**Conduct and Planning of Courses AA/PPS No. 02.03.01**

**Issue No. 2**

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Sr. Reviewer: Associate Provost**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

*Texas State University is committed to hiring qualified faculty responsible for effectively developing and implementing courses and syllabi that meet the teaching and instructional components of the university mission.*

1. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION** 
   1. This policy contains information concerning the conduct and planning of courses, using “instructor” and “faculty member” as interchangeable terms.
2. **ROLE OF THE INSTRUCTOR**
   1. Texas State University hires qualified faculty as instructors of record to meet the teaching component of its mission. These instructors of record are qualified to teach assigned courses, have overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the syllabus, and have the right to evaluate student performance and assign grades.
   2. The [Faculty Handbook](https://www.provost.txst.edu/resources-faculty/faculty-handbook.html) affirms that faculty members enjoy full academic freedom, including the right to freely discuss the subject matter of their area of specialization, as well as academic responsibilities, including:
   3. maintaining competence in their fields;
   4. conscientiously executing assigned academic duties;
   5. not allowing the exercise of academic freedom to interfere with the performance of their academic responsibilities; and
   6. avoiding classroom discussion of controversial material not related to their areas of specialization.

02.03 Faculty members shall not, without approval of the president, or designee, collect money from students.

02.04 Faculty members at the rank of lecturer or above may not accept pay for extra instruction, teaching, or tutoring from students registered at the university. With prior written approval of the department chair or school director, teaching assistants and instructional assistants may accept pay from students for extra class instruction, coaching, or tutoring, but only in courses or sections of courses for which they have no instructional connection.

02.05 Faculty members interested in information related to classroom civility or disruption should refer to [AA/PPS No. 02.03.02](http://policies.txstate.edu/division-policies/academic-affairs/02-03-02.html), Conduct of Classes.

02.06 Faculty members are obligated to maintain confidentiality with regard to students’ educational records (see [UPPS No. 01.04.31](http://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/01-04-31.html), Access to Student Records Pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and the[Faculty Handbook](https://www.provost.txst.edu/resources-faculty/faculty-handbook.html)). Faculty members shall reveal information about their students’ education records only to school officials with legitimate educational interests, that is, those officials who need the information to fulfill their professional responsibility. Faculty members may reveal student information to parents if:

* 1. the student has authorized parental viewing of the records; or
  2. the parent demonstrates that the child is a dependent for tax purposes by completing the [Affidavit for Parental Access to Student Records](http://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/provost-vpaa/office-pps-files/pps4/PPS4-01AttB.doc).

\*02.07 Numerous offices offer resources to faculty members for planning and conducting their courses. They include but are not limited to the Alkek Library; Instructional Technologies Support; Technology Resources; the Office of Disability Services; the Office of Distance and Extended Learning; the Education Abroad Office; the Office of Faculty Development; the Testing, Evaluation, and Measurement Center; and the University Writing Center.

02.08 [AA/PPS No. 02.03.30](https://policies.txstate.edu/division-policies/academic-affairs/02-03-30.html), Faculty-Authored Teaching Material, describes the authorization process for Texas State faculty to require teaching and instructional materials in their courses that are prepared by Texas State faculty and for which students purchase or pay a fee.

1. **ATTENDANCE POLICIES**
   1. Class attendance is essential to both learning and student performance. The university strongly encourages student attendance. Specific absence policies are generally determined by the academic departments or schools or, if no departmental or school policy exists, by the instructor. However, the university recommends that only the following be considered as valid excuses for an absence:
      * + 1. injury or illness requiring treatment at home or in a hospital including any temporary medical condition (e.g., pregnancy);
          2. death of a family member;
          3. required participation in a university-sponsored activity (see [UPPS No. 02.06.03](http://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/02-06-03.html), Excused Absence Policy Related to University-Sponsored Events);
          4. a field trip or off-campus activity required for a non-elective course essential to the student's degree program;
          5. required participation in active military service (see [UPPS No. 02.06.03](http://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/02-06-03.html), Excused Absence Policy Related to University-Sponsored Events); and
          6. official religious holy days (see [UPPS No. 02.06.01](http://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/02-06-01.html), Student Absences for Religious Holy Days).

