MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty and Teaching Assistants
    College of Natural Sciences

FROM: Sacha Kopp, Associate Dean

SUBJECT: Coursework and Routine: Policies, Procedures, and Recommendations

Welcome to the Fall 2012 semester in the College of Natural Sciences. We have completed a revised version of the memorandum on Coursework and Routine that is provided each semester to CNS instructors.

The document includes the following information:

- UT registration and grading policies
- UT academic policies
- Course management suggestions
- CNS contact and calendar information

If you have limited time on your hands, the Baker’s Dozen of Commonly-Abused Academic Policies at the beginning of the document would be a good read.

If you are used to receiving this document and wonder what might be new, here are two major points:

**Posting of Course Syllabi:** Read the included memo from the Provost that specifies not only that a syllabus must be provided to students on the first class meeting day, but that it be posted electronically. This policy change is consistent with the biggest piece of advice that we offer to faculty—if you provide students a thorough syllabus and stick to what it says, then they have little room for later grievance.

**Dean’s Office Reorganization of Academic Affairs:** Linda Hicke started as the Dean of the College on July 16, 2012. Academic Affairs in the Dean’s Office is undergoing some restructuring for the 2012-13 academic year. While most of the units remain intact with respect to function, organization at the Associate Dean’s level has shifted. Shelley Payne will join the Dean’s Office as Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, overseeing Promotion/Tenure, University Teaching Awards, Faculty mentoring. I will continue as Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, and will retain responsibility for student services, advising, honors and retention programs, Quest, assessment and placement, and in addition will assist with instructional budget

Feel free to contact either Shelley or me with any questions you might have. Also, It would be useful to get to know the advising staff in the advising center associated with your department. Names and addresses of advising and special program locations are provided at the end of the document.

I hope that you have the best of semesters in the classroom!!

Sacha Kopp
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A BAKERS’S DOZEN OF COMMONLY ABUSED ACADEMIC POLICIES

1. Final examination. Guidelines for final examination are the most detailed of all academic policies, and are also the most abused. Adherence to the posted final exam schedule, posted in the Course Schedule, is required and exceptions are rare. Requests for time or room change require approval of the department chair and the dean of the college. In addition, permission of the department chair is required if a final exam is not given.

2. Course syllabus. Think of the syllabus as a contract between student and instructor. How important is it? It is the first thing the department chair and the dean of the college ask for to arbitrate disputes between faculty and students. Fortunately, the faculty member is required to provide a copy of the syllabus by the first meeting day of the class and make it publicly available on the University web site. The syllabus should include details about course content, prerequisites, drop deadlines, attendance policy, exam times, make-up policy, grading procedure and much more. The bigger your syllabus, the less you get hassled later.

3. By the 12th class day…. Students with special concerns, be they athletes who might miss class meetings, students with religious observances that interfere with class meetings, or students with disabilities who need special accommodation, are all supposed to notify you about these special needs. Especially in large classes, responding to these requests can be difficult to manage, so you need to be organized and responsive. If you are going to be a stickler for that 12th class day requirement, make sure you keep lists of student requests and what the accommodation will be. If you want to be more freewheeling on the notification front, you will need to apply this strategy equally to each student.

4. Required meetings outside scheduled course times; night exam conflicts. Required class meetings including required office hours, discussion sections, lectures and exams can be scheduled only at times published in the Course Schedule. If exams are scheduled at times not identified in the Course Schedule, make-up exams must be provided without penalty. Be aware that because there has been a significant increase in the scheduling of evening exams, it can be difficult for students to create a full schedule without a conflict arising. As student dean it is my position that when a scheduled night exam unavoidably conflicts with other scheduled evening exams or labs, a solution must be found that does not affect student performance.

5. Substantial examination during the last week of classes. It is not permitted to give exams counting for more than 30% of the course grade during the final week of classes. Also be aware that a large percentage of faculty schedule exams during the final week of class instead of during the official final examination period—sensitivity to the burden imposed on students would be appreciated and significant violations of this policy that are brought to the attention of the College will not be tolerated.

6. Incompletes. An incomplete (X) is a temporary delay in reporting the final course grade. It is intended to allow students with nonacademic issues the time to make up missing work so that a fair final grade is assigned. It is not to be used to allow a student to replace graded coursework. For your own protection, a written agreement between student and instructor should accompany every assigned incomplete so that there is a clear understanding of what must be done to complete the work. The student must complete the requirements for the course and the instructor must report a final course grade by the last date for grade reporting in the next long-session semester, or an F will be recorded as the final grade in the course. In the event of a need for extending this deadline, the dean’s office looks carefully at such requests and may require students to provide documentation of their circumstances prior to making decisions on extensions.

