



Course Management: Basic Responsibilities

The teaching responsibilities of all faculty members are laid out in the [CUFA](#) and [CUPFA](#) collective agreements (articles 16 and 9 respectively). These duties include: preparing, organizing and presenting course materials; being available to students outside class hours; directing and evaluating student progress in courses by grading and providing feedback on assignments, portfolios or examinations; invigilating or being available for consultation during any examinations (including supplemental examinations); ensuring, within reason and without infringements to academic freedom, that Department and University standards are maintained in the preparation of course outlines and course descriptions; and engaging with the Chair and the department around pedagogical matters. Additional teaching responsibilities may include student advising, supervising tutorials or independent study courses or seminars, and supervising internships and research.

The Faculty of Fine Arts further interprets these basic responsibilities to include the following:

- Fostering a respectful learning environment.
- Clearly communicating to students how they may meet with you outside of class time, whether by appointment or through fixed office hours. Professors should make every effort to provide alternative times to meet those who are unavailable during regularly scheduled office hours.
- Being accessible to students directly and not solely through the mediation of a TA.
- Responding in a timely manner to communications from students, your Chair, program director or department staff.
- Regularly checking and responding to your university email account.
- Adhering to the requirements of the [CTL Syllabus Guide](#).
- Clearly articulating expectations and grading criteria for all evaluated components of the course.
- Providing marks for at least one graded assignment or exam no less than a week before the DISC date (for 3-credit courses) or before the winter break (for 6-credit courses). If you are employing an assessment model that does not depend on discrete graded assignments (e.g. a cumulative portfolio assessment), assign students a provisional grade based on their work thus far.
- Providing constructive feedback, oriented towards student learning and improvement.
- Regularly reviewing and updating course content and approaches to ensure engagement and inclusion.
- Being aware of the academic regulations that appear in the [Undergraduate](#) and [Graduate](#) Calendars.

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Course Management: Best Practices

Setting the Tone

Take a few minutes at the beginning of the semester to discuss the values and norms of your classroom, and let students know about the [Code of Rights and Responsibilities](#) and [other campus resources](#) that uphold a safe, civil, and inclusive university environment. If best practices for discussion and frameworks for mutual respect are established early, they can more easily be engaged if moments of classroom tension arise.

Keeping in Touch

Your course outline should provide your full contact information and availabilities. Encourage students to meet with you; getting together can answer a lot of questions and avoid problems. If something prevents you from keeping planned in person office hours, post the information on Moodle and arrange to have a note put on your door.

Ensure that all announcements or handouts are also posted on Moodle. Depending on students to get information from others in the course isn't the best strategy; students may not know others in the class, and the information they get in this way isn't always reliable.

Communicating Expectations Clearly

Consult the guidelines from the [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#) before crafting your syllabus and post the syllabus through Moodle once it is complete. Indicate all due dates and your policy on extensions and on late work.

Establish your expectations for classroom or online (n)etiquette. If teaching online, please note that there are many valid reasons why students may choose to leave their cameras off during a lecture; they should not be penalized or pressured in this regard.

If you have an attendance requirement, state this clearly, inform students of your reasons, and keep attendance records.

If you plan to have field trips, special meetings or tutorials, announce them early, especially if they will involve time outside class hours. Normally, you should not expect students to attend meetings outside the times scheduled for your course. Ending your class on time is also important, as students often have tightly-scheduled classes or work commitments.

The undergraduate calendar stipulates that during the fall and winter terms, no tests or examinations are permitted in the final week of classes. Any exceptions must be approved in advance by the Fine Arts Faculty Council.

If you are teaching a 6-credit course, it is not generally appropriate to assign homework during

the winter break. The permission of the Chair should be obtained if there are exceptional circumstances that make such work essential to the pedagogical objectives of the class.

Changes to Expectations

The syllabus is considered your contract with the students. It should only be changed in extenuating circumstances. If you do have to change course requirements, test dates or deadlines, explain why and endeavour to ensure that no one will be adversely affected by the change. Most students understand when changes have to be made for pedagogical reasons or because of circumstances beyond your control, but they feel unfairly treated when they perceive changes to be arbitrary. Any amendments should be made in writing, distributed to students and posted on Moodle.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Talk to your students about academic integrity and explain plagiarism, both at the beginning of the course and again during crunch time. Concordia has [information available](#) to students to better understand and uphold academic integrity. Because plagiarism is often caused by an inability to manage time effectively, please take a few minutes to discuss the importance of good time management and make students aware of the time management workshops available to them through the [Student Success Centre](#). If you do detect plagiarism, advise the Associate Dean, Academic Curriculum and Pedagogy, as soon as possible. In order to ensure consistency, faculty members cannot impose their own sanctions but must refer the matter to the Dean's Office.

Letting Students Know Where They Stand

Give students some feedback on where they stand as early as possible during the semester so they will quickly know what to expect, and can seek support if they need it. You will also gain valuable information about your students. Every year, many students submit student requests for 'late withdrawal' when they find out after the deadline they're not doing well. These requests may be denied.

Evaluation

Try to spread out the assignments so that the whole semester is not dependent on one exam or on one essay.

Return submitted work promptly, and within 2 weeks whenever possible.

Explain your assessment criteria as fully and as clearly as possible, inviting students to discuss their questions about evaluation with you early in the term, and reviewing your expectations when they are working on assignments.

If you are using an assessment scheme that is not based on discrete, graded assignments (e.g. a cumulative portfolio evaluation) take extra time to ensure that students understand the assessment structure and criteria.

Use a grading rubric to clearly define your criteria and standards for assignments. Grading rubrics help students to succeed, because they can see what skills, knowledge and attitudes you are evaluating *and* benefit from observable descriptions of performance at different levels. There are many different kinds of rubrics and the Centre for Teaching and Learning can help you devise one that remains true to the creative practices and values of Fine Arts pedagogies including creation and performance contexts.

Where possible, implement anonymous marking to minimize unconscious bias.

If class participation figures in your grading scheme, explain clearly how you will evaluate it. It is important to let students know how they're doing and, if they're not doing well, how they can improve. Ten percent for participation can make a big difference in a grade—a participation mark shouldn't be an end of term surprise.

If you mark using percentages, indicate how these will relate to a final letter grade and include this information on your course outline. There is no university-wide formula for converting percentages to letter grades, but some units have adopted an internal standard so please consult your unit.

Grading Norms

Consult with your chair to inform yourself about the norms within your unit. The undergraduate academic calendar stipulates that A-range grades are “outstanding”, B-range grades are “very good”, C-range grades are “satisfactory”, D-range grades are a “marginal pass,” and F is a “failure”. The Faculty of Fine Arts encourages the use of a full range of grading options to offset grade inflation, particularly at the undergraduate level.

Undergraduates must maintain a GPA of 2.0 (or C) to remain in acceptable standing in their program. At the graduate level, students must maintain a GPA of 3.0 (or B) to remain in good standing in their program, and they will be withdrawn if they receive more than one C grade.

Group Projects and Peer Assessment

If group projects are part of your course requirements, clearly state how grades will be assessed. Have a plan to deal with conflict between group members. Inform students that conflict does sometimes arise and advise them as to what they should do if this occurs. Ideally, your instructions should be in writing. You may want to consider a strategy for students who are unable to find a group to work with or who are asked to leave their group. If peer assessment is part of your course, this should also be clearly explained at the outset and indicated in the syllabus.

Crafting effective feedback

Receiving feedback can be a very positive or a very negative moment for a learner; it can drive the formative process or completely derail it. Here are 6 key features of effective feedback. The [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#) also offers a workshop that can help you apply them.

| Key Features | Feedback Goal |
|----------------|--|
| Criteria-based | The feedback is clearly connected to your evaluation criteria (which are transparent and known to learners). |
| Informative | The feedback explicitly informs learners on what is good and what needs improvement rather than praises, judges or simply gives advice. |
| Actionable | The feedback gives learners the means to <i>do</i> something tangible to improve. |
| Balanced | The feedback begins with a positive remark (that is genuine & personal) to affirm what the learner is doing correctly, and follows with the critique (that is not personal, but focused on the work), then directs them towards improvement. |
| Targeted | The feedback focuses on a 'specific' criteria/area rather than dealing with EVERYTHING (to avoid overwhelming the learner). |
| Timely | The feedback should be given to the learner as soon as possible while the work they undertook is still fresh in their minds. |
| Mindful | The feedback is delivered with a positive and productive tone |

Concordia Centre for Teaching and Learning and the ASCD

Papers in French

All students have the right to submit written assignments and examinations in either English or French at their discretion. The same rigor is expected in terms of academic writing in both French and English submissions. If you are unable to evaluate written assignments in French, please consult your chair to plan for this eventuality. If you plan on asking a colleague to read student submissions, discuss this with the class at the outset and explain any possible delays or drawbacks that may result.

Grade Submission

It is important to get your grades in on time. Late grade submissions can result in students falling into failed standing and being de-registered, can disrupt access to financial aid, and can prevent them from receiving the mention they should at graduation. If circumstances beyond your control will result in your grades being late, let the department coordinator know.

For Fall term courses, grades must be submitted no later than three days after the commencement of the January term. For Winter and Summer terms: grades for potential graduating students are due 3 calendar days following the last scheduled class, critique, performance or exam. For all other students, grades are due 7 calendar days following the last scheduled class, critique, performance or exam.