03.02 Faculty members are required to certify their census rosters (fourth class day for summer semesters and twelfth class day for fall and spring semesters). These records are permanently retained by the Office of the University Registrar.

Special care should be taken to certify rosters for courses where faculty and students have not yet had face-to-face interaction by the census date. These may include courses taught via online or hybrid instruction. In these cases, certification of the roster will require documentation of active academic engagement by the student in the course by the census date.

The list below will serve as definition of academic engagement:

a. active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student’s course of study that is defined by:

1) the institution in accordance with any applicable requirements of its state or accrediting agency;

2) includes, but is not limited to,

(a) attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically, or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students;

(b) submitting an academic assignment such as an assessment, test, survey, or discussion when the assignment is graded and related to the academic subject of the course;

(c) interacting with instructor about academic matters;

(d) participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction; and

(e) participating in a study group, group project, or online discussion that is assigned by the institution.

3) does not include, for example:

(a) logging into an online class or tutorial without any further participation;

(b) participating in the institution’s meal plan;

(c) living in institutional housing; or

(d) participating in academic counseling or advisement.

03.03 Instructors are encouraged to announce their attendance policies early in the semester. Attendance policies should also be specified on each course syllabus.

03.04 Further information concerning attendance policies is included in the [Faculty Handbook](https://www.provost.txst.edu/resources-faculty/faculty-handbook.html), under the heading "Student Attendance Policy."

03.05 Self-paced, correspondence courses are not subject to attendance requirements.

1. **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS AND PREREQUISITES**
   1. The instructor is expected to ensure that each course syllabus is designed in accordance with the description provided in the appropriate catalog. The catalog course description should appear in the course syllabus (see [AA/PPS No. 02.01.01](http://policies.txstate.edu/division-policies/academic-affairs/02-01-01.html), Academic Credit Courses: Additions, Changes, and Deletions, for policies regarding academic courses).

* 1. If a student refuses to drop a course for which they do not have the required prerequisites, the department chair or school director may drop them from the course.

1. **CORE CURRICULUM COURSES**
   1. Core curriculum courses are intended to provide general education for undergraduate students. In teaching them, instructors should emphasize information and skills valuable to all students, regardless of their majors. Instructors should also emphasize aspects of the course that are related to other core curriculum courses.
   2. Instructors in core curriculum courses have a particularly important responsibility to identify academic weaknesses such as deficiencies in writing, critical thinking, or mathematical skills and to refer students to the appropriate agencies for assistance.
2. **GRADES**
   1. Grade symbols are defined in the [undergraduate](http://mycatalog.txstate.edu/undergraduate/) and [graduate catalogs](http://mycatalog.txstate.edu/graduate/) under the heading "Grade Symbols," and in the [Faculty Handbook](https://www.provost.txst.edu/resources-faculty/faculty-handbook.html), under the heading "Grades," in the section entitled "Policies Relating to the Teaching Function." This subheading includes information from those documents, as well as other university policies.
   2. Instructors are encouraged to frequently inform students of their academic progress during the semester.
3. GRADE CHANGE PROCEDURES

07.01 All grade change actions are implemented through a web application managed by the Office of the University Registrar (see [departmental resources](https://www.registrar.txst.edu/faculty-staff/dept-resources/admins.html)).

07.02 Grades may be changed for the following reasons:

* 1. a grade of "I" or "PR" may be changed upon completion of course requirements;
  2. if the instructor made a computing or recording error; or
  3. if the instructor acquires information unavailable when the original grade was recorded. Such information may include proof that a student had cheated or valid reasons for the recording of an "I" grade (see [G/PPS No. 02.12](https://policies.txst.edu/division-policies/global/02-12.html), Grades and Changes of Grades for more information).

07.03 Students who wish to protest a grade earned in a course should first discuss the grade with the instructor. If no resolution is reached, the student may appeal the grade to the department chair. If no satisfactory conclusion is reached at this level, the student may appeal to the college dean, whose decision is final. A student’s appeal for change of grade must be filed not later than two years after the grade is issued.

08. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

08.01 In accordance with university policy and federal law, all members of the university community are responsible for ensuring that students are not discriminated against because of a [disability](http://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/provost-vpaa/office-pps-files/pps4/PPS4-01AttC.doc). To accomplish this goal, reasonable and appropriate academic accommodations may be necessary for qualified students with disabilities. The Office of Disability Services will coordinate with faculty members to facilitate necessary accommodations for students with disabilities.

**09. INDEPENDENT STUDY, TOPICS, AND PROBLEMS COURSE PROCEDURES**

* 1. While they are not obligated to do so, instructors may teach independent study, topics, or problems courses to individual students with the permission of the department chair or school director. Such courses need not meet at a regular time and place. They permit a student to pursue an individualized topic under the direct supervision of the instructor.
  2. The student and the instructor should agree upon a topic, specify it in writing on the [Agreement for Study in an Individualized Topic Course Form](http://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/provost-vpaa/office-pps-files/pps4/PPS4-01AttD.doc) provided by the department or school, and submit the form to the chair or director for approval.

* 1. The instructor is expected to ensure the quality and rigor of the course. Term papers, creative works, or oral presentation may constitute graded material; tests may be required at the discretion of the instructor.
  2. Instructors of such courses may receive workload credit in accordance with departmental or school, college, and university policies (see [AA/PPS No. 04.01.40](http://policies.txstate.edu/division-policies/academic-affairs/04-01-40.html), Faculty Workload).

**10. CONTACT HOURS OUTSIDE OF CLASS (OFFICE HOURS)**

10.01 Texas State has a longstanding tradition of faculty being reliably available for out-of-class instruction and advising of students and continues to affirm the value of these experiences for students and faculty.

10.02 Departments, schools, and programs shall develop and publish policies for faculty expectations to dedicate time to meet, advise, and instruct students outside of class periods based on the considerations stated below:

1. A variety of means may be used to meet with students, including in-person, via telephone, electronic communication, or other means that allow faculty to effectively support students outside of scheduled class periods.
2. The means faculty use should be appropriate to the number of courses they teach, the enrollment in the classes they teach, the student population served, and the instructional delivery modes employed in their classes.
3. The number of hours scheduled per week should reflect the teaching load and class enrollment of the faculty member.
4. Contact hours outside of class should be convenient to students and flexible enough to provide reasonable access for students who have class conflicts.
5. Instructors should announce in class how and when they will be accessible outside of class, include this information on syllabi, and have their contact hours and means on file in their department or school office.

**11. PROCEDURES FOR RETENTION OF RECORDS**

* 1. Grade records are the property of the university. Instructors should retain them for grade change discussions, Honor Code cases, and for other requests. Instructors of record who supervise instructional assistants are responsible for the collection and retention of grade records maintained by their instructional assistants. To minimize the need for storage space, instructors should consider retention of records electronically.
  2. When faculty members leave the university, they should submit their grade records to their department chairs or school directors. At all times, faculty members should maintain grade records in such a way as to make them readily accessible to the department chairs or school directors in the event of unexpected death, incapacitation, or departure.
  3. A faculty member must keep some written, formal record of student grades during the semester. The grade book either in paper copy or electronic form, or collected student work in lieu of a grade book must be retained according to the university [Records Retention Schedule (RRS)](https://www.univarchives.txstate.edu/records/rm-rrs.html), which is two years dated from the end of the semester.

a. If a faculty member maintains a grade book as a record of student progress throughout the semester, then that grade book is the official university record that must be retained according to the [RRS](https://www.univarchives.txstate.edu/records/rm-rrs.html) (i.e., student work is returned to the student). A submitted final grade roster represents the official record for the final grade awarded in the course. In this situation, the retention category is such a document [SAD300](https://alkek.library.txstate.edu/scripts/rrs/index.php?tsus=&series=SAD300) – Faculty Grade Books.

b. If a faculty member does not maintain a grade book and retains all student work (e.g., exams, quizzes, term papers, projects, etc.) as a record of student progress throughout the semester, then the collected student work is the official university record that must be retained according to the [RRS](https://www.univarchives.txstate.edu/records/rm-rrs.html) (i.e., student work is held by the faculty member). However, following the expiration of the retention period, work may either be returned to the student or shredded. Submitting a final grade roster is still required and represents the official record for the final grade awarded in the course. In this situation, the retention category is [SAD200](https://alkek.library.txstate.edu/scripts/rrs/index.php?tsus=&series=SAD200) – Examinations, Tests, Term Papers, and Homework Records.