7. Course evaluations. Course Instructor Surveys (CIS) must be completed for every formal course taught at UT Austin. The University takes a dim view of faculty who do not complete this task, if for no other reason than that the evaluations are an essential piece of performance evaluation for promotion, post-tenure review, merit raise, teaching awards and reappointments. You will be emailed later in the semester with the option to
choose online vs paper evaluations for your courses. Instructors and Teaching Assistants are not to be present in the room while surveys are being administered. Go to http://www.utexas.edu/academic/mec/cis/index.html for more information.

8. Grading equity. Grading policies must be applied uniformly in accordance with the grading policy identified in the syllabus. Replacement or “extra credit” grading opportunities must be provided to every student. Not providing the same opportunity to earn a grade to every student in a class raises an immediate flag in the Dean’s Office.

9. Availability of coursework. Faculty must provide students with access to all written material submitted as part of a course. If coursework is not returned to the student it must be retained by the instructor for one long semester following the completion of the course. If a student asks to see the work, you have to provide it. Do not make the mistake of tossing it and not being able to defend a grade you have assigned.

10. Makeup work. A reasonable policy for makeup work should be identified in the syllabus. Requiring a student to drop a course because an exam is missed for good cause is not acceptable, nor is it appropriate to view makeup work in a punitive manner. Although the Dean’s Office cannot enforce simple human decency, it will exert pressure through the department chair to achieve fairness for students who have documented nonacademic reasons for incomplete assignments.

11. Q-drop policy. Know and correctly implement the Q-drop policy. In particular:
   • Provide substantial course assessment before the imposed Q-drop deadline (in principle by the 20th class day) but certainly no later than the mid-semester drop deadline (typically around the 49th class day). See the calendars at the end of this document for specific dates.
   • Provide realistic advising to students considering a Q-drop and do not encourage them to remain in the class past the Q-drop deadline unless there is a reasonable possibility of success;
   • After the 49th class day, students can only drop a course by providing substantiated nonacademic reasons to the College or the Dean of Student’s Office. After the drop deadline the instructor may be asked to provide information about student progress in the course to validate or refute a nonacademic drop or withdrawal request, but the College has ultimate authority in assessing these nonacademic cases.
   • Please encourage students experiencing significant nonacademic problems (extended health problems or family emergencies) to contact the Dean’s Office or the Dean of Student’s Office for assistance.

12. Processing of nonacademic and scholastic dishonesty cases. Refer nonacademic problems and scholastic dishonesty cases to appropriate offices. If uncertain about where to refer a student with a nonacademic problem, contact the Assistant Dean Mike Raney mraney@mail.utexas.edu in the Dean’s Office or an academic advisor in your department for assistance with appropriate referral. Contact Judicial Services in the Dean of Students Office for academic dishonesty referral (http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/). Academic dishonesty issues can be difficult to navigate so if you would like advice, call Judicial Services. Do not decide to manage academic dishonesty issues off the record. It can end badly if you do not follow procedure.

13. Confidentiality. A student has a right to confidential distribution of grade information. The return of graded coursework must be done in a manner that ensures confidentiality. In addition, no part of the SSN may be made public as either a means to identify students or to return grades. Further, spreadsheets with student grades is considered “category 1” data by the university and must be protected with encryption on your local computer and in email communications. Instead consider switching your grading to one of the secure web-based grading systems. Finally, parents may not be given information about student performance without student consent. To be safe, politely minimize conversation with parents about their children and speak only in general terms about academic issues. Persistent parents should be referred to the Dean’s Office for an explanation of confidentiality rules.
REGISTRATION AND GRADING POLICIES

ROSTERS

Official class rosters are available to instructors through CLIPS and Blackboard. CLIPS furthermore provides instructors with a roster including a picture of each student. This is a very easy procedure that requires only that you know your UTEID. It is a great way to familiarize yourself with the names of your students. Please note that the roster and the photo ID list is considered “category 1” data by the university and requires appropriate measures be taken in their use and distribution.

Please use these rosters to ensure that the students attending your class are in fact registered for the course and to notify the student's college if the student is not attending. If you discover students are attending your class who are not on the official roster, notify the college immediately. Those students will be required to provide verification that they have been attending class throughout the semester.

ATTENDANCE

University regulations require instructors to keep attendance records for students with less than 30 hours. If the size of the class makes checking roll impractical, assign several homework sets and check these against your class roll to isolate attendance problems. Report these problems to the student's academic dean. This can be done electronically using the absence/failing report (see below).

