

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

Problem Solving: General Considerations

In general, the responsibility of the GTF/instructor is to communicate and enforce course policies. Although our course policies are clearly articulated, some students attempt to disregard them and shift the responsibility for the resulting situation to the instructor. You should immediately make clear to the students in this situation that they have knowingly made certain choices and must face the consequences. We have not established these policies to be punitive. Rather, they were devised to assure the continuity of instruction and fair treatment of all students in a multi-sectioned course.

Of course, circumstances do arise where course policy may need to be altered or waived. These cases should be handled on an individual basis. When confronted with one of these cases, tell the student that you will consult with your supervisors about the matter. This will allow you/us time to reflect on possible remedies and avoid hasty and ill-considered solutions.

REMEMBER: There is only so much you can do to assure a student's success in the course. The ultimate responsibility rests with the student.

Frequently Asked Questions about:

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Student Attendance and Participation

A student wants to add my class but says the computer won't let her in. What do I do?

There are three main reasons why DuckWeb blocks a student from registering. You must figure out which applies to your student and initiate the appropriate type of clearance:

1. **pre-authorize to enroll**
Students must have instructor approval once classes have started in week 1 of each term. If there is an available seat in your class, you can give the student

- approval to register. However, other restrictions (missing pre-requisites, major or minor restrictions) may still prevent the student from registering.
2. **restriction override**
Certain courses are limited to departmental majors and minors or require specific pre-requisites. This type of override allows students to bypass these restrictions. especially useful when study abroad credits have not yet been filed with the UO Registrar.
 3. **limit override**
This type allows a student to enroll in a class even if the class is full. Consult with your supervisor before overenrolling your section.

To initiate an override, send an email to Zach Lazar with following information: please try to be specific in the type of clearance you are granting a student when you send your requests to me. Example:

Student Name
Student ID number
CRN
type of override (pre-authorize, restriction or limit)

What if a student misses the first few days of class?

A student who misses the **first two days** of class is must drop the course. Thus, it is essential that you take careful attendance the first two days of each term. Students are not removed from your list automatically; they must drop the course using the normal procedure in DuckWeb.

What should I do if a student notifies me that s/he will be missing several days of class for a seemingly valid reason?

Consult your course syllabus for the exact policy. In general, we offer NO make-up tests or assignments, but you should consult with your supervisor on a case-by-case basis.

You will receive excuses from students participating in university-sponsored extracurricular activities (athletics, theater, etc.). We honor these excuses and do not penalize students for these absences. Note that while the student is excused from class, s/he is nonetheless responsible for assigned work.

Should students notify me every time they are absent?

Inform students that they should notify you only before or during an extended absence or when an important assignment will be missed due to sickness or personal emergency. At the beginning of the term, you should encourage students to share phone numbers and email addresses with three or four classmates so that students may call each other for missed assignments and class notes.

What should I do if a student is absent extensively/repeatedly without prior notification?

Remind the student of the attendance policy as stated in the course syllabus, either by talking to him/her after class or by leaving a note on his/her homework. Tell him/her that in the future, s/he must notify you before or during his/her absence if at all possible. You have the responsibility of explaining the effects of a student's absence on his/her class grade.

Can I cancel class the day before a holiday?

No.

What should I do in case of personal absence?

See the section on the role and responsibilities of the GTF. [link to document]

In the case of an extended absence, the department will make arrangements for a long term substitute.

Testing and Assignments

How should I prepare students for tests/exams?

First, deliver coherent and motivating lessons each day in class. The course syllabus provides appropriate pacing of material so that students arrive on test day with sufficient preparation. Your supervisor will offer you additional suggestions if needed.

Appropriate preparation may include:

- announcing the test format
- indicating the focus of the exam
- practicing exercise formats that have not been previously presented
- doing exercises to ensure thorough coverage

What if I suspect a student of cheating/plagiarism?

It is important to follow the established procedures. See the section on Academic Integrity. [link to document]

What should I do if a student fails to turn in his/her homework?

As in the case of absences, course policies as outlined in the syllabus should be observed. Use common sense in making exceptions for late or missed assignments. However, it is within your rights to refuse it. Homework is a learning tool that is closely linked to the rhythm of the syllabus.

What should I do if a student wants to do work for extra credit?

Individual teachers cannot offer extra credit to students. It is unfair to the students in other sections, it leads to difficulties in grading, it creates false expectations, and it burdens the teacher with additional work not accounted for in the contractual workload. Occasionally the entire language program may offer students extra credit for participation in special events, studies, etc.

What should I do if a student is failing?

You may not be able to do much! You are responsible only up to a certain point for a student's success or failure in the course. Some steps you can take are to:

- inform the student s/he is not achieving passing grades as early as possible
- make an appointment to diagnose the problem and try to advise him/her on how s/he can improve his/her study habits;
- make the student aware of resources available for improving academic performance;
- encourage students to come to your office hours or form study groups;
- consult with your supervisor for specific suggestions depending on the student's individual circumstances

Don't:

- devote time beyond office hours to tutoring individual students;
- arrange for extra-credit work;
- inflate grades;
- assume that one student's failure is your fault and consequently blame yourself.

How should I handle discipline problems in the classroom?

Handle discipline problems immediately, directly and without anger or hostility. Speak to the student in private, by appointment or after class. Avoid accusations, explain what you see as the problem and how it affects the other students. Make it clear that the behavior is unacceptable, and that if it continues, your supervisor will make an appointment to speak with the student. It is essential that you confront these problems as they occur. Students consider this your role and failure to fulfill it will only aggravate the problem and lower their opinion of your competence as an instructor.