**12. PROCEDURE FOR SURVEYING STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTION**

* 1. Student perceptions of teaching effectiveness should be routinely surveyed. An anonymous student survey of the teaching of all faculty should be done at least once every fall and spring semester. The method and frequency of surveys are determined by the instructor's department or school. Student perceptions of teaching surveys should be retained in accordance with the [RRS](https://www.univarchives.txstate.edu/records/rm-rrs.html). The instructor’s department or school is responsible for the retention of student perception surveys in accordance with the [RRS](https://www.univarchives.txstate.edu/records/rm-rrs.html).

**13. SYLLABI PROCEDURES**

* 1. Instructors are expected to provide students with course syllabi as early as possible in each semester, in either electronic, paper version, or both. Course syllabi should be aligned with the beginning and ending dates of the semester, including university holidays, as published in the university’s academic calendar. Syllabi should also reflect instructional contact time and out-of-class assignments consistent with [G/PPS No. 02.11](https://policies.txst.edu/division-policies/global/02-11.html), Instructional Contact Time and Academic Credit. Faculty members should consult with their chairs or directors about format expectations in their departments or schools. The following information should be included on all syllabi:
  2. the purposes and objectives of the course;
  3. objectives related to departmentally- or school-generated student learning outcomes;

c. a list of required and recommended readings, teaching materials, and instructional materials that meet the instructional goals and student learning outcomes of the course;

* 1. policies concerning grading, examinations, term papers, and other

required assignments;

* 1. contact information, including:
     1. name;
     2. office address;
     3. email address;
     4. telephone number (either instructor’s office or departmental or school office); and
     5. contact hours outside of class (how and when the instructor will be accessible outside of class);
  2. due date for major exams and major assignments;

g. policies regarding student absences from classes and from examinations, including final examinations;

h. course description consistent with the catalog (see Section 04.);

i. disability statement (see Section 08.); and

j. Honor Code or statement (see [UPPS No. 07.10.01](http://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/07-10-01.html), Honor Code).

13.02 In addition to the information outlined in Section 13.01, faculty members teaching courses through Education Abroad or Study-in-America should include additional information on all syllabi:

* 1. objectives related to education abroad global learning outcomes;
  2. policies concerning pre-departure orientation and class meetings, in-country work, and post-travel class meetings and work including examinations, term papers, and other required assignments;
  3. instructor contact information while in-country;
  4. program itinerary including dates, locations, transportation details, and alignment of activities with learning outcomes; and
  5. a statement regarding country risk reports and where to access additional risk and safety information while traveling abroad, which are available on the [Health and Safety page of the Education Abroad Office website](http://www.studyabroad.txstate.edu/Health-and-Safety.html) and [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

13.03 Faculty members teaching core courses, including core courses taught through Education Abroad and Study-in-America, are expected to provide printed or electronic syllabi, using the [appropriate syllabus template](http://www.avpas.txstate.edu/General-Education-Council/Syllabi-Templates.html) developed by the General Education Council, and following the guidelines established by the General Education Council. These guidelines can be found in the [Minimal Expectations for All Course and Section Syllabi in General Education Core Curriculum Courses,](http://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:9181439a-504b-4111-a8dd-8dc1fe1cbf1b/Minimum%20Expectations%20for%20All%20Course%20and%20Section%20Syllabi.pdf) and are as follows:

