SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY SINCE 1802

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Name:	**Senate Policy on Course Outlines**
Policy Number:	**8-1012**
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Responsibility:	University Senate
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The purpose of this policy is to ensure that at the start of a course, students are adequately advised of:

1. description of the topics covered in the course including learning outcomes,
2. the method(s) of assessment,
3. the method(s) of instruction
4. key dates for course activities, in particular dates of major tests and assignments,
5. required and recommended readings,
6. required and recommended course prerequisites,

such that students can make a reasonable decision with respect to enrolment.

Required Elements of the Course Outline

General Information:

- Course number and title
- Credit hours
- Name and title of the instructor(s)
- Day, time and place of classes, labs and tutorials
- Instructor office hours and location
- Prerequisites, including required courses as well as knowledge or skills the student should have (e.g., MS Office)
- Course description from the Academic Calendar

Course Description

- Description of course topics
- Planned sequence/timing of topics (indicator of relative emphasis among topics)
- Course objectives and learning outcomes (intended audience, knowledge and competencies expected of students who successfully complete the course, …)
- List of required and recommended readings and required materials (e.g., calculator, lab coat, goggles,…)
- Description of instructional approach (lecture, labs, case studies, group projects, clickers,…)

Assessment

- Description of the individual elements upon which the final course grade will be determined (Academic regulation 4.b.)
- The relative weighting of these components (Academic regulation 4.b.)
- Performance requirements on individual components that must be separately passed to pass the course (see note following Academic regulation 5.)
- Explanation of how assessment will be done for any group activities
- Explanation of assessment of lab/recitation/field component.
- Explanation of how any peer assessment will be done
- Explanation of how participation marks are assigned
- Planned dates of any in-class tests or other in-class assessments
- Planned dates of any outside class tests and accommodation policy for students with conflicts with these dates (other than the final exam scheduled by the Registrar) (Academic regulation 4.c.)
- Instructor policy on late assignments or missed tests (e.g., consequence of missed test due to illness)
- A reminder to students of the regulations on Special Examinations (Academic regulation 10)
- A reminder to students of the regulations on Academic Integrity (Academic regulation 19)
- Assessments must conform to academic regulations including 4d, 8c and 8g.

Dissemination/Communication

The course outline must be distributed to students at the first class. At the start of the term, a copy of the outline must be given to the Department Chairperson and Faculty Dean.

Changes to the course outline must be provided to the students in writing and copied to the Department Chairperson and Dean. Such changes should be done only in exceptional circumstances.

Review

Courses listed in the Academic Calendar have gone through a rigorous process involving the Department, Faculty and Senate along with curriculum committees at each level. As part of the institution's commitment to quality assurance, programs are reviewed on a 7 year cycle.

As follow through to the course proposal process and in support of the program review process, annually, departments should review all course outlines from the previous academic year.

Grade Appeals

Students may appeal final grades if they "…have good reason to believe they have been subject to mistaken, improper or unjust treatment with respect to their academic work." The assessment criteria must stand up to examination of whether they are "mistaken, improper or unjust". Particular attention should be paid to whether "performance requirements on individual components that must be separately passed to pass the course" are "just" and whether peer, group or participation assessments are not "mistaken". If appropriately designed, these assessment approaches can be very effective.

Academic Regulations pertaining to elements of the course outline:

4. Grading System

a. The final grade for a course will be based on the quality of a student's work including, where appropriate, essays and exercises, class tests, end of semester examinations, final examinations, reports, class participation, laboratory work, tutorial sessions, projects and field work.

b. Instructors must inform students in writing of the grading system to be used in each of their courses. The written statement must include the relative weight which will be given to class and/or laboratory participation, examinations, tests, written assignments and other means of evaluation. The statement must also show how these evaluations will be used to determine the final letter grades. This detailed grading system for the course must be given to the students **ON THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS IN THAT COURSE**. Subsequent changes to this system must also be made available to students in writing. A copy of the grading system and any subsequent changes to it must be placed on file in the office of the Dean of the Faculty at the time when they are distributed to the students.

c. Instructors must also inform students in writing on the first day of class of any "in-class" test which will be scheduled outside of the regular instructional hours of the course. Students who cannot write the test outside of class time must be offered reasonable accommodation. Students must give the instructor a minimum of two weeks notice.

d. Instructors must also provide feedback to students regarding their progress in the course prior to the final date by which a student may cancel the course without academic penalty (see Academic Regulation 16 a). Normally, for undergraduate courses, this feedback must equal a minimum of 15% of the final grade.

