

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

SENATE POLICY 145: UNDERGRADUATE COURSE MANAGEMENT

Revision Approval Date: May 31, 2016

Revision Implementation Date: September 1, 2016

Policy Review Date: 2017

Responsible Office: Provost and Vice President Academic

1 PREAMBLE

In a university setting, learning is a shared enterprise in which faculty and students come together in an environment influenced by their disciplines, academic programs, the University, broader intellectual traditions, and the values and priorities of the community at large. An academic course represents a discrete learning endeavour in which an intensive sharing of knowledge, expertise, experience, and perspective may occur.

The central purpose of this course management policy is to provide a framework of common understanding for students, faculty and staff concerning the structures, processes, objectives, and requirements that pertain to Ryerson undergraduate courses. Course outlines are required by the University and it is the obligation of all faculty members to prepare outlines for their courses that adhere to this policy. It is the responsibility of Chairs and Directors to ensure that course outlines are produced and meet policy requirements.

The Policy recognizes the importance of diversity in learning and teaching styles and modes of course delivery 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, this policy seeks to reflect the fundamentals of course management.

2 UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICY ELEMENTS

2.1 Provision of Course Outlines

2.1.1 Students will be provided with a course outline, either electronically on the University's Course Management System or in hard copy, by or at the first meeting of every course that includes, as a minimum, information on the items specified in Section 4.0. The information in this outline should be discussed at the first class. Outlines may be supplemented by more detailed topical or project information that is provided periodically through a course. In Distance Education courses, the course outline should be available electronically prior to the start of the course.

2.1.2 Course outlines must be submitted to the Department/School in the format requested, and revised course outlines must be submitted when changes are made during the semester.

2.2 Assessment and Feedback on Student Performance in a Course

Timely and constructive feedback in response to student work is an essential element in the learning process. Constructive feedback refers to any type of instructor response that serves to inform, guide, encourage, and/or instruct the student in respect to relevant course work or related aspects of her/his learning endeavour. Students should also be able to assess their progress as early as possible.

- 2.2.1 Each course must have at least two, independent assessments per semester in the evaluation scheme. Where appropriate, these should be of different types. An individual assessment may not be worth more than 70% of a student's final grade.
- 2.2.2 Students who add a class after there has been an assessment must be given the opportunity to make up that assessment.
- 2.2.3 It is important that all student term work be graded and returned with reasonable promptness. In the case of tests for which the faculty member will retain the question paper, students should receive feedback on the content of the test, in addition to a numerical grade.
- 2.2.4 Where an assignment or test requires students to build directly on the proficiencies developed through an earlier assignment/test, they should have the benefit of feedback on the earlier work before the subsequent due date.
- 2.2.5 To enable students to assess their progress in a course, some graded work should be returned to the student prior to the final deadline for dropping courses without academic penalty. Course outlines will provide an indication of approximately when the first graded project(s) will be returned to students. In cases where a course does not lend itself to early feedback, this should be clearly noted on the course outline.
- 2.2.6 Student assessments should comply with the provisions of *Senate Policy 159, Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*.
- 2.2.7 **Make-up mid-term tests, assignments and other assessments during the semester:**
- 2.2.7.1 **Guiding principles**
- Students receive grades that they earn by demonstrating their knowledge of the course material.
 - Assessments are structured such that students' knowledge can be demonstrated incrementally and they are given feedback to facilitate improvement where needed.
 - Different types of courses (e.g. lectures, labs, studios) have different types and number of assessments, ranging from a number of smaller assessments spread over the semester to a single mid-term test and a final exam.
 - Make-ups should cover the same material as the original assessment but need not be of an identical format.
- 2.2.7.2 **Determination of whether a make-up of a mid-term, assignment or other assessment during the semester should be given**
- Should a student miss a mid-term test or equivalent (e.g. studio or presentation), with appropriate documentation, normally a make-up will be scheduled as soon as possible in the same semester, and, where possible, before the last date to drop the course.
 - Where a missed mid-term, assignment or other assessment is one of only two assessments in a course (e.g. there is one mid-term and a final), or when the assessment is worth more than 30% of the final course grade, the provision of a make-up is required.
 - Where a missed mid-term, assignment or other assessment is part of a number of assessments given throughout the term, and when it can be shown that the objective of the missed work is assessed in some other way, then the instructor and student may agree, in writing, to distribute the weight of the missed work to the final exam, or other assessment or group

of assessments. The redistribution of the weight of missed work may not cause the final exam or any single assessment to be worth more than 70% of the student's final grade. Where there is no agreement, the student may consult the Chair or Director for assistance.

