

Responsibilities Of The Academic Staff To Students

1. PREAMBLE

This document is intended as a compilation of policies and practices which govern the professional relationship between instructor and student. It arises from a concern expressed by the University Senate that faculty responsibilities to their students should be clarified, for simplicity of reference and also to guide new members of faculty who arrive at Bishop's.

The Mission Statement of the University underlines our commitment to standards of academic excellence. It reads in part as follows:

The mission of Bishop's University is to provide a sound liberal education primarily at the undergraduate level. The goal is the education of individuals to realize their full potential in their intellectual, spiritual, social and physical dimensions. To this end the University emphasizes excellence in teaching enriched by scholarship and research.

In keeping with these principles, the University has in recent years codified current practice or developed policies which define the day-to-day responsibilities of members of the academic community towards each other. Examples are:

- The Policy on Academic Dishonesty
- The Policy on Accommodating (Learning) Disabled Students
- The Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities
- The Policy on Student Conduct

This document outlines the responsibilities of the individual academic, and the academic unit to students.

Where elements of these policies are contained in other documents, such as the Academic Calendar, reference to these other sources is made in the text.

2. DEFINITIONS

Academic Staff

Academic Staff shall include all individuals holding full or part-time appointments at the rank of Instructor I, Instructor II, senior instructor, lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, or professor. This term shall also include academic administrators, academic librarians, counsellors, adjunct professors, professional associates, research associates, research assistants, student research assistants, and student teaching assistants, insofar as such persons perform duties within the ambit of the policy.

Academic Unit

Academic Unit is the generic term used to refer to division, department, or programme administrators (depending on the subject area).

Student

Student shall mean any person who is registered in the University.

3. THE POLICIES

3.1 The Objective:

These policies define the responsibility of academic staff towards students, with the objective of (a) ensuring fair and equitable treatment of students, and (b) promoting harmonious relations between academic staff and students. It also provides general guidelines with respect to the administration of courses.

3.2 Policies Regarding Individual Responsibilities:

In general terms, the responsibilities of the individual academic staff member fall under two headings: (a) general course management, and (b) the interaction of students and staff.

3.2.1 General Course Management

"The primary responsibility of academic staff is the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge and understanding through teaching, research, scholarly activity, and creative artistic activity. They should endeavour conscientiously to develop their scholarly

competence and their effectiveness as teachers. They should be thorough in the preparation and organization of their subject matter, and should review this periodically in the light of developments in their field. They should foster and maintain high academic standards." (Policy Statement of Professional Rights, Responsibilities and Relationships, CAUT, January 1992)

A. Course Outlines

Before the Add-Drop deadline of each semester, teaching staff will provide in writing to students in each of their courses a course outline containing:

- 1. a list of the required textbooks, readings (or material) to be covered in the course;*
- 2. a general outline of the topics to be covered;*
- 3. a schedule of term assignments and tests;*
- 4. a description of the evaluation procedures to be used.*

Where appropriate, this should include:

- a. the instructor's policy regarding late submission of assignments;
- b. the instructor's policy regarding supplemental examinations;
- c. the instructor's policy regarding classroom attendance;
- d. reference to the University's policies on academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating, and personation.

B. Textbook Ordering

Academic staff responsible for a given section shall specify textbooks and materials in accordance with announced purchasing deadlines of the University Bookstore.

C. Mid-term and Final Examinations

Academic staff members shall be familiar with and adhere to the policies concerning scheduling and grading of examinations, re-reading of examinations and papers, supplemental examinations, deferred marks, aegrotat standing, and submission of grades, as described in the Academic Calendar. Particular attention is drawn to the scheduling of "mid-term" or final examinations, which may not be held during the last two weeks of classes (subject to D. below), nor during the period between the end of classes and the beginning of the examination period.

D. Workload During the Last Two Weeks of Classes

No progress tests totalling more than 10% of the final grade may be held during the last two weeks of lectures, with the exception of lab tests of 30% of the grade in lab courses of one credit.