ADDING AND DROPPING COURSES

The academic calendar for each semester is provided at: http://registrar.utexas.edu/calendars/11-12. The College of Natural Sciences adheres strictly to the published deadlines of the University. The following information is generally true during each new long semester. Summer courses are subject to a somewhat compressed version of this procedure:

- **4th class day: Dropping courses electronically:** During the first four class days, students may add and drop courses with the Registrar’s online registration service, ROSE (Sept.4 for Fall, Jan 17 for Spring).

- **12th class day: Dropping a class with possible refund:** During days five through twelve (September 14, 2012, for the Fall semester, and January 30, 2012, for the Spring semester) students may drop courses online, but must go to the department offering the course to seek permission to add a course. Be advised that some departments do not allow adds/drops after the fourth class day. For those departments that do allow adds/drops, the add-transactions before the twelfth class day will be processed in the respective department. Students who wish to add a class after the twelfth class day should be required to go to the Student Division of the Dean's Office (first floor of W. C. Hogg) to provide justification for the proposed change. The student must have written permission and documentation of class attendance from the instructor and departmental approval.

- **49th class day: Last day to drop a course with approval:** After the 12th day of class, and until the deadline for dropping courses (November 6, 2012, for the Fall semester, and April 1, 2012, for the Spring semester), a student wishing to drop a course will get the forms from the Dean's Office (WCH 1.106) or their departmental advising center and ask the instructor to sign the drop form. Instructors are also asked to indicate on this form the grade (A-F) that the student has earned in the class up to this point. In contrast to previous years, instructors are not asked or able to assign a Q vs F on this form; henceforth the students are completing this paperwork for a Q-drop.

- **Nonacademic Q-drop:** After the last day for academic Q-drop students with substantiated nonacademic reasons (as determined by the Dean’s Office) may be allowed to drop a course. Faculty will be asked to provide information on student performance up to the time of the nonacademic Q-drop request but are not responsible for making the decision about assigning a grade of Q. Please encourage students who experience significant nonacademic problems such as extended health-related problems or family
emergencies to contact the Dean’s Office.

**New One-time Drop Policy:** Beginning this year, students have the option once in their undergraduate degree to drop a class or drop out of all classes in a semester right up till the last class day. This new policy was proposed and approved by UT Faculty Council on May 9, 2011, and more information is available at [http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2010-2011/legislation/EPC_OTE.html](http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/2010-2011/legislation/EPC_OTE.html). According to the policy as approved by the Provost, a student who has completed at least two long semesters here at UT can drop a class only if he or she has an average grade of D+ or below in the class at the time of the request and if there are no pending investigations of scholastic dishonesty for the course in question.

Please include this information about adds and drops with your course syllabus. It will help to clear up much of the confusion that students have about the add/drop cycle.

**REPETITION OF FAILED AND DROPPED COURSES**

Students cannot enroll more than twice in any course offered in the College of Natural Sciences, even if the course is needed to meet degree requirements. Exceptions are permitted but require the consent of the major advisor and the department offering the course. A symbol of Q counts as an enrollment unless the Q was approved by the Dean's Office for nonacademic reasons. Some departments in the College of Natural Sciences may have additional requirements for students who repeat courses.

**ABSENCE AND FAILING REPORTS**

Faculty should notify students of excessive absences or poor performance on-line via "Absence-Failing" notices. These can be filled out on CLIPS or Blackboard, such that that student will receive an email from you with a notice of the situation and a direction to meet with you, a TA, etc. Absence-Failing reports need to be filled in after the first reporting period and before the end of the Q period if students are to receive maximum benefit from them. If you have questions, you may speak Mike Raney mraney@mail.utexas.edu here in the CNS Student Division offices.

**PROHIBITION OF SUBSTANTIAL EXAMINATIONS DURING LAST CLASS WEEK**

No final examinations may be given before the examination period begins, and no change in time from that printed in the official schedule is permitted. An instructor with a compelling reason to change the time of an examination must obtain the approval of both the department chair and the dean of the college or school in which the course is taught before announcing an alternative examination procedure to the students. No substantial examinations may be given during the last class week or during the reading days and the no-class days included in the final examination period. An examination counting for more than 30% of the final course grade is considered to be substantial. A change in the room assignment for an examination may be made only with the approval of the registrar.