* 1. semester (fall, spring, summer I, or summer II);
  2. instructor’s name, office number, office telephone number, and email address;
  3. names and email addresses of teaching assistants, laboratory assistants, graders, or supplemental instructors, as appropriate;
  4. contact hours outside of class (how and when the instructor will be accessible outside of class);
  5. course prefix number and title;
  6. course description and objectives;
  7. General Education learning outcomes for designated courses;
  8. required textbooks and materials (authors, title, publication date, edition, etc.);
  9. brief course outline and schedule for semester;
  10. any special requirements (especially those introducing students to the library as a resource for research or those that make use of computer applications);
  11. instructor’s grading policy;
  12. instructor’s attendance policy;
  13. a statement describing Texas State’s Honor Code policy and a web reference (see [UPPS No. 07.10.01](http://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/07-10-01.html), Honor Code);
  14. date and time for final examination; and

o. a statement for students with disabilities that might read: “If you are a student with a disability who will require an accommodation to participate in this course, please contact me as soon as possible. You will be asked to provide documentation from the Office of Disability Services. Failure to contact me in a timely manner may delay your accommodations.”

13.04 Departments, schools and colleges may elect to require additional information on course syllabi. This information is typically designed to communicate unique expectations, disciplinary standards, or important resources. For example, departments, schools, colleges, and instructors may choose to add the following statement on course syllabi:

“Mental health issues can diminish academic performance and may affect students’ ability to participate in activities. The Counseling Center at Texas State provides free and confidential mental health services on both its San Marcos and Round Rock campuses. For additional information, visit the Counseling Center’s [website](http://www.counseling.txstate.edu/) or call 512.245.2208. Additional resources are available on the university website “[Minds Matter](https://mindsmatter.vpsa.txstate.edu/).”

# 14. PROCEDURES REGARDING EXAMS, PAPERS, ESSAYS, AND OTHER GRADED ASSIGNMENTS

**14.01 Final Examinations**

1. Final examinations will be given by all faculty members and taken by all students; however, an alternate method of evaluation approved by the chair or director and the faculty member may be used when the subject matter makes a traditional final examination inappropriate.
2. Final examinations will be administered according to the published schedule. Individual students with conflicts or serious problems may take a final at an alternative time if they secure permission from the instructor.

1. Faculty members who wish to change the time of a final examination for an entire class may do so with permission from their chair or director and college dean.
2. Instructors should retain final examinations according to the [RRS](https://www.univarchives.txstate.edu/records/rm-rrs.html), so that students may profit by reviewing them and so that grading errors may be corrected.
   1. Punctual Returns

Instructors are obligated to allow students to review all graded work received from students as soon as possible so that students are aware of their progress and performance in the course.

* 1. Textbooks

1. The choice of course instructional material, including textbooks, is a departmental or school responsibility. Departments or schools may specify a required text, allow the instructor a choice of several options, or allow the instructor to choose without restriction.
2. Instructors must observe deadlines established by the bookstore to ensure that texts are available at the appropriate time.
   1. Writing
3. The university encourages the use of written assignments in as many courses as possible.

1. Students’ written work must conform to the policies and procedures regarding cheating and dishonesty, as described in [UPPS No. 07.10.01](http://policies.txstate.edu/university-policies/07-10-01.html), Honor Code.
2. Criteria and guidelines for identifying courses as writing intensive are listed in [AA/PPS No. 02.01.01](http://policies.txstate.edu/division-policies/academic-affairs/02-01-01.html), Academic Credit Courses: Additions, Changes, and Deletions.

**15. Public Access to Course Information**

* 1. Each institution of higher education in the state of Texas, other than a medical and dental unit, is required to make available certain course information to the public on the institution's website. This is commonly referred to as the [HB 2504](http://hb2504.txstate.edu/) requirement. In addition, the university must post information about work-study opportunities and departmental budgets.

15.02 Relative to the conduct and planning of courses, Texas State is required to provide:

* + - 1. for each undergraduate lecture or seminar course offered for credit by the institution, a syllabus and a curriculum vita for the instructor of record including courses taught via extension; and
      2. summarized end-of-course student evaluations of faculty for each undergraduate lecture or seminar course including those taught via extension.

16. REVIEWER OF THIS PPS

16.01 Reviewer of this PPS includes the following:

Position Date

Associate Provost November 1 E4Y

17. CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

This PPS has been reviewed by the following individuals in their official capacities and represents Texas State Academic Affairs policy and procedure from the date of this document until superseded.

Associate Provost; senior reviewer of this PPS

Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs