

## Getting Started Teaching at Fairfield University

Fairfield University values excellence in teaching and provides a great deal of support for instructors. An overview of available resources can be found at the [Center for Academic Excellence](#). The following document assembles policies that everyone teaching at Fairfield needs to know, along with some suggestions for how to implement those policies. The entire collection of policies jointly approved by the Faculty and Administration can be found [here](#), in the Journal of Record.

At the end of this document, there are also some general links to help you get settled in at Fairfield.

Note that although the policies below were written for a pre-Covid world, they are still in effect. Links about how about to transform classes for Fall 2020 can be found [here](#) (the links require a netID to access). Updated information regarding Fall 2020 reopening plans and the University's Covid-19 response can be found [here](#).

### THE SYLLABUS

University policy is explicit on the matter of course syllabi: In all classes, students are to be provided a course syllabus setting out the course outline, readings, and grading policy including the number of tests, method of evaluation, and weight of each evaluation.

Given the exigencies of the current pandemic, faculty should post Fall 2020 syllabi and information about access to other course materials on the Blackboard sites for their classes. Materials should be posted no later than September 1, but faculty are encouraged to post their materials earlier in the summer.

### Specific Policies regarding Required Syllabus Content

#### Class Attendance

*Policy:* All students are expected to attend every regularly scheduled class session. The impact of attendance on grading is specified in the syllabus for each course. Unexcused absences may be reported to the appropriate academic dean. Faculty members should have a policy for dealing with student absence on the syllabus for each course. If a student will miss a class due to an illness/injury, the professor should be notified according to the policy on the syllabus. If a student will miss an exam, quiz or in class presentation due to illness/injury or another type of emergency, the professor should be contacted beforehand. A faculty member may request that the student provide verification of the absence from a health care provider. It is within the purview of the faculty member to determine when or whether a student absence will be excused.

#### *Comments:*

In the current context, faculty are encouraged to be quite flexible regarding attendance at synchronous class components.

If a faculty member considers it necessary to seek verification from a health care provider (e.g., the Student Health Center, Counseling & Psychological Services, or the student's independent medical provider), then the faculty member should address the request to the student and the

student must consent to having the health care provider disclose information as to the student's treatment. Neither the Student Health Center nor Counseling & Psychological Services is able to excuse a student from class, examinations or other class-based requirements; the ultimate decision to excuse a student from class/class work rests with the faculty member. On occasion, the Academic Dean's Office will advise professors that a student has notified the University that he or she will be absent for a specific period of time. This notification is provided as a courtesy and does not constitute a verification or excuse (unless it is determined that the student's condition constitutes a health or safety emergency, in which case the Office of the Dean of Students reserves discretion to restrict a student from attending class). Students who have Covid-19 or who have been directly exposed to Covid will be quarantined and thus excused from in-class meetings.

### **Policy on Released Time or Excused Absences for Students**

A student participating in a university-sponsored event has the right to be excused without penalty or grade jeopardy from exams, student presentations, attendance, and other classroom events during that time, provided the student makes up the required work in the fashion mutually agreed upon by the professor and the student.

Students participating in such university-sponsored events will be allowed to make up any major exams, tests, or quizzes which they miss in a course, when they are involved in a scheduled event, provided that participating students, or the faculty moderator, inform all their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, or as soon thereafter as possible, once scheduling is confirmed.

University sponsored events covered by this policy are defined as follows:

1. Athletics
  - a. all varsity sporting events; to include post-season tournaments;
  - b. all club sporting events
2. Others
  - a. concerts, plays, or other group performances where the absence of a member would detract from the overall performance.

Not included in this policy are clubs formed on a departmental basis such as Biology Club, Psychology Club, etc.

### **Course-Related Field Trips**

The provisions for make-up of missed work outlined in the policy stated above on released time for students do not apply to absences due to course-related field trips.

### **Policies regarding Final Examinations**

1. Each instructor should be given wide latitude, so as to provide for a degree of creativity and flexibility in how the students will be tested. The form of evaluation should be in keeping with the goals and purposes of the course.
2. In every case the form of the final, end-of-semester comprehensive evaluation (such as written examination, take-home, oral exam, paper, or a combination of these) must appear on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester.

3. No form of final evaluation is to be due prior to the date assigned by the Registrar for that course's final examination. [The final exam schedule for undergraduate classes can be found under the Registrar's link in my.fairfield.]
4. The final comprehensive evaluation should reflect integration of course materials discussed during the semester.

### **Weighting of Course Components for Grading Purposes**

There is no single formula for the weighting of course components, but in all classes, students should receive feedback on their work at multiple points during the semester. In classes for which the final assessment is an in-class examination, that exam should not count for more than 1/3 of the course grade.