Re-evaluation

All students have the right to see their course work and to ask for any component of the course to be re-evaluated according to Concordia's [Academic Re-evaluation Procedures](#). For this to occur: "Instructors are responsible for the preservation of course work that has not been returned to students as follows: until December 31 of the next calendar year for Fall-term courses; until April 30 of the next calendar year for Fall/Winter and Winter-term courses; and until August 31 of the next calendar year for Summer-term courses." If a dispute arises, your evaluation should be clear and defensible to both the student and a third party. Likewise, a re-evaluation decision must be supported by a reasoned report.

Participation grades cannot be submitted for re-evaluation, however you may be asked to explain how you calculated the grade (i.e. attendance, contribution to class discussion, engagement with material). If your assessments are heavily based on performances or other ephemeral work, consider whether a record can be preserved for future reference.

Confidentiality

Students' grades and personal information are confidential and should not be shared with others without permission. The [Policy Concerning the Protection of Personal Information](#) outlines how Quebec's privacy act applies to the Concordia context and [Guidelines](#) on the Application of the Act Respecting Access provide useful Q & A sections.

Medical information is also confidential. If you require a physician's certificate to consider granting an accommodation to a student, ask to be told what effects a student's medical condition might have on their work in your course, rather than asking for diagnoses or personal and potentially sensitive information. If you're unsure about a particular situation, the [University's Health Services](#) is a good resource.

For reasons of security and confidentiality, leaving graded work in a box outside your office or in an envelope on your door is not appropriate. If work is to be left in your department, make sure that someone will be there to receive it or that there is a locked box in which to leave papers.

Accessibility

Faculty members must implement any accommodations recommended by the [Access Centre for Students with Disabilities \(ACSD\)](#), and may contact the Centre for any questions or concerns.

The ACSD provides [online instructional modules](#) that will show you how to create class materials in accessible formats, identify accessible web resources, and develop inclusive learning environments through strategies such as [Universal Design for Learning](#).

Please take care to preserve the privacy of students registered with the Access Centre, avoiding in-class questions or statements that might publicly identify these students.

Student Absences and Missed Deadlines

The university recognizes that students may experience unexpected physical or psychological health concerns that limit their ability to attend class or submit coursework on time. [The short-term absence form enables students request a short-term medical accommodation without documentation like a medical note.](#) The form is only applicable for absences of 5 days or less that do not fall during the exam period. It can be submitted a total of twice across the fall and winter, and once during the summer. It cannot be used for absences that result in missing coursework or deadline worth 30 per cent of their final grade or more. You will be automatically notified of your student's absence, and they have the responsibility of contacting you within two consecutive days of their return, to clarify how they should fulfill any outstanding responsibilities.

If students do not complete the short-term absence form, or are not eligible to use it, your own late policies and penalties will apply. Because the form is new, many students are unaware of it. Please explain the process to them at the beginning of term.

Your policies should reasonably anticipate unforeseeable circumstances (e.g. the broken alarm, bus strike, snowstorm) and life events (e.g. illness, death in the family). Invite students to inform you if they need special consideration. Talk about student responsibility in the course. A student should not be penalized for a compelling reason and their request for an accommodation should be duly considered. At the same time, you have the right to know that their rationale is valid when it falls outside the scope of the short-term absence form.

For absences or extensions due to religious reasons, apply the [Policy for Students on the Accommodation of Religious Observances.](#)

Disclosures and Students in Distress

If a student requests an accommodation due to personal distress, keep in mind that it may be the first time they are disclosing their experience to anyone. Take a moment to inquire whether they have support and offer your assistance in connecting them with the appropriate university [services.](#)

If you are concerned about a student in distress, [detailed guidance](#) is available.

If you are uncertain how to guide a student through a particularly difficult situation it is okay to tell them you will get back to them later that day or the next, and then reach out to your Chair for information. The Associate Dean, Curriculum and Pedagogy, can also offer advice.

Difficult Knowledge

If your course material and learning objectives entail engagement with difficult histories and knowledges, inform students in advance. Such material, and your approach to it, should be

carefully framed and contextualized. Are there options to minimize exposure for those who may have personal experience of related trauma? The Centre for Teaching and Learning can assist you to develop appropriate pedagogical strategies and build your syllabus. The [Equity Office](#), the [Office of Indigenous Directions](#), the [Black Perspectives Office](#), and the [Sexual Assault Resource Centre](#) can also offer guidance.

Do not repeat racial or other slurs, and avoid difficult histories or sensitive topics if they are not directly related to your pedagogical objectives.