**FACULTY PRESENCE ON CAMPUS DURING FINAL EXAMINATION PERIODS**

A faculty member is responsible for ensuring that final examinations for his or her courses are adequately staffed, that he or she is available for related questions and to resolve problems, and that final course grades are turned in on time. Unless a faculty member has received approval for travel under regular University policy, he or she must be available on campus during final examinations in his or her courses, or available in the Austin area and easily reachable by telephone or e-mail. The faculty member must remain in the Austin area until his or her grades are finalized. If a faculty member must travel during this time, he or she must include on the request for travel authorization how final examination matters will be handled and how he or she can be reached in case of an emergency.
COURSES TAKEN ON A PASS/FAIL BASIS (CR/NC)

The University defines a D- as a passing grade for undergraduate students. The instructor is obliged to assign a grade of CR (Credit) for a student registered on a pass/fail basis who has a D- or better in the course. It is important that the roster indicate the student is registered for the course on a pass/fail basis. Otherwise, a letter grade must be assigned. There is a time limit for students to change courses from a grade basis to pass/fail basis and vice versa. During the long session, it is the same as the final deadline for drop/withdrawal for academic reasons. See the current academic calendar for the exact date. After that deadline, students should see a counselor in the Student Division of the Dean's Office of their college.

For majors in CNS, the College has instituted a minimum C- standard of passing grades for courses in order to progress to subsequent courses. For example, a grade of C- in M408N (calculus-I) is required to progress to M408S (calculus-II). This standard applies to graduation requirements as well (see +/- grading below).

INCOMPLETE GRADES (X)

(From the UT Austin General Information Catalog) A grade of Incomplete, X, is a temporary delay in reporting the final course grade. A student is expected to complete a course, including self-paced courses, in a single semester, summer term, or summer session. If the course is not completed as expected, the student normally will not be given additional time to complete it, or to do additional work to achieve a better grade. In rare instances, for nonacademic reasons and at the discretion of the instructor, a temporary delay of the final course grade, symbol X, may be recorded.

Improper uses of the symbol X. A student must not be assigned the symbol X to provide (1) the opportunity to raise a grade for any reason other than the approved reasons cited below; (2) time to prepare coursework in addition to that assigned the entire class; or (3) time to repeat the entire course.

Approved uses of the symbol X. The symbol X is not issued for student or faculty convenience; it may be issued for one of the following reasons only in the case of compelling, nonacademic circumstances beyond the student's control.

1. Missing the final examination: The student is unable to take a final examination because of illness or for another nonacademic reason. A physician's statement or other satisfactory verification is required.

2. Incomplete classroom assignment: The student has not been able to complete the required class or laboratory assignments for a reason other than lack of adequate effort. A request for temporary delay of the final course grade because of incomplete class or laboratory work can be made only if the student has a passing average on the class work or laboratory work already completed and has taken and passed the final examination (unless a final examination is not given in the course or the student is unable to take the examination for reasons indicated in the previous paragraph).

3. Reexamination petition: Only a student who has a grade average of at least C on all class work and laboratory work submitted before the final examination may request a temporary delay of the final course grade because he or she failed the final examination, which is the examination given during the final examination period as defined in the official examination schedule. If the instructor denies the petition, the student's final course grade remains as originally determined. If the instructor grants the petition, and the student earns a grade of at least C on the reexamination, then the instructor substitutes the reexamination grade for the original examination grade in determining the student's final course grade. If the instructor grants the petition, and the student earns a grade on the reexamination of less than C, then a final course grade of F must be recorded.
Our perspective in the Dean’s Office is that students sometimes pressure their instructors to assign them an X, the symbol for an incomplete grade. This results in the X symbol often being assigned improperly, as a means of allowing a student to avoid a poor grade. Here are considerations you should use in deciding whether to give an incomplete:

- An X may properly be assigned for students who must miss the final due to illness or other imperative nonacademic reasons. You may require a medical excuse if the reason for the request for a postponed final is illness. If you would prefer to not deal with nonacademic issues, you may refer the student to a counselor in the Dean's Office.

- An X may also be given when the student has not been able to complete all the required assignments for reasons other than lack of diligence but only if the student has a passing grade on the work completed. Finally, an X may be assigned if the student qualifies for a reexamination and the instructor chooses to give a reexamination. (See the General Information bulletin for details.)

- An X should not be assigned to allow the student an opportunity to repeat the entire course; the only assignments or exams that should be completed to resolve the X are those that were missed for legitimate reasons during the semester.

- An X should be assigned only if the student has been informed and the exact procedures by which the student will make up the work are agreed upon. The assignment of an X constitutes a contract between the student and the instructor. It is often helpful to have the arrangement in writing, specifying what the student is expected to do to complete the course, including due dates.

The instructor who assigned the X is responsible for evaluating the student's subsequent work. If another faculty member is to be involved, the procedures for this should be clearly understood by all parties in advance. If an instructor does not assign a grade or a symbol to a student on the final roster, the Registrar will automatically insert an X. This grade in no way obligates the instructor to allow the student to complete missing work. Students who have stopped attending class or who have never attended class should be assigned a grade of F.

Students have one long semester to make up an X and extensions are rare. After one long semester, the X converts to an F if no other grade is reported.