- Where it is not possible to schedule the missed work or mid-term because, for example, it was presented in a group, it requires that a lab studio or other set-up be recreated; the weight may be distributed to the final exam or other assessment or group of assessments. In this case, the redistribution of the weight of missed work should normally not cause the final exam or any single assessment to be worth more than 70% of the student's final grade. If it will, an alternate assignment should be considered on a case by case basis.

2.2.8 **Make-up of final exams:** Students who miss a final exam for a verifiable reason and who cannot be given a make-up exam prior to the submission of final course grades, must be given a grade of INC (as outlined in *Policy 46: Undergraduate Grading, Promotion, and Academic Standing*) and a make-up exam (normally within 2 weeks of the beginning of the next semester) that carries the same weight and measures the same knowledge, must be scheduled.

2.2.9 **Missing a make-up**

2.2.9.1 **Provision of a second make-up:** On a case by case basis, a second make-up may be scheduled at the discretion of the instructor. The student may be required to provide a detailed rationale supported by appropriate documentation for consideration.

2.2.9.2 **Mid-term test, assignment or assessment during the semester:**

- If a student misses a scheduled make-up of a mid-term, assignment or other assessment for verifiable reasons, the grade may be distributed over other course assessments even if that makes the grade on the final exam worth more than 70% of the final grade in the course.
- If a student misses a scheduled mid-term make-up test or assignment, without a verifiable reason, a grade of "0" may be assigned.

2.2.9.3 **Final Exam:** Except where there are verifiable reasons, and the student and instructor have agreed to a rescheduled make-up exam, students who miss a scheduled make-up of a final exam will receive a "0" for that exam.

2.2.10 Final exams are not returned, but are retained for a period of one year after the end of the semester. Departments and Schools must develop procedures to ensure that the disposal of examination papers respects the privacy of the students' work.

2.2.11 While it is preferable to post grades electronically on the Course Management System, grades on assignments, tests and exams, including final exams, if posted in hard copy, must be posted by numerically sorted student identification number after at least the first four digits have been removed. Instructors must inform students in all course management documentation of the method to be used in the posting of grades. Students who wish not to have their grades posted in hard copy must inform the instructor in writing prior to the due date of the first assignment.

2.2.12 All grades, on assignments or tests, must be posted or made available to students through the return of their work. Grades on final exams must be posted. However, as there may be other considerations in the determination of final grades, students will

receive their official final grade in the course only from the Registrar. Final official course grades may not be posted or disclosed anywhere by an instructor.

- 2.2.13 It is the responsibility of the Department or School to develop systems or determine procedures for the confidential return of graded course work. It is the instructor's responsibility to ensure that these procedures are followed.

2.3 Changes to an Announced Evaluation Scheme

- 2.3.1 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:
- 2.3.1.1 discuss the changes with the class;
 - 2.3.1.2 make such revisions as early as possible in the course;
 - 2.3.1.3 confirm the changes both orally and in writing (i.e., handout or posting to course web site); and
 - 2.3.1.4 forward a copy of the revised outline to the Department/School.
- 2.3.2 When 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 in order to reasonably adjust their course work plans.
- 2.3.3 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.
- 2.3.4 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, normally by email, with a copy retained by the student(s) and the faculty member(s).
- 2.3.5 In the case of emergencies such as faculty illness, the Chair/Director of the teaching department (or a designated course co-ordinator) 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.

2.4 Period of Prohibition from Testing

- 2.4.1 In the Fall and Winter semesters, the last week of classes and the subsequent Saturday and Sunday before the examination period are to be free of all tests, examinations or major assignments or assessments. The same principle applies to Continuing Education courses and to courses taught in the spring/summer term.
- 2.4.2 Exceptions/Clarifications: If the structure of a course requires a justifiable exception to the above principle, or to the following rules, the Chair/Director must approve that exception (see section 5.0).
- 2.4.2.1 This provision does not apply to courses taught intensively, at a distance, or otherwise outside the usual scheduled hours per week mode.
 - 2.4.2.2 Take home examinations may be handed out during the last week of class, but cannot be due until the end of the first week of examinations.