Sexual Violence: “Start with SARC”

If a student discloses an experience of sexual violence to you, please ensure that they are aware of Concordia’s [Sexual Assault Resource Centre](#) and offer to facilitate a contact for them if they wish. The centre is not limited to assault but can assist with any type of sexual violence. It is staffed by highly trained personnel and offers a single-point-of-contact service to ensure that students do not have to tell their stories multiple times in order to access accommodations. Sexual violence is widespread in our society; when planning course material please be mindful that one or more students in the class has probably been directly affected by it.

Inclusive Teaching

Students learn best when they feel equally valued and see themselves represented in the education they receive. Guest speakers, readings, videos and podcasts can all help bring a diversity of perspectives into your classroom. Avoid asking students to speak on behalf of their group identity or history, as this practice places a heavy responsibility on students and may assume a knowledge or an experience they do not have.

Respect students’ [stated names](#) and pronouns and [mention your own pronouns](#) if you are comfortable doing so. Communicate flexibility and responsiveness to the needs and experiences of students with disabilities.

Assistance in expanding your curriculum and building inclusive classrooms is available through [one-on-one consultations](#) at the Centre for Teaching and Learning. You can contact Mel Riley Case for input on inclusive pedagogies, Donna Goodleaf for decolonial approaches, or Alicia Cundell on Universal Design for Learning. A range of [specialized offices](#) also provide guidance to faculty.

Student Behaviour

If a student's behavior in your course is unreasonable, talk to them about it. A quick discussion can often resolve the problem. If you feel you need assistance or want to discuss the situation, talk to your Chair, or contact any of the following: the Associate Dean, Faculty Relations and Inclusion; the [Office of Rights and Responsibilities](#); the [Ombuds Office](#).

Complaints

If a student raises a concern with you, it is important that it be appropriately addressed. The Faculty of Fine Arts has issued [guidelines](#) to help faculty members respond in these situations.

If a student objects to something you have said, please listen to their concerns. You do not need to respond immediately; it is fine to say that you will think about their comment and follow up with them next class. Your chair, the Associate Dean, Faculty Relations and Inclusion, or the Centre for Teaching and Learning are available to listen and advise.

Assessment of Teaching

Course evaluations occur online for CUFA members; you and your students will be automatically informed when the evaluations are ready. For CUPFA members evaluations remain on paper; you will receive an envelope with instruction on how to administer them in class. To improve participation rates, all members may wish to spend a few minutes in class explaining how the process works, how it is used by committees and how important it is for an individual faculty member's progression through the ranks.

Informal options for [mid-term feedback](#) have also been shown to improve the teacher/student relationship. You can administer your own informal classroom assessment through Moodle or by asking students to anonymously write down what is helping and what is hindering their learning. When you do this, discuss the results with students so they know how you plan to address the feedback.

Managing TAs

If you are assigned a teaching assistant, it is your responsibility to go over the workload form with them in detail and assign 2 hours of training (consult your department to determine whether it is participating in FoFA's training program). Ask your TA to let you know if they are dedicating more hours to a task than allocated by their contract. You may be able to offer useful tips, or it may be necessary to revise the workload form. TAs cannot be expected to work in excess of their contracted hours or beyond the end date of their contract.

Graduate Supervision

The needs and norms of graduate supervision are outlined in separate [guidelines](#) issued by the school of graduate studies. Please review these prior to accepting any graduate students.

Professional Boundaries

As we mentor and assist our students, the boundaries between personal and professional relations can easily become blurred, creating conflicts of interest and placing both students and faculty in vulnerable positions. Giving some advance thought to where and how you will draw your professional boundaries will help you avoid these problems and will benefit your students in

the long term. The Associate Dean, Faculty Relations and Inclusion is available for consultation.

Consensual sexual or romantic relations between instructors and students constitute a conflict of interest. They are strongly discouraged. Please read the [guidelines](#).

eConcordia

[eConcordia](#) is the gateway for online credited courses at Concordia University outside of the context of emergency remote teaching. If you are the instructor of record for an e-concordia course developed by another faculty member, please record a video introducing yourself to students, explaining your role and the larger pedagogical infrastructure of the course, including the role of TAs.

Other tips for a better class experience

Spend a few minutes before or after class to speak with students and help them to navigate the university's system.

If the size of your class allows it, learn your students' names. Research has shown that this simple gesture can make a huge difference in how students feel and how engaged they are in class. You can also foster engagement by helping students get to know each other through break-out groups or pair-and-share techniques.

Try to help undergraduate students understand and, if possible, become involved in research (by using capstone projects, for example). Tell them why research is so fascinating and develop a strategy for sharing information on special events, projects, competitions, grants and awards that may enhance their learning experience.

Finally, please remember that most students are young, sometimes still immature and often quite impressionable. Be compassionate. Try to guide them. Most students look up to faculty members and consider us as potential mentors.