**FINAL GRADES**

Do not leave town or disappear before turning in final grades for your students. Seniors' names are starred on the grade sheets and their grades must be received in time to determine eligibility to graduate. A schedule for reporting final grades is provided to the department. Please notify the College if you are unable to comply with these deadlines so we can try to prevent problems for students.

**PLUS/MINUS GRADING**

The university has instituted plus/minus grading for all students. Instructors have discretion whether to implement the +/- system in any course where a letter grade is assigned, but you must state your intention in the course syllabus. That is, you may choose to award grades of A, B, C, D, F, or the full list of +/- grades below, just declare your intentions clearly and the requirements to earn these grades. This policy was clarified in a memo dated August 24, 2011, from Vice Provost Gretchen Ritter. The plus/minus grades and grade points listed below will be used to calculate grade point averages for undergraduate and graduate students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
One implication of the new plus/minus grading is that what constitutes a passing grade for a course must be reevaluated. The College of Natural Sciences, in consultation with faculty representatives from each department on the College Course and Curriculum Committee, have decided that in general, a grade of C- constitutes a passing grade for the course, both to meet degree requirements and to meet prerequisites for later coursework in Natural Sciences.
ACADEMIC POLICIES

CONFIDENTIALITY

Student confidentiality is protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. This means that it is not possible to give out any information about students or grades to anyone without the student's written permission.

Issues to consider include:

- Grades may not be posted by name or social security number
- No portion of the SSN may be posted, distributed or made public in any way, even with consent of the student.
- Students must give written permission to discuss academic issues with others, including parents.
- Homework or exams may not be left unsupervised for students to pick up and should be returned in a manner that maintains student confidentiality.
- Written permission must be given by a student prior to writing letters of recommendation if the student’s academic record is to be discussed.

Faculty may continue to use student specific password protected systems (such as UT Direct and its applications) to communicate academic work, grades or other confidential information to individual students. Students may also access their final course grades using UT Direct services. ITS has developed an e-grade book application that provides faculty with a password protected system to communicate academic work grades to individual students.

For those faculty who wish to post student grades on the Web, at least two options are available through the University.

Blackboard
Faculty may use the grade book feature of Blackboard even if they do not use the course management system for their courses. Tutorials on using the Blackboard grade book are online at http://www.utexas.edu/academic/blackboard/
Faculty may also call 475-9400 for assistance.

Quest
Quest is an assessment system maintained by the College of Natural Sciences which also has a gradebook feature. https://quest.cns.utexas.edu. Training is provided. Contact William Corrigan bill.corrigan@utexas.edu.

Confidentiality of student records also extends to the electronic storage of this information. Such data is considered ‘Category 1’ data by the University and must be handled with great care. For example, storing spreadsheets with student grades on your laptop can only be done if you have encryption software protecting it; spreadsheets of student grades cannot be emailed between you and TAs unless the email is encrypted, etc. In the latter case, it is better practice to communicated information via Blackboard or CLIPS, or Quest. For more information on “CAT1” data, you may consult either your departmental IT contact or the College’s Director of IT, Mark McFarland m.mcfarland@austin.utexas.edu.

PROHIBITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF STUDENTS

It is the policy of the University of Texas at Austin to maintain an educational environment free from sexual harassment and intimidation. Sexual harassment is expressly prohibited and offenders are subject to disciplinary
"Sexual harassment" is defined as either unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, by a faculty member or other employee of the university, when

- submission by a student to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a condition for academic opportunity or advancement;
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by a student is used as the basis for academic decisions affecting that student
- the intended effect or reasonably foreseeable effect of such conduct is to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for the student.

The Office of the Dean of Students has been given the primary responsibility for responding to questions about and receiving complaints of sexual harassment of students. Students who believe they have been subjected to sexual harassment may consult with the associate dean of students. However, they also may address their questions or complaints to the department chairperson or other University administrative personnel. In such cases the chairperson or the administrator should immediately contact the associate dean of students for consultation.

Investigation of a specific complaint of sexual harassment will be initiated upon submission of a written and signed statement by the student to the associate dean of students, department chairperson, or dean. Investigation and resolution of such complaints will be through the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent permitted under the law, and the rights of the individuals involved will be protected.

Disagreement with the resolution of the complaint will be handled according to the usual procedures for grievances.

In addition to complying with the above policy dealing with sexual harassment, students and faculty members should conduct themselves in an appropriate manner and should avoid compromising situations involving any romantic or sexual relationship between a faculty member and a student who is enrolled in a course taught by the faculty member or who is otherwise under the supervision of the faculty member.