### **Additional Final Exam Policies**

Students are not required to take more than two exams in any final exam day. To activate this policy, a student should contact his or her academic Dean's office. The Dean's office will verify that more than two exams are in fact scheduled, and work with the student and instructor of the second of the scheduled exams to find a mutually agreeable makeup time for that exam. Reading days may not be used for rescheduled exams.

Final examinations (blue books, etc.) and term papers or other written assignments used by the professor for determining the final course grade are to be retained by the professor until the end of the following term, so as to be available for student inspection.

### **Suggestions:**

A well-designed syllabus can eliminate many student misunderstandings about the instructor's expectations for performance in the course. It is recommended (and in some cases, required) that all of the following items be included in the syllabus in a manner appropriate for the learning environment, e.g., lecture, seminar, laboratory, clinic, studio, fieldwork, or independent study:

1. Basic information: Course number, title, and credit hours
2. Course goals and objectives including cognitive and/or behavioral outcomes and the relation of assignments to the proposed outcomes. Some faculty include explicit reference to the relevant objectives from the IDEA evaluation form (see below).
3. List of required (and recommended) course readings and materials
4. Assignment schedule including disciplinary topics, reading and writing assignments, due dates, required out-of-class work, e.g., field trips, group projects, review sessions, and examination dates.
4. Evaluation criteria including the components of the final grade, weights of various grades, the relationship (if any) of class participation and attendance to the final grade, grading criteria, and other information relevant to the evaluation process. (See above for policies regarding the final assessment and the weighting of course components.)
5. Instructor policies including policies on attendance, excused absences (see above) late work, group projects, requests for extensions, missed exams, make-up exams, materials allowed at examinations, and retention of materials submitted to meet course requirements.

6. Academic Honesty statement including a definition of behavior that would constitute misconduct in the course (see below), and an invitation to students to seek advice if they have any doubts about actions or procedures which might constitute academic misconduct e.g., plagiarism.
7. Statement indicating that the instructor will work with the Office of Accessibility ([ooa@fairfield.edu](mailto:ooa@fairfield.edu), ext. 2615) to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented needs.
8. Instructor information and resources including office address and phone number, email address, preferred way to contact instructor, office hours, course or lab assistant, and tutoring availability.
9. Student evaluation statement indicating the expectation that all students will participate and complete the IDEA course evaluation at the end of the semester.
10. Statement about the possibility of changes in class format/structure due to the pandemic.

## **Other relevant policies and information**

### **Academic Honesty**

All members of the Fairfield University community share responsibility for establishing and maintaining appropriate standards of academic honesty and integrity. As such, faculty members have an obligation to set high standards of honesty and integrity through personal example and the learning communities they create. Such integrity is fundamental to, and an inherent part of, a Jesuit education, in which teaching and learning are based on mutual respect. It is further expected that students will follow these standards and encourage others to do so.

Students are sometimes unsure of what constitutes academic dishonesty. In all academic work, students are expected to submit materials that are their own and to include attribution for any ideas or language that is not their own. Examples of dishonest conduct include but are not limited to:

- Falsification of academic records or grades, including but not limited to any act of falsifying information on an official academic document, grade report, class registration document or transcript.
- Cheating, such as copying examination answers from materials such as crib notes or another student's paper.
- Collusion, such as working with another person or persons when independent work is prescribed.
- Inappropriate use of notes.
- Falsification or fabrication of an assigned project, data, results, or sources.
- Giving, receiving, offering, or soliciting information in examinations.
- Using previously prepared materials in examinations, tests, or quizzes.
- Destruction or alteration of another student's work.
- Submitting the same paper or report for assignments in more than one course without the prior written permission of each instructor.
- Appropriating information, ideas, or the language of other people or writers and submitting it as one's own to satisfy the requirements of a course, commonly known as plagiarism. Plagiarism constitutes theft and deceit. Assignments (compositions, term papers, computer programs, etc.) acquired either in part or in whole from commercial

sources, publications, students, or other sources and submitted as one's own original work will be considered plagiarism.

- Unauthorized recording, sale, or use of lectures and other instructional materials.

In the event of such dishonesty, professors are to award a grade of zero for the project, paper, or examination in question, and may record an F for the course itself. When appropriate, expulsion may be recommended. A notation of the event is made in the student's file in the academic dean's office. The student will receive a copy.