E. Cancellation of Classes

Academic staff shall not cancel, miss, terminate or shorten scheduled instruction except for good reason. Whenever a scheduled period of instruction is cancelled, the academic staff member shall:

1. inform the class at the earliest possible time;
2. ensure that a cancellation notice is posted at the classroom by the faculty secretary;
3. consistent with Senate policy regarding course contact hours, make every effort to ensure that appropriate substitution or make-up instruction is provided.

F. Storage of Final Exams

Arrangements must be made for the storage of all final examination papers for a minimum period of one complete semester following the semester in which the course was given.

G. The Reporting of Grades

Academic staff members who provide instruction shall comply with the schedules and formats for reporting student grades, as established by Divisions and the Registrar's Office. They shall also remain accessible until after Divisional grades meetings have been held, in the event that consultation is required. An instructor who learns of an error, which if corrected would change an assigned grade, shall correct it without requiring the student affected to appeal his or her grade.

H. Posting of Grades

In keeping with the provisions of Bill 65 (Loi sur l'accès aux documents des organismes publiques et sur la protection des renseignements personnels), no grades shall be posted unless all students concerned have indicated their

approval for posting.

3.2.2 The Interaction of Students and Staff

A. Course Admissions

Academic staff shall not unreasonably deny registration for instruction in those courses for which the permission of the instructor is required. Acceptable grounds for refusal would include cases where the student lacks appropriate qualifications, where an approved policy on limited enrollment is in effect, or where classroom size places a constraint on enrollment.

B. Non-Discrimination

Academic staff shall comply with existing human rights legislation, and refrain from differential treatment of individual students on the basis of their actual or presumed membership in, or association with, any class or group of persons.

C. Remuneration

Academic staff shall not accept money or other goods or services from students for assistance with any course offered by the University. This clause, however, shall not prevent part-time instructors from accepting payment for tutoring in courses/sections which do not fall within the present scope of their University employment.

D. Office Hours

Academic staff are required to establish and post office hours during which they are available for individual consultation with students.

E. Student Evaluation

Academic staff shall -

1. evaluate student academic performance by means of academic criteria only and are encouraged to evaluate with particular reference to both the presentation of substance (content) and an acceptable standard of process (style and structure).
2. provide evaluation in a timely manner.
3. provide (upon request) appropriate evaluative feedback to any student prior to the voluntary withdrawal deadlines specified in the Academic Calendar.

F. Academic Freedom

Academic staff shall encourage a free exchange of ideas between themselves and their students in the classroom, and shall not inhibit free discussion; students shall be allowed to take informed exception to the data, views, and/or methods presented.

G. The Confidentiality of Information

Academic staff should keep confidential all information gained in confidence about students, whether concerning their academic progress, personal lives, or political and/or religious views. This does not affect the normal use within the institution of information concerning academic progress for the purpose of making academic decisions in accordance with University and government policies on the release of such information.

H. Academic Indebtedness

Academic staff shall explicitly acknowledge in written or oral presentations any indebtedness to student research or assistance, and therefore not obtain any improper advantage from a student's work.

I. Non-Retaliation

Academic staff shall not retaliate against a student who has filed a complaint, whether or not the complaint was substantiated.

J. Conflict of Interest in Academic Supervision and Evaluation

Academic staff shall decline to participate in an evaluative role with an individual student if the staff member and the student are in a close personal relationship in which there is, or there may be perceived to be, a conflict of interest. Such relationships include (but are not limited to) spousal, parent-child, sibling, and consensual amorous relationships. In the event that a staff member terminates a supervisory or evaluative role with an individual student because of such a

relationship, alternative supervisory or evaluative arrangements (a) shall be made, (b) shall be made in confidence, and (c) shall be made without prejudicing the status of the person(s) in question.

K. Appropriate Language and Behaviour

Academic staff shall respect every student's right to dignified treatment. Therefore, academic staff shall at all times use language, and exhibit behaviour consistent with this right.

3.3. Policies Regarding Collective Responsibilities

A. Periodic Review of Courses

The academic unit shall periodically review and update all courses to ensure that the material to be presented (a) is current and appropriate, and (b) "conforms to national and international norms." (Report of the Long Range Planning Committee, November 1992)

B. Review of Course Descriptions

Members of the academic unit shall review course descriptions periodically to ensure that the current content of each course is clearly and accurately described.

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