- 2.4.2.3 It is recognized that in certain types of courses it may not be possible to avoid tests or other in class assessments in the last week of classes without creating undue problems in other areas of course management. Where absolutely necessary, a single assessment may be exempted from the above restrictions where it meets ALL the following criteria:
- 2.4.2.3.1 it is a logical continuation of a regular, ongoing series of term assessments (e.g., weekly or bi-weekly field placement, lab or studio assignments);
 - 2.4.2.3.2 it is held in the normal class/lab/field placement time slot;
 - 2.4.2.3.3 it is worth no more than 15% of the final course grade.
- 2.4.2.4 A final assignment given in lieu of a final exam, which cannot itself be made due prior to the last week of class, may be due during the final exam period.
- 2.4.2.5 If an assignment involves a presentation component, and it is necessary for this presentation to be made in the last week of the semester, any written component of that assignment must be due the week prior to the last week of class and the presentation cannot itself be worth more than 15% of the final course grade.

2.5 Record Keeping

- 2.5.1 Faculty members are required to:
- 2.5.1.1 submit copies of all course outlines, and any revisions, in the requested format, to their Department/School and/or Continuing Education at the beginning of each term;
 - 2.5.1.2 only assess the work of officially registered students (i.e., the work of non-registered students is not to be assessed);
 - 2.5.1.3 maintain a grade calculation sheet for each class they teach;
 - 2.5.1.4 forward a copy of all grade calculation sheets to the Department/School or Continuing Education at the end of the term, to be retained for at least one year;
 - 2.5.1.5 retain all final examinations for a period of one year after the end of the term; and
 - 2.5.1.6 forward all final exams to the Department/School or Continuing Education (or make them otherwise accessible) if they are not returning the following term, or if they will be away for an extended period of time.
 - 2.5.1.7 Course shells on the Course Management System may be accessed by the Chair/Director in case of emergency and/or the need to reassign the course to another instructor.

3 DEPARTMENTAL/SCHOOL/ CONTINUING EDUCATION POLICIES AND HANDBOOKS

- 3.1 Department/School Handbooks** - All Departments and Schools, including the Chang School, must develop an online Student Handbook which must contain the policies and items outlined in section 3.2. Departments/Schools with programs must include information specific to the

program. The handbook may also be made available in hard copy. In lieu of repeating general Department/School information in each course outline, instructors may refer to the Student Handbook.

- 3.1.1 Policies and Guidelines established by Departmental/ School Councils must be distributed to faculty
- 3.1.2 For Continuing Education courses, the policies and guidelines of the teaching Department/School apply. For CE courses which do not have a home teaching department, CE is to develop policies and guidelines.
- 3.1.3 Departments/Schools must ensure that the information in course outlines is in keeping with University and Department/School policies.

3.2 Department/School Policies and Guidelines

- 3.2.1 **Group Work**- The Department/School should establish policies regarding:
 - 3.2.1.1 the total amount of group work to be allowed in their courses;
 - 3.2.1.2 procedures to ensure that students are afforded sufficient individual assessment (Group work for which a student does not receive an individual assessment should not constitute more than 30% of a course grade.); and
 - 3.2.1.3 fair, appropriate and timely procedures for students who encounter difficulty with their working group.
- 3.2.2 **Academic Integrity** – It should be determined what information should be included in program/Department/School student handbooks and websites, and what common elements are to be included in course outlines concerning academic integrity and *Senate Policy 60: Academic Integrity*. In courses taken by students outside the Department/School, it is recommended that pertinent policies be stated on the course outline, or reference made to a Department/School website.
- 3.2.3 **Course Variation** - The amount and types of variation that are appropriate among different sections of the same course should be determined. Course descriptions and overall objectives must be consistent and there should be comparable assignment structures and grading schemes in all sections of the same course.
- 3.2.4 **Attendance** – It should be determined what policies, if any, are appropriate regarding the use of class attendance as a basis for grades. If attendance grades are permitted, criteria must be established and included in the course outline.
- 3.2.5 **Class Participation** – It should be determined what policies, if any, are appropriate regarding the use of class participation as a basis for grades. If participation grades are permitted, criteria must be established and included in the course outline.
- 3.2.6 **Accommodation of Students with Disabilities** - Departments and Schools are required to accommodate students with disabilities. A statement should be made regarding the accommodation of these students, including use of Academic Accommodation Support (formerly the Access Centre) in their handbook and the Department/School may require such a statement on each course outline (Senate Policy 159).

- 3.2.7 **Student Email policy** – Departments/Schools must inform students of the Ryerson policy regarding the requirement that their Ryerson email address be used and maintained as their official communication with the University (Senate Policy 157).
- 3.2.8 **Non-Academic Conduct** – Departments/Schools should make a reference to *Senate Policy 61: Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct*, with regard to student behaviour.
- 3.2.9 **Other** – It should be determined what other areas relevant to the school/department should be included in the course outline, ensuring that these are in conformity with overall University policy.