## **Honor Code**

Fairfield University's primary purpose is the pursuit of academic excellence. This is possible only in an atmosphere where discovery and communication of knowledge are marked by scrupulous, unqualified honesty. Therefore, it is expected that all students taking classes at the University adhere to the following Honor Code:

"I understand that any violation of academic integrity wounds the entire community and undermines the trust upon which the discovery and communication of knowledge depends. Therefore, as a member of the Fairfield University community, I hereby pledge to uphold and maintain these standards of academic honesty and integrity."

## **Grades**

Academic grades are defined as follows:

- A -- Outstanding achievement
- B -- Superior level of achievement
- C -- Acceptable level of achievement with course material
- D -- Minimal achievement, but passing
- F -- unacceptable level of achievement; course must be repeated to obtain credit

A "plus" (+) may be added to grades of B or C to indicate work performed at the top of that range.

A "minus" (-) may be added to grades A, B, or C to indicate work performed below that range.

*Incompletes.* An Incomplete is issued when, due to an emergency situation such as a documented illness, a student arranges with the course instructor to complete some of the course requirements after the term ends. All course work must be completed within 30 days after the beginning of the next regular semester. Any requests to extend the 30-day time period for completing an Incomplete require approval by the appropriate Dean.

*Withdrawal Policy.* Students who wish to withdraw from a course after the initial add/drop period may do so through the end of the tenth week of a traditional semester provided that (a) the student's academic dean, in consultation with the course instructor, finds withdrawal to be in the student's best interest (note that a student must maintain 12 credit hours for full-time status). After the tenth week in the semester, course withdrawal will only be granted in highly unusual circumstances, such as documented health emergency. Withdrawal after the tenth week will not be permitted simply to prevent receipt of a grade that might not meet the student's satisfaction.

## **Academic Grievance**

Academic grievances can be procedural appeals, academic honesty appeals, or quality of work appeals. The appeal must be initiated by the end of the subsequent fall or spring semester after the event that is the subject of the grievance. The grievance procedure includes informal and formal processes, all of which are spelled out in the [Journal of Record](#), Appendix 21.

## **Evaluation of Teaching**

Fairfield University uses the IDEA form and system for online student evaluations and a separate narrative assessment conducted on paper for every course. All Faculty are contacted by the Registrar's office via email throughout the semester with prompts to guide them through the process. In preparing your syllabus, you may want to consider which 3-5 of the 12 IDEA objectives are most relevant to your course, and make sure that your assignments and assessments are designed accordingly. More detailed information can be found [here](#).

## **Missed Classes and Weather Delays/Closings**

All instructors should begin and end their classes on time as a courtesy to their students and fellow instructors. When, for any valid reason, they are unable to meet their classes, they should notify the appropriate Dean and, if possible, make arrangements for conducting the class.

In the event of inclement weather, when the University remains open, faculty members should make every reasonable effort to meet their regularly scheduled classes. The final judgment on what is reasonable effort, and therefore whether to hold class, resides with the individual faculty member. Faculty members should try to notify their students of a decision to cancel class in a timely manner.

Note: Scheduled classroom meetings should move to zoom if on-campus classes are cancelled due to weather (see below) or other circumstances .

## **Inclement Weather Notification**

The operations and activities of a residential, comprehensive university, such as Fairfield University, necessitate that the campus remain open with essential services available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Therefore, the University never fully closes or ceases operations. The default position in the event of inclement weather is that classes and all other activities will continue as scheduled, and cancellations or delays will be kept to an absolute minimum. Students, faculty, and staff should plan in advance accordingly.

In the event of extraordinary inclement weather conditions that affect the normal operations of the University, the information regarding the changes will be disseminated in three ways:

- 1 Outgoing message on the University's main line: (203) 254-4000 or ext. 4000
- 2 Posting on the University's website, [www.fairfield.edu](http://www.fairfield.edu)
- 3 Utilization of the StagAlert emergency notification system

## **Additional information and links to help you get settled in at Fairfield**

The first thing you'll want to do, even before you get to campus, is [claim your netID](#). That will allow you to set up your email and access [my.Fairfield](#), where there are a variety of useful links.

The Registrar's link will take you to academic calendars and "faculty self-service," which is where you can find your class lists and class locations, among other things. The Human Resources link has pay stubs under "employee self-service" and information about benefits if applicable. Your netID is also your password to our learning management system, Blackboard, either [directly](#) or through my.Fairfield.

You'll also want to get to know [Academic Computing](#). There you'll find information about Blackboard, other software teaching tools, iPads, and more.

With regard to physically settling in, once you're on campus,

- you'll need to get your ID (stagcard). The stagcard office is currently working on an online process for new employees. [This page](#) will be updated with the details once that process is finalized.
- your department chair or program assistant are the people to talk to about office space.
- information about car registration and parking is [here](#).
- for full time faculty, here's what you need to know about [relocation benefits](#).