

COURSE MANAGEMENT POLICY**Preamble**

The central purpose of course management policy is to provide a framework of common understanding for students and faculty concerning the structures, processes, objectives, and requirements that pertain to courses offered through the School of Graduate Studies at Ryerson. It recognizes the importance of advanced education, research and scholarship while (a) defining the types of information that both students and faculty need in order to optimize the learning value of any given course, and (b) making clear to students and faculty alike the principles and procedures that have been adopted by the University that bear upon the operation of academic courses. In a more general sense, course management policy seeks to reflect principles that are fundamental to teaching and advanced study at the graduate level.

No course management policy can replace, or succeed in the absence of, the basic qualities of professionalism and mutual respect, both between and among faculty and students, and a shared commitment to learning. Ryerson's Graduate Course Management policy fits comfortably within the following statement of values:

As an academic community, Ryerson seeks to establish and maintain an environment conducive to effective teaching, learning, and Scholarly, Research, and Creative (SRC) activity. This requires support from all members of the community for academic and intellectual freedom, maintenance of the highest standards of integrity in teaching, learning, research and evaluation, and personal behaviour which supports these freedoms and standards of integrity. (Student Code of Conduct)

Policy***Policy Element 1: Statement of General Principle***

Academic courses are highly varied in format, delivery, objectives, and structure. No course management policy can anticipate all possible course or the circumstances that affect course delivery. In cases where a course must vary from the approved course management policy, this may be authorized by the relevant Program Director and AVPA. Students will be informed in writing of such variances at the beginning of the course or, if they arise during the course, at the earliest possible opportunity.

Policy Element 2: Course Outlines and Syllabi

Students will be provided at the beginning of every course with an outline or syllabus that includes, as a minimum, information on the items specified below. Outlines may be supplemented by more detailed topical or project information that is provided periodically through a course.

A. Basic Information

- Name and number of course; semester and year, if appropriate; prerequisites, if any
- Faculty member's name; office location and scheduled student consultation hours; office telephone number; e-mail address; faculty/course web site(s) if available

B. Course Description

- An explanation of the course's academic focus and scope, course objectives and/or intended learning outcomes, and topics with their approximate sequence and schedule
- Texts and reading lists
- A description of the teaching method(s) that will be used (lecture, laboratory, studio, cases, problem-based learning, seminar, field work, or combinations of these)

C. *Expectations/Requirements of Students*

- A list of all assignments, tests, exams, and other work to be graded, and general descriptions of these.¹
- A course schedule, identifying project deadlines and, a close approximation of test dates, etc.²
- The weighting of each assignment, test, and/or other unit of evaluation
- Other student requirements in the course.

D. *Program/University Policies and Course Practices*

Direction should be given to all School of Graduate Studies policies and/or individual course practices that bear upon the course in question. Students should be reminded that they are required to adhere to all relevant University policies, such as the student code of conduct (Policies 60 and 61, which are listed at: <http://www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/policies.html>), set out in the Ryerson calendar and the Graduate Student Information Guide.

Policy Element 3: Changes to Announced Evaluation Scheme

During the semester, it is sometimes necessary or desirable for a faculty member to revise the plan of student evaluation contained in the course outline. When this is the case, the faculty member will: (a) discuss the changes with the class; (b) make such revisions as early as possible in the course; and (c) confirm the changes both orally and in writing (handout or posting to course website).

When such a change involves only the extension of a deadline, a minimum of one week's notice is normally required. In the case of other changes (e.g., in the number, mix, and/or weighting of methods of evaluation) students will be given as much notice as possible, normally at least three weeks, in order to adjust their course work plans.

Once students have begun work on a particular component of the evaluation scheme, changes will be made to that component only under extraordinary circumstances. When such changes must be made, students will, if at all possible, be given the opportunity to complete the evaluation(s) as initially set out and with the same course weight, if they so wish.

When changes are made to the plan of student evaluation or to the nature of a particular assignment/test to accommodate the needs of an individual student or of a group within the class, the nature of the accommodation will be outlined in writing with a copy retained by the student(s) concerned and the faculty member(s).

In the case of emergencies such as faculty illness, the director of the graduate program is responsible for restructuring the evaluation scheme, if required, in such a way as to maintain course integrity while not creating undue disadvantage for students. Normal periods of notification may be waived in such circumstances.

Policy Element 4: Feedback on Student Performance in a Course

All student term work should be returned with reasonable promptness. Final exams are not returned, but are retained by the faculty member for a period of six months³.

¹ Specific and appropriately detailed information on the format of tests, exams, and assignments will be provided by the course instructor as early in the course as possible. Save for extraordinary circumstances, this will be at least three weeks before the evaluation in question.

² In the case of intensive courses and other courses offered in a rhythm outside the conventional semester pattern, e.g., three-weekend courses, standard schedules cannot apply. In such cases the student must be informed in writing at the beginning of the course what time-lines will prevail for all projects, tests, exams, and other graded and required non-graded work.

³ When faculty members are away from Ryerson for any extended period of time, final exam papers should be left with, or made accessible to, the graduate program.

Policy Element 5: Incomplete Grades

The assignment of an incomplete grade normally follows discussion between the faculty member and student concerning the work to be completed and the relevant due date(s). To confirm arrangements that are already mutually understood or to provide the necessary information where prior consultation has not taken place, when an Incomplete grade is assigned the faculty member(s) will complete a prescribed *ΔIncomplete Grade Form@* that specifies work to be completed and due dates. Copies of this completed form will be provided to the program department, which will in turn provide a copy to the student⁴.

The due date set by the faculty member will be no later than the end of the following semester, but will normally be earlier than this.

⁴ This will normally be done by regular or electronic mail. If the student does not receive a copy by mail, however, he/she is responsible for obtaining it from the teaching department.