

Recommendations for:
How to avoid grade disputes and
How to deal with them during the semester when they do occur
Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel
(Updated August 2015)

For Students:

When you have a question about the evaluation of an assignment or test:

- Stop by the instructor's office during his/her office hour or make an appointment to discuss grading; individual grade issues should not be discussed during class time.
- Discuss grade concerns on assignments as you receive them back; do not wait until after you know what your final course grade is going to be.
- Before discussing your grade with the instructor: (1) reread the assignment or test question, (2) read the instructor's evaluation and comments, and (3) assess and critique your assignment yourself to identify how your work meets the grading criteria standards.

General responsibilities:

- Read the syllabus thoroughly; be aware that the schedule may need to be changed by the instructor as the semester progresses.
- If you have a disability that may affect your performance in the class, see the UM Disability Resource Center to have your disability documented; they will send a letter to your instructor that identifies appropriate accommodations for you. This does not mean that you do not have to complete all of the requirements of the class based on the grading criteria.
- Record in your own calendar when assignments are due, and when quizzes, midterms, and the final exam are scheduled.
- Understand how your grade is going to be determined; interpret points received on small assignments, e.g., 7 of 10 points would be a "C-" grade; these points eventually add up to determine your final grade in most cases.
- If class participation is part of the evaluation for your grade, be clear about what that means; ask the instructor if you are not clear.
- Attend every class session; be on time; do not leave early.
- An excused absence is because you are sick **and** you have a doctor's note to substantiate the absence; bring the note to the instructor by the next class session. Leave a voicemail or email message as soon as possible with your instructor to indicate you need to miss class.
- Be respectful of the instructor and of other students

For Instructors:

To avoid students' questions about your evaluation of assignments and tests:

- According to the UM Center for Writing and the UM Center for Education and Innovation, most **grading** problems are actually **assignment** problems, so write assignments that are clear and include:
 - Course objective addressed by the assignment
 - Purpose of the assignment and the audience
 - Content of the assignment
 - Resources to be used
 - The process students should follow to complete the assignment
 - Mechanics of the final assignment (e.g., approximate page length, mounted or not, etc.)
 - Grading criteria and relative weight of criteria
 - Due date
- Return graded assignments and tests in a timely manner; students should have an idea of how they are doing before the midpoint of the semester.
- Do not be defensive when questioned about your grading; explain your evaluation clearly based on the criteria you have established.
- Evaluate assignments based on achievement, not on effort.
- If you question the level of your expectations (either too high or too low), talk to the lead faculty member for the course and/or to a peer to assess your assignments and your criteria for evaluation.

General responsibilities:

- Treat all students equitably; if allowances