5. Undergraduate Rating, Grades and Grade Points *

a. The rating of undergraduate students' performance is given as shown below in equivalent grades, grade points, and percentages.

Grades	Grade Points	Percentage Points	Rating
A+	4.30*	90-100	
A	4.00	85-89	Excellent
A-	3.70	80-84	
B+	3.30	77-79	
B	3.00	73-76	Good
B-	2.70	70-72	
C+	2.30	67-69	
C	2.00	63-66	Satisfactory
C-	1.70	60-62	
D	1.00	50-59	Marginal
F	.00	0-49	Failure or withdrawal after deadline (see 16 below)
IP			In Progress (Applicable ONLY for undergraduate honours courses.)

*In November 1997, the Senate of Saint Mary's University voted to have the A+ grade carry 4.30 grade points, retroactive to I Summer Session, 1988. All past decisions on academic matters, such as academic probation/requirement to withdraw, placement on the Dean's List, qualifications for graduation, academic distinctions, and scholarships, shall not be affected.

b. The following grades shall be given when appropriate but will not be calculated in the grade point average:

Aegrotat standing (see No. 12)	AE
Authorized withdrawal from course (see 16a below)	W

c. The minimum passing grade is D (or its equivalent). Students should be aware, however, that a grade of D (or the equivalent) is regarded as a marginal pass and therefore carries negative connotations. For example, many programs require a grade higher than "D" in an introductory course in order to declare a major.

d. In cases where students have not be able to complete the work of the course due to exceptional circumstances the instructor may, with the prior written authorization of the Dean of the Faculty, give the grade IC (incomplete). The IC grade will not be included in the calculation of any grade point average. The IC will be automatically converted to a failing grade, F, if the instructor does not submit a final grade as follows: for first term by Jan 31, for the second term by May 31, for summer session one by July 31 and for summer session two by Sept 30.

e. A temporary grade of IP (in progress) may be assigned by the instructor with the Dean's official concurrence in those instances where students do not complete on time the work in honours courses and theses. The IP grade will not attract any

grade points and therefore will not be calculated into any grade point averages. If an IP grade has not been changed into a real grade six months from the last day of classes in the semester in which the course was taught it will automatically be converted to a failing grade of "F". The change from IP being a permanent grade with no impact on calculations of grade point averages to a temporary grade became effective on 1 September 2001 and is not retroactive.

f. The maximum time limit permitted for a change of final grade is six months from the last day of classes in the semester. Except for the changing of an already approved "incomplete" to a real grade, a grade change must be approved by the Dean of the Faculty in which the course is offered.

g. In cases where through no fault of the student, grades have not been received and processed by the deadline stipulated by Senate, a temporary grade of AI ("administrative incomplete") will be assigned but will not be included in the calculations of grade point and cumulative grade point averages. This temporary grade of AI is assigned by the Registrar.

h. Once a final grade has been submitted to the Registrar, supplementary examinations or any additional assignments for the purpose of changing that grade are not permitted.

*The course outline may stipulate how the final grade is determined. While the total of all elements of a course may exceed 50%, a pass in certain components may be mandatory in order to pass the course.

8. Examinations

a. At the end of a Fall or Winter semester, at the discretion of the Department concerned, a final test or examination may be held during the special periods set aside for this purpose in December and in April.

b. All final tests and examinations held during the above periods are scheduled by the Registrar. The maximum time allowed for each examination is three hours.

c. (i) In a six (6) credit hour course, no single test given in a regularly scheduled class period (50 minutes or 75 minutes) shall contribute more than 20% of the overall evaluation for that course.

(ii) In a three (3) credit hour course, no single test given in a regularly scheduled class period (50 minutes or 75 minutes) or laboratory/recitation session (up to 3 hours) shall contribute more than 35% of the overall evaluation for that course.

(iii) In the fall and winter terms, test and examinations individually or collectively contributing more than 10% of the overall evaluation of the course are not permitted to be held during the last fourteen calendar days preceding the end of classes, except as noted in (iv) below. End of term tests and examinations are to be held during the final assessment period as specified in sections, 8a. and b.

(iv) Prior to the first class date, the Dean of the Faculty may authorize a lab examination worth more than 10% of the final grade within the last 14 days preceding the end of classes. A lab examination requires the use of lab resources.

d. To be eligible to write any type of test or examination in any course, students must be properly registered in that course. Students must write all such tests or examinations at the designated times and in the designated places.

e. Students are responsible for knowing the date, time and location for writing each of their formal examinations. Students are responsible for ensuring they have up-to-date schedules. This information is posted on Banner Self Service with the student's schedule. While this is accurate when viewed/printed, it is subject to revision without any prior notice; hence students are responsible for ensuring they have up-to-date schedules. Missing an examination for reasons of misreading or misunderstanding the date, time, and location does not constitute grounds for a "special test or examination" or for rescheduling the test or examination.

f. Students are required to present their valid Saint Mary's University student identification cards at all tests and examinations for possible verification of their photographs or signatures.

g. The University acknowledges that due to the pluralistic nature of its community, some students may, on religious grounds, require alternative times to write tests and examinations. Accordingly, a student who requires an alternative test or examination time on these religious grounds should consult with the Dean of the Faculty in which the course is offered regarding alternative arrangements. Such a request must be made in writing within one week of the announcement of the test or examination date.

h. Participation in university sanctioned activities and events may occasionally conflict with exam schedules. Students experiencing such conflicts should follow the instructions in g. (above)

i. In the case of courses delivered at extension centres, midterms and final examinations will take place at the extension centre. If the location is within the Halifax Regional Municipality, the final examination may be held on the Saint Mary's University campus, with the approval of the Dean of the Faculty.

j. In the case of distance education courses taught via the internet or other means, the course outline will specify if midterms and final examinations will be either held online or at locations in reasonable proximity to the students. Remotely offered examinations must be invigilated by an invigilator (proctor) that is approved by the course instructor. The Division of Continuing Education will be responsible for working with the student to make arrangements for the test location and invigilation.

k. Supplementary examinations are not offered.

9. Evaluations

a. At the end of each semester, instructors must submit to the Registrar, through Self-Service Banner, their evaluations of all students registered in their courses. For six credit hour courses taught over two terms, interim grades will be submitted at the end of the first term and final grades at the end of the academic year. The time frames for the submission of mid-year and final grades to the Registrar are:

(i) in the case of courses in which no formal examination was scheduled by the Registrar within the period designated by Senate for formal examinations, one week from the beginning of the examination period;
(ii) in the case of courses in which formal examinations were scheduled by the Registrar within the period designated by Senate for such examinations, one week from the day on which the examination was written; and
(iii) in the cases of courses taught in Summer Sessions, grades are due in the Service Centre no later than one week from the last day of instruction in the course.

Students have the right to expect their grades to be submitted by these deadlines in conformity with the faculty members' terms of appointment.

At the start of each term, any blank grades from the previous term will be assigned a grade of F.

b. Final grades are available on Self-Service one day after submission by the instructor. Grade reports are not produced.

c. Final grades are withheld from students who have money owing to the University or who have either money or books owing the University Library system.

d. Grades given at the end of a semester shall not be made known to students except by the Registrar. Under the FOI-POP legislation, it is not legal for members of faculty to publicly post grades without the written permission of the student.

e. Grade changes must be approved by the Dean of the Faculty in which the course is offered before they can be accepted for processing by the Registrar. Reason(s) for the change(s) is required at the time of submission.

10. Special Examinations

A student who, due to a serious illness or emergency, was detained or rendered unfit to write a required final examination, may appeal for a special examination. Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time. A student who wishes to have such an appeal considered must:

a. Within 48 hours after the end of the final examination, report, or have a representative report (in writing if possible), to the Instructor and the Dean of the Faculty in which the course is offered, intention to appeal for a special examination and

b. Within one week after the end of the examination submit to the Dean a written request for a special examination. This request must be accompanied by an explanation of the circumstances which made it impossible for the student to write the regular examination and a medical doctor's report, or other document, which supports the appeal

c. The Dean's decision will be communicated to the student and the instructor within one week of receipt of the request.

d. If the Dean approves the special examination, the responsibility for setting and conducting special examinations will lie with the instructor and the department. Special examinations should be completed as soon as possible and normally (i.e. wherever possible) as follows: for first term by Jan 31, for the second term by May 31, for summer session one by July 31 and for summer session two by Sept 30.

Version History

Version	Date Changed	Updated by	Description of Change
1.0	November 16, 2012	Senate Curriculum Committee	Document creation.