



## Memorandum

To: Faculty in the Krieger School of Arts & Sciences  
and the Whiting School of Engineering  
From: Edward Scheinerman, Vice Dean for Education (WSE)  
Joel Schildbach, Vice Dean for Undergraduate Education (KSAS)  
Re: Teaching policies and guidelines  
Date: January 24, 2017

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Dear Colleagues,

The purpose of this memo is to remind you of key policies and recommended practices for your course this coming semester. We have collected these policies and recommendations in a single document for easy access and referral. We hope that you will consider incorporating the relevant points into your course's syllabus and also, if you have not already done so, to adopt the practice of posting your syllabi on the web (your departmental IT specialist will be happy to assist you in doing so if necessary).

While the focus of this memo is on undergraduate education, most of what we present is applicable to graduate students as well. For full details on all policies and procedures, please see the catalogue: <http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/>

The issues covered in this document include:

- Commencement and prompt submissions of grades
- Illness note policy
- **Request:** Avoiding exams on these dates this spring
- Starfish for reporting student progress/difficulty
- Blackboard grade book
- Administration of final examinations
- Academic integrity
- Disability services
- Illness and missed class or work
- Religious holidays
- Graded work before the drop deadline
- The use of the "I" (incomplete) grade
- Faculty-Student Interaction fund

## **Commencement and Prompt Submissions of Grades**

This spring, Commencement will take place on Wednesday, May 24 at the Royal Farms Arena in downtown Baltimore.

While the majority of the faculty submit grades promptly, every year the advising offices have worked late into the evening prior to Commencement to track down faculty members who have not submitted grades for graduating seniors. We need to be certain that all students who have completed their degrees will receive their diplomas at Commencement.

Therefore, it is vital that faculty post their grades promptly. The expectation is that grades will be submitted within 48 hours of the administration of the final exam. Clearing students for graduation by the advising offices takes time.

At all costs, we want to avoid the situation in which a student does not receive a diploma because his/her instructor was late in submitting a grade.

Please note:

- We understand that this can be challenging for large courses whose final exam slot falls toward the end of the examination period. If need be, prioritize your grading for graduating seniors. It is possible to submit some grades through ISIS and later, again through ISIS, submit grades for underclassmen.
- If it is difficult to grade a student because the student is late submitting work, then an appropriate course of action may be to give the student an Incomplete.

## **Dates to Avoid Exams**

Hopkins students work hard and need time to relieve stress. Two excellent opportunities for this are Spring Vacation and the annual Spring Fair. Scheduling an examination for the Monday or Tuesday immediately after these events reduces the effectiveness of these breaks.

We ask faculty to consider not scheduling exams for March 27-28 (immediately after vacation) or May 1-2 (immediately after Spring Fair). Note that the last day of classes is Friday, May 5.

## **Starfish for Reporting Student Progress/Difficulty**

Starfish is a tool through which you can raise concerns about students in academic or personal difficulty. It is also now the method by which we collect mid semester reports. You can access Starfish through Blackboard.

## **Blackboard Grade Book**

The Blackboard course management system is available to all instructors. This system provides many features that can enhance your course. If you have yet to use Blackboard (or would like a refresher), you can receive training from the Center for Educational Resources. See <http://www.cer.jhu.edu/bb.html>

One simple feature we suggest you consider using is the Grade Book. This allows you (or your teaching assistant) to post grades for assignments and exams. Students are able to check their own grades (and not see the grades of other students). Use of the Blackboard Grade

Book eliminates the need to keep a separate record. However, the Grade Book can be exported as an Excel file if you so choose.

It is possible to post course grades in Blackboard and have those grades automatically migrated to ISIS. However, in order that course grades are not released to students before they complete their course evaluations, the course grade column in the grade book should be "hidden." It is our understanding that a hidden course grade column will be automatically included in every course supported by Blackboard, so we anticipate that no special action on your part will be necessary to conceal that column.

### **Administration of Final Examinations**

The posted final examination schedule [see [web.jhu.edu/registrar/forms-pdfs/Final\\_Exam\\_Schedule\\_Spring\\_2017.pdf](http://web.jhu.edu/registrar/forms-pdfs/Final_Exam_Schedule_Spring_2017.pdf)] allows the 13-week semester to be used, as intended, for instructional purposes alone, and also gives students adequate time to prepare for examinations. For this reason, we are concerned about reports of *ad hoc* arrangements for the administration of final examinations. Consistent with the recommendation made by the Commission on Undergraduate Education that the policies related to final examinations be reiterated each year, and with the concurrence of the Academic Council, we wish to call your attention to the following guidelines and urge your cooperation:

1. The times and places of final examinations are officially scheduled by the University Registrar. All final examinations are to be administered during the official final examination period at the time prescribed for the course in question. Students should not be polled as to their willingness to change the time of the scheduled examination. Exams scheduled outside the formal schedule inevitably conflict with other examinations or other obligations.
2. The reading period was established so that students could have several days free of other obligations in order to prepare for their examinations. Please keep those days clear just for that purpose. In particular, no final examinations are to be administered during the reading period.
3. While faculty have the discretion to schedule quizzes, mid-term examinations, and hourly examinations (including tests that they may regard as comprehensive) during any class period of the regular semester, the practice of scheduling a formal final examination for the last class period violates both the letter and the spirit of the final examination policy. It compromises the length of the semester for instructional purposes and limits the ability of students to prepare adequately.
4. Any take-home final examination can be due no earlier than the time of the regularly scheduled final examination. Faculty members sometimes substitute other academic exercises for a final examination. When assigned as a final exercise, with the expectation that the student will prepare for the assignment and complete the assignment after classes have concluded, such substitutes for examinations should be treated as final examinations and be due on the course's scheduled examination date. While faculty members retain the discretion to assign appropriate due dates for papers and projects, it is inappropriate to structure a course so that assignments must be completed during the reading period.

