of Sponsored Programs](#)
- [Opportunities for Funding](#)
- [Research Centers and Institutes](#)
- [University Library](#)