Developing Specific Course Policies

What Does This Guide Offer? This resource outlines the steps for crafting or refining specific policies tailored to individual courses, including examples for policies on communication, technology use, and in-class activities.

Application of This Guide To create robust and effective course policies, follow this systematic approach that emphasizes clarity, enforceability, and fairness. Refer to the exemplar policies provided for inspiration. For further guidance, our team of educational designers is available for consultation.

Course policies that are specific to an individual class grant instructors the flexibility to establish guidelines that reflect their unique teaching style and course needs. These differ from broader institutional or departmental policies which are often preset. Common areas where instructors might formulate their own policies include communication guidelines, attendance and participation requirements, and rules regarding technology use in class.

Steps for Crafting or Refining Course Policies

1. Confirm with your department to ensure that your intended policy does not conflict with existing mandatory guidelines.
2. Refer to the example policies for phrasing ideas that could be adapted for your specific needs.
3. Evaluate your draft policy considering:
    *   Detail: Is the policy clearly outlined?
    *   Consequence: Are the repercussions for non-compliance explicitly stated?
    *   Equity: Could the policy disproportionately affect certain groups of students?
4. Solicit feedback from a colleague and revise your draft accordingly.
5. Implement the new or updated policy by editing the course syllabus prior to the commencement of a new course cycle.
6. Discuss the specific policies with students on the first day to ensure understanding and compliance.

Illustration of Policy Improvement Original Policy on Late Submissions | Enhanced Policy on Late Submissions (with modifications for precision, consequences, and fairness) Assignments must be submitted by the deadlines. | Assignments turned in late will incur a 10% reduction in grade for each 24-hour period of delay, barring emergency situations that are approved by the instructor. Contact the instructor promptly to arrange for alternative solutions in case of an emergency.

Examples of Policies These samples represent various instructor-designed policies. They may not all be applicable to your situation, but they provide a framework which you can customize for your course requirements.
Communication Policies Such policies are deeply personal, as they are influenced by an instructor's availability and communication preferences.

*   Students are encouraged to reach out via institutional email or during scheduled office hours. Responses to emails will be provided within two business days, with additional time allowed over weekends or holidays. Queries right before deadlines may not be addressed promptly. Communication should originate from an institutional email address.
*   For questions outside of class, use your institutional email and include the course identifier and your name in the subject line. Brief inquiries will be answered via email, while complex issues may require an office hour visit. Expect a response within one business day, excluding weekends or holidays.

- To foster self-reliance and problem-solving, students should first consult the syllabus and classmates, followed by reaching out to a teaching assistant before contacting the instructor directly. When emailing, detail the steps you've taken to find the answer. Expect a response on weekdays within one business day.

In-Class Activities Policies These replace traditional attendance and participation policies, as they necessitate active engagement and produce evidence of learning.
- Students are to complete tasks during class, such as group work or quizzes, contributing to their active participation grade. The lowest scores may be omitted from the final grade calculation.
- As proof of engagement and presence, students may be required to submit individual or group tasks during class. The least significant scores might be discarded from the overall participation grade. Missed tasks due to tardiness or early departure will not be compensated.

Technology Use Policies These guidelines define the acceptable use of personal electronic devices during class sessions, ensuring equitable access to necessary technology.
- Device usage for academic purposes should be indicated by the instructor. If devices are needed, students should be informed in advance. Those requiring a device for unindicated purposes must communicate with the instructor privately. Inappropriate use may lead to grade penalties.
- An internet-capable device is expected to be brought to class for instructor-led activities. Unauthorized use during class is prohibited. Students in need of such a device can utilize a loaner program provided by the institution's computing services.
- Personal devices should be used responsibly for class-related research and tasks. Distractions and noise should be minimized, and misuse will result in grade consequences. Loaner devices are available for those who need them through the institution's technical support services.
- Possession of the latest software is necessary for class participation, with loaner laptops available if required. Technical assistance for software installation is offered by the institution's IT department.
- Personal electronic devices are allowed provided they do not cause distraction. The instructor reserves the right to request the stowing away of any device deemed disruptive