5. If weather necessitates the cancellation of final examinations, make-up examinations must be administered only within the formal examination schedule.
6. Faculty members who have other imperative professional obligations that require some adjustment to the final examination schedule should confer as soon as possible with us (Joel Schildbach for KSAS or Ed Scheinerman for WSE), as appropriate.
7. Students find it extremely helpful when a course syllabus describes all the requirements for a course, including the date of the final examination and weight to be accorded it, in addition to the course description and goals, reading assignments, grading policies, contact information and office hours, and the ethics insert that we have recently suggested for inclusion. Please include this information in your syllabus.

These procedures are prescribed in the interest of fairness to students and an orderly and manageable final examination schedule.

### **Academic Integrity**

Cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are corrosive and harmful to our university. We urge you to place a statement about academic integrity on your syllabus. It is also important to make clear the ground rules for your course (may students work together on homework assignments, etc.). The following syllabus insert was created by a faculty ethics committee some years ago, and we recommend that you adopt it:

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

[In addition, the specific ethics guidelines for this course are:

(1) (Insert unique rules here, such as your policy regarding collaboration on assignments or use of old exams.)

(2) (etc.)]

Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student affairs and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board Web site (<http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/undergrad-students/student-life-policies/#UAEB>) for more information.

We also encourage the use of an ethics pledge on examinations:

I attest that I have completed this exam without unauthorized assistance from any person, materials, or device. [Signed and dated]

If you find that a student has committed an ethical violation, please follow the proper procedures.

For undergraduate students, the procedures can be found online here:

<http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/undergrad-students/student-life-policies/>

Various forms that you may require in handling the case can be found here:

<http://web.jhu.edu/studentlife/policies/judicial.html>

The procedures for graduate students are different. The policy can be found at this website:

<http://engineering.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Grad-Student-Misconduct-Policy.pdf>

### **Disability Services**

Students with disabilities will need accommodations, but first they must make themselves known to the Office of Disability services. This office is also available to consult with faculty about any issues or concerns.

Please include on your syllabus the following:

Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu

### **Illness and Class Attendance**

Students who have flu symptoms will be told not to attend class and to isolate themselves to the extent possible until they have been fever-free for 24 hours. In the interest of minimizing contagion, we urge your cooperation in accommodating students who miss class due to illness. The Student Health and Wellness Center does not issue notes for routine class absences, but will for missed mid-term examinations, final projects, etc. Please review your policies regarding missed classes and work to ensure that students who heed the advice of health professionals are not penalized academically.

### **Religious Holidays**

Religious holidays are valid reasons to be excused from class. Students who must miss a class or an examination because of a religious holiday must inform the instructor as early in the semester as possible in order to be excused from class or to make up any work that is missed. If possible, try to avoid scheduling exams for major holidays.

For more information, we recommend the Chaplain's website:

<http://web1.johnshopkins.edu/chaplain/>

### **Graded Work Before the Drop Deadline**

The last day a student can drop a class is at the end of the sixth full week of classes. It is helpful to students to have a chance to review some graded work before that date so that they can make an informed judgment as to whether or not to drop a course. Specific information about drop dates is available on the registrar's web site:

[http://web.jhu.edu/registrar/academic\\_dates/20162017.pdf](http://web.jhu.edu/registrar/academic_dates/20162017.pdf)

### **Incompletes**

The “I” grade may be given to students who, *due to compelling circumstances beyond their control*, are unable to complete the semester’s work during the normal course of the semester, and only after conferring with the student about the timetable for submitting the unfinished work. When the “I” grade is given as an extension for students who have procrastinated or become distracted with other pursuits, it is unfair to students who have completed the course requirements within the allotted time.

When entering an “I” grade in ISIS, you must also enter a reversion grade. This is the grade that the student will receive if the missing work is not completed. For example, if the student—based on the coursework completed by the end of the semester—would receive a C+ grade without the missing work, then choose the I/C+ grading option. If the incomplete grade is not resolved within the allowed period (the end of the third week of the subsequent semester, the “I” grade is automatically converted to the reversion grade.

Courses should be structured so that, barring any unforeseen complications, students are able to complete their work during the confines of the semester. However, some graduate courses (such as seminar courses) may require students to continue working on papers or other assignments beyond the end of the semester. In such cases, the grade IP—for “in progress”—should be assigned.

### **Faculty-Student Interaction Fund**

Dean Martinez’s office provides funding for full-time faculty to share a meal and have some fun with undergraduates. This type of interaction is a great way to get to know your students better and is greatly appreciated. Here’s the fine print: The program is open only to full-time members of the faculty and only undergraduate students may participate. You will be reimbursed up to \$100 per event for at most one event per semester. Alcohol is not reimbursed (and most undergraduates are under age). Original, detailed receipts (hard copy) should be brought to Mamie Bryant in Mattin 210. Only faculty are reimbursed (not students, not departments).

### **Thank You**

Please let us know if you have any questions about these matters, or if you have suggestions about other issues that should be addressed in similar communications. Many thanks for all that you do to support the University’s teaching mission at such a high level of excellence.