Should I give tutoring/review sessions?

NO. We discourage the practice for the following reasons:

- GTFs are not paid to give review sessions. If a few GTFs donate time for review sessions, some students may expect all GTFs to give them. Teachers are overworked and underpaid at all levels, but GTFs earn an especially low salary

- and should not be exploited. We would also hate to see review sessions cutting into time needed for academic work.
- Students should learn to use the many resources available for review: corrected homework, tests, class activities, GTF office hours, language lab. There are no tricky exam sections and no intentional surprises that students need to be primed for by the teacher.
 - The time spent organizing and giving review sessions would be better used to keep students on track throughout the term.

Am I supposed to return student exams and papers after the term is over?

Class papers and examinations: Each faculty member is responsible for keeping and handing back their own papers and examinations during terms they are on the regular payroll and “in residence”. If requested to do so, the department office staff will keep and hand back papers and examinations during terms that faculty are not “in residence”.

The official university retention policy is: (a) one (1) term after completion for uncontested grade results, (b) until resolved for contested grade results. For complete information see: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/speccoll/archives/schedule/index.html>

Consult your course supervisor for specific policies on retaining or handing back assignments and exams.

Disposal: To protect the student's right of confidentiality, Friendly Hall has a secure bin for recycling confidential material. Contact Linda Leon in the RL office for the current location.

What options for final grades do I report on DuckWeb?

1. A letter grade--A, B, C, D, F, P, N, with plus or minus--according to the contractual evaluation criteria on the course syllabus.
2. An "I" (Incomplete). This is the option for students who have complete the majority of the evaluation items for a course but are missing a minor yet essential requirement. It is not the right of a student to receive an incomplete, and GTFs and instructors must receive the course supervisor's approval before using this grading option.

Once the course supervisor approves the incomplete, the teacher and student must jointly fill out a form (available in the Romance Languages Office) in which the missing assignments and the plans for their make-up are agreed upon.

The teacher who assigns the incomplete is responsible for administering the test at a date agreed upon by teacher and student.

An "I" should never be given as a form of withdrawal. Effective winter term 2005, undergraduate students have one calendar year to makeup an incomplete

mark assigned by a UO faculty member. Failure to makeup the incomplete by the end of one calendar year will result in the mark of I automatically changing to a grade of F or N.

3. A "Y" (No Basis For Grade). This is intended to be used only if the instructor has truly never seen or heard from the student--an error in registration. Students who take only one quiz and are never seen again should be given an F. A "Y" grade cannot be used for students who are doing poorly in the class and want to avoid a low letter grade.

Can I post students' grades or leave graded assignments for them outside my office?

Final grades are not posted, as every student can access their grades on Duck Web.

Care should be taken to protect the privacy of student records. Social security numbers or UO student ID numbers are not to be used in any form for posting grades.

It is the instructor's responsibility to return papers and other assignments in a way that protects the identity of the student.

How should I handle student complaints?

Tell students on the first day of class that if they have any comments or complaints about the course, they should see you first. If they would rather not confront you directly, they should be directed to the course supervisor. The supervisor will listen to the student's side of the story, consult you for your perspective, and attempt to resolve the problems to both parties' satisfaction. If a student comes to you with a complaint, listen calmly. If you feel taken by surprise, angry or hurt, tell the student that you need time to think and talk to your supervisor, and you will get back in touch with him/her. Avoid outbursts, accusations or emotional displays.

N.B.: A complaint should be referred to the department chair's office only after it has followed the appropriate channels:

GTF --> supervisor --> director of language instruction --> department head

Teaching Questions

How much time should I spend on class preparation/correction?

According to GTFF regulations, you are expected to spend a maximum of 215 hours term on teaching. The actual hours you will spend per week will vary, but in any case should not exceed the maximum allowed per term. If you find yourself spending an inordinate amount of time on teaching, correction and preparation, please see your supervisor.

What should I do if I fall behind in the syllabus, or if I get ahead?

The course syllabus is a rough outline that should help you pace the class in an appropriate manner; it is normal for a teacher to anticipate or delay small amounts of material assigned on the syllabus.

If you fall behind, consult with the supervisor who will help you find the most efficient way to cover the material in the remaining time.

If you get ahead, consider review activities, communicative activities, audio/visual resources available at the Yamada Center and the Media Center (Knight Library), well-chosen games or getting a head start on the next chapter. See a supervisor if you need additional guidance.

These situations should not arise very often. If they do, see a supervisor!

How should I handle the mixed levels in my class?

It is often the case that you will have students of varying levels and preparations in your class. This situation is particularly acute during the first term of first year. On the first day of class, emphasize the goals of the course and its intended clientele as described on the policy statement. If overqualified students choose to remain, they must abide by all course policies (attendance, homework and participation) and they should show consideration to classmates who are registered at the legitimate level. Given these circumstances, instructors should also make special efforts to encourage absolute novices. Note that this discrepancy in levels usually disappears by the beginning of the second term.

Other questions

Many unpredictable situations will arise during the course of the year. The best rule of thumb is to USE YOUR JUDGEMENT. Simply think and (re)act as the professional that you are. Don't forget that the course supervisors and director of language instruction are all a part of your team and are available to help answer any questions that arise.