4 COURSE OUTLINES – REQUIRED INFORMATION

4.1 Basic Information

- 4.1.1 Name and number of course; semester and year, prerequisites, and exclusions, if any.
- 4.1.2 Faculty member's name; office location and scheduled student consultation hours; office telephone number; e-mail address; faculty/course web site(s) if available. (If any of these factors are unknown when the course outline is prepared, the information will be provided in writing at the beginning of the course. Student consultation hours may be posted or disseminated by other means.) Continuing Education students must be provided with an appropriate e-mail address for the course.
- 4.1.3 Method of posting grades and, if necessary according to sections 2.2, a statement of the process by which an individual student may request that his/her grades not be posted.
- 4.1.4 Any instructions or limitations on student use of email for faculty contact, as well as any preference for means of student contact.

4.2 Course Description

- 4.2.1 Calendar Course Description
- 4.2.2 A synopsis that informs students of
- 4.2.2.1 the course's academic focus and scope;
 - 4.2.2.2 course objectives and/or intended learning outcomes; and
 - 4.2.2.3 topics with their tentative sequence and schedule.
- 4.2.3 Texts, reading lists, and other course materials or equipment;
- 4.2.4 A description of the teaching method(s) that will be used (e.g., lecture, laboratory, studio, cases, problem-based learning, seminar, field work, in-class debates, oral presentations, un-graded journals, or combinations of these)
- 4.2.5 A schedule of any field trips or required activities outside of class time.

4.3 Other Course Issues - In addition to any general statement required by Department/School policy, each outline must include a statement on specific academic issues related to the course. These may include, but are not limited to:

- 4.3.1 An indication of any requirement for the submission of work to an electronic plagiarism detection service and a statement indicating the provision in section 4.3.1.2.
- 4.3.1.1 Instructors who choose to use an electronic plagiarism detection service that retains a copy of the submitted work in its database must include either:

- 4.3.1.1.1 the following statement: “Students who do not want their work submitted to this plagiarism detection service must, by the end of the second week of class, consult with the instructor to make alternate arrangements.”; or
- 4.3.1.1.2 the details of alternate arrangements including the deadlines for consultation with the instructor concerning the use of these arrangements.
- 4.3.1.2 Even when an instructor has not indicated that a plagiarism detection service will be used, or when a student has opted out of the plagiarism detection service, if instructor has reason to suspect that an individual piece of work has been plagiarized, the instructor is permitted to submit that work in a non-identifying way to any plagiarism detection service.
- 4.3.2 Specific details on any Information Technology requirements for courses utilizing IT in course work, assignments or exams.
- 4.3.3 Specific requirements for field placements, if appropriate.
- 4.3.4 Policies on the appropriate use of cellular phones, laptop computers and other electronic devices in the classroom
- 4.3.5 The requirement for medical documentation/notification for missed work, or other issues as set out in *Senate Policy 134: Undergraduate Academic Consideration and Appeals*.

4.4 Variations within a Course: In cases where there are multiple sections of the same course with consequent variations in course delivery methods, grading and/or methods of evaluation, etc., students will be provided with at least a brief section/instructor-specific description in addition to the generic course outline. (See section 3.1.3)

4.5 Departmental/University Policies and Course Practices

- 4.5.1 Information must be given on all Department/School policies which have been identified in section 3.0. Where relevant information is available through departmental handbooks and/or websites, course outlines will provide direction to these.
- 4.5.2 Students should be reminded that they are required to adhere to all relevant University policies, such as *Senate Policy 60: Academic Integrity*.
- 4.5.3 For courses involving research with human subjects/participants, the guidelines of the Research Ethics Board must be clearly referenced.

4.6 Evaluation

- 4.6.1 A list and tentative schedule of all assignments, tests, exams, and other work to be graded, and general descriptions of these. (More specific information on each assessment will be provided by the course instructor as early in the course as possible.)
- 4.6.2 The weighting of each assignment, test, and/or other unit of evaluation.
- 4.6.3 The inclusion of snap tests or other unscheduled evaluations as part of the grading scheme, if applicable.
- 4.6.4 An indication of approximately when the first test results/term work will be returned to students.
- 4.6.5 Policies on deadlines for the acceptance of assignments and/or take-home examinations, and on any penalties that will be assessed when such deadlines are not met.

5 DEVIATION FROM COURSE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Academic courses are highly varied in format, delivery, objectives, and structure. No course management policy can anticipate all possible circumstances and configurations. In cases where a course must vary from approved course management policy, this may be authorized by the relevant Chair/Director. 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.