This policy is not intended, in any way, to discourage the interaction of faculty and students where harassment or a conflict of interest is not a factor; however, the policy is intended to clarify that it is inappropriate for a faculty member to form romantic or sexual relationships with students working under the faculty member’s direct supervision.

It should be stated that students making unwanted advances on faculty or teaching assistants is also not to be tolerated. If a faculty member or teaching assistant is ever in an uncomfortable interaction of this nature with a student, he or she should contact the Dean of Students. This also applies to situations of harassment or verbal abuse by students.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The rights of students with disabilities are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which are civil rights provisions aimed at ending discrimination against persons with disabilities. Section 504 specifically refers to post-secondary and vocational education services. The legislation reads: "No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from the participation, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." The University of Texas at Austin provides a wide variety of services to assist students with disabilities in becoming active members of the
University community. These services vary according to the different types and severity of impairments.

The Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office of the Student Dean’s Office is charged with assisting disabled students. They estimate that about 2000 students suffer from disabilities including mobility impairments, learning disabilities, visual impairments, hearing impairments, ADD and ADHD, and others. By law, these students are guaranteed a learning environment with reasonable accommodation of their disability.

As an instructor you are required to provide reasonable accommodation of students with disabilities. Many of the problems that might arise during the semester can be avoided by letting students know that you are aware of your responsibility to provide these accommodations, especially with respect to modifications to the examination procedure.

**OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS (Student and Faculty)**

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. Sections 51.911 and 51.925 of the Texas Education Code relate to absences by students and instructors for observance of religious holy days.

Section 51.911 states that a student who misses an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day must be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence, provided that he or she has properly notified each instructor.

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Austin that the student must notify each instructor at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates he or she will be absent to observe a religious holy day. For religious holidays that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, the notice should be given on the first day of the semester. The student may not be penalized for these excused absences but the instructor may appropriately respond if the student fails to complete satisfactorily the missed assignment or examination within a reasonable time after the excused absence.

Section 51.925 prohibits the University from discriminating against or penalizing an instructor who is absent from class for the observance of a religious holy day. Proper notice must be given to the department chairman. Prior to the beginning of classes each semester, the instructor must provide the department chairman a list of classes that will be missed due to observance of a religious holy day. The list must be either personally delivered, acknowledged and dated by the chairman, or sent certified mail, return receipt requested. Consistent with regular University policy, the instructor is responsible for finding a qualified substitute U.T. Austin instructor for any such classes.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Cheating is not tolerated in this College. Design your course and teaching methods so that cheating is difficult. Tell your class what you consider to be plagiarism and collusion. If you have any questions about a suspected cheating problem, we will be happy to try to answer them, but ultimately the Office of the Dean of Students is responsible for handling academic dishonesty complaints. Additional information on the definition of academic dishonesty including plagiarism can be found at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/. You should discuss your options and University procedures with the Office of Student Judicial Services at 471-2841.

**STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES**

Should a student have a concern about your course that you are unable to remedy to both party’s satisfaction, the next recourse for the student is the department chairperson. Please direct the student to your chairperson rather than to the Dean’s Office. It is the chairperson’s responsibility to send the student to the Dean’s Office if
the grievance is not resolved at the departmental level. If you wish, please consider making use of the Office of the Ombudsman. The ombudsman is authorized to investigate and seek to mediate and resolve student complaints and grievances concerning academic or administrative policies, procedures, or decisions at the University. Each complaint is carefully scrutinized to determine whether the student's grievance is actionable. The telephone number is 471-3825.

**COURSE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**QUEST**

The College maintains a homework and content server, The Quest Learning and Assessment System ([https://quest.cns.utexas.edu](https://quest.cns.utexas.edu)) of which many faculty are familiar for assigning online homeworks or preparing printable exams. Faculty can choose from questions in the 80,000 item bank spanning all disciplines or can write their own questions. Students can complete homeworks online and Quest will record and manage grades in the gradebook feature. Recently, we added Mathematica to Quest which enables graphing, algebraic, and simulations-based questions well beyond the usual multiple choice question format.

We now have the facility for content delivery (either in the form of text modules or short video tutorials/lectures) which can be linked to assessment question as an evening "learning module" assignment to be given to students. Seminars on this subject and how to organize your course content like a calendar or syllabus given in Summer 2011 can be viewed at [http://web4.cns.utexas.edu/quest/support/instr/utseminars.htm](http://web4.cns.utexas.edu/quest/support/instr/utseminars.htm). Additional workshops will occur over the long semesters.

A content support team is available to work with you in the design and assembly of your course in Quest.

- Bill Corrigan (program director) bill.corrigan@utexas.edu
- Patsy McDonald (program coordinator) quest-help@cns.utexas.edu
- Dr. Shannon Stokes stokessn@mail.utexas.edu (Chemistry)
- Dr. Lin Huffman lhuffman@utexas.edu (Biology)
- Dr. Jesse Miller jmiller@mail.utexas.edu (Mathematics)
- Dr. Nathan W Erickson nathanwerickson@utexas.edu (Physics)
- Heather Van Ligten hvanligten@math.utexas.edu (general)

Please feel free to call on these folks as you start working on your courses or want to learn about the new resources now in Quest.

The College assesses a cost recovery charge to students for access to the Quest homework server. Students will pay $25/semester/course, with no student required to pay more than $50/semester, which is less than other third party systems. Similar to other mandatory instructional materials such as textbooks and iClickers, students must be notified of this charge in course syllabi. The following syllabus language is required:

_This course makes use of the web-based Quest content delivery and homework server system maintained by the College of Natural Sciences. This homework service will require a $25 charge per student for its use, which goes toward the maintenance and operation of the resource. Please go to [http://quest.cns.utexas.edu](http://quest.cns.utexas.edu) to log in to the Quest system for this class. After the 12th day of class, when you log into Quest you will be asked to pay via credit card on a secure payment site. You have the option to wait up to 30 days to pay while still continuing to use Quest for your assignments. If you are taking more than one course using Quest, you will not be charged more than $50/semester. Quest provides mandatory instructional material for this course, just as is your textbook, etc. For payment questions, email quest.fees@cns.utexas.edu._

**CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING—FACULTY INSTRUCTION SERVICES AT UT**

The University has strengthened and consolidated its faculty support services for instruction with creation of the
Center for Teaching and Learning. The Web site, http://www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/ is a remarkable source of materials and information that can help you improve your entire teaching experience. Please go to the web site and explore. I am sure you will learn things that will be of real value to improving the quality of your course as well as providing resources to simplify the teaching process.

TUTORING AND STUDY GROUPS

The College and University are committed to providing attractive learning environments outside the classroom for students who need additional assistance beyond what you can provide through discussion sessions and office hours. Both the CNS Academic Communities Program and the UT Learning Center offer these kinds of resources, especially for faculty teaching the large lower division courses.

Academic Communities. The Academic Communities Program (ACP) was created in 2005 to provide to University of Texas at Austin students resources and services that promote success in introductory courses in math and sciences and encourage students to utilize positive learning and study skills throughout their academic careers. Through a combined effort between CNS course instructors, the College and UT Housing, residence hall dining rooms are transformed into evening study environments with a TA presence, tutoring, and study group formation. For more information on the various activities offered by ACP, go to http://cns.utexas.edu/community/resident-hall-study-groups.

Undergraduate Teaching Assistants: Many departments are increasingly relying on undergraduates to assist with courses either as lab assistants, study coaches, tutorial leaders, etc. Besides being a low-cost supplement to an instructional team, such trusted undergraduates can often identify well with the students enrolled in your course and provide faculty valuable feedback on the student perspective. The College has several programs to aid in the training and professional conduct of such assistants. First, the Peer Leadership Academy is a day-long workshop on professional conduct, mentoring, and classroom interactions lead by Jennifer L Smith jlsmith@austin.utexas.edu. Second, a 1-credit course, NSC109, Teaching Practicum in the Natural Sciences, guides such UGTAs in learning theory and how to serve as effective coaches. This course is often taken concurrently with students’ serving as UGTAs.

Learning Center. The UT Learning Center in Jester provides a variety of opportunities for students to improve their chances for success in the classroom. A broad array of workshops and classes assist students with study skills development as well as foundational preparation in math, reading and writing, and English-language skills. In addition, free or inexpensive tutoring is provided for many introductory-level courses.

SYLLABUS AND DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

Instructors are required by University policy to provide a written statement to students on course requirements and the evaluation of student performance. This statement lets students know what they must do and how they will be graded. It must specify how the course grade will be determined. This statement should be handed out on the first day of class and is required before the end of the fourth class day each semester.

A memorandum from the Provost’s Office explicitly defines the minimum requirements of the syllabus as proposed by the Educational Policy Committee:

TO: All Instructional Faculty
FROM: Gretchen Ritter, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Faculty Governance
DATE: August 3, 2012
SUBJECT: Requirement to Provide a Course Syllabus by First Meeting Day of All Classes

In accordance with university policy and state law, all instructors of undergraduate courses are required to provide a syllabus to their students by the first day of class. The course syllabus must also be made
available on the university’s website. This memorandum specifies the University’s policy on providing and posting course syllabi.

The syllabus MUST contain the following items:
- The course number and title
- The instructor’s name, office location, and office hours*
- If there are teaching assistants for the class, their names, office locations, and office hours*
- An overview of the class, including prerequisites, the subject matter of each lecture or discussion, as well as the academic/learning goals for the course and how they will be assessed
- Grading policy, including the means of evaluation and assignment of course grades, including whether plus and minus grades will be used for final course grades (please note that the university uses the plus minus grading scale for recording the final grades in all undergraduate classes, but instructors are permitted to make their own determination of whether to assign plus and minus final grades)
- A brief descriptive overview of all major course requirements and assignments, along with the dates of exams and assignments that count for 20 percent or more of the class grade
- A list of required and recommended materials, such as textbooks, image collections, audio and audiovisual materials, supplies, articles, chapters, and excerpts as appropriate, identified by author, title and publisher.
- Final exam date and time (when available)
- The class web site, if any
- A notice that students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/dcee/ssd/

* Listing of office locations and hours for TAs should NOT be included on the publicly posted version of the syllabus, since this may be a violation of FERPA.
* Instructor's office location and hours is not required on the publicly posted version of the syllabus.

Recommended Materials:
In addition, we recommend that faculty include the following information on their course syllabi:
- A notice regarding academic dishonesty. UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism (Link to University Honor Code: http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html)
- A notice regarding accommodations for religious holidays. (Sample statement—“By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.”)
- The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety/:
  - Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
  - Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
  - Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
  - In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
  - Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency

For additional suggested templates and guidance on writing an effective syllabus, please see: http://ctl.utexas.edu/teaching-resources/design-your-course/create-your-syllabus/

If you have any questions about this policy memorandum, please contact Amelia Rey-Shannon, 512-232-3312.

**Posting Syllabi**

Additionally, instructors must upload a copy of their course syllabus and their updated CV to the University’s central repository. The upload system is quite easy and is located at https://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/student/coursedocs/syup/. Once uploaded, these will be visible on the front page of the university’s web site (if you scroll to the bottom, it has a link for ‘Access Syllabi and CVs’). Keep in mind that compliance with this policy is mandated by Legislative Statute from the State. The University keeps careful records of compliance by College and by Department.
Linda Hicke started as the Dean of the College on July 16, 2012. Academic Affairs in the Dean’s Office is undergoing some restructuring for the 2012-13 academic year. While most of the units remain intact with respect to function, organization at the Associate Dean’s level has shifted. Shelley Payne will join the Dean’s Office as Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, overseeing Promotion/Tenure, University Teaching Awards, Faculty mentoring. Sacha Kopp will continue as Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, and will retain responsibility for student services, advising, honors and retention programs, Quest, assessment and placement, and in addition will assist with instructional budget.

Feel free to contact either Shelley or Sacha with any questions you might have. Also, it would be useful to get to know the advising staff in the advising center associated with your department. Names and addresses of advising and special program locations are listed below for your convenience.

**Linda Hicke—Dean**  
 lhicke@austin.utexas.edu, WCH 3.104, 471-6176

**Shelley Payne – Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs:**  
 Chris Rosales, Administrative Associate  
 Sarah Supulski, Administrative Associate

**Sacha Kopp—Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education.**  
 kopp@hep.utexas.edu, WCH 2.222, 232-0677

**Administrative Associate:** Adrianne Chacon, WCH 2.222, 232-0677

**Student Services:** Mike Raney, Assistant Dean, WCH 2.102, 471-3796  
 Departmental Advising Centers:  
 Biological Sciences: NHB 2.600, G2530, 471-4920  
 Chemistry and Biochemistry: WEL 2.216, A5300, 471-3097  
 Computer Sciences: PAI 5.60, G2530, 471-9509  
 Human Ecology: GEA 37, A2700, 471-7219  
 Mathematics, Physics, and Astronomy: RLM 4.101, C1650, 471-0900

**Academic Records and Initiatives:** Cathy Stacy, Assistant Dean, WCH 2.102, 232-0697  
 Grade changes: Judith Quinney, WCH 2.218, 232-1065

**Career Services:** Karen Landolt, Director, PAI 5.03, 471-6700

**Health Professions Office:** Lesley Riley, Director, PAI 5.03, 471-6700

**Quest:** Bill Corrigan, Program Coordinator, WCH 2.306, bill.corrigan@utexas.edu

**Center for Inquiry in Math and Science:** Ruth Franks, Director, WCH2.220, rfranks@mail.utexas.edu  
 Peer Leadership Academy: Jennifer L Smith jlsmith@austin.utexas.edu

**Honors & Research Programs:** Sarah Simmons, Assistant Dean, PAI 3.04, G2550, 232-9029

**Texas Interdisciplinary Plan:** Sue Harkins, Assistant Dean, GRG 234, A2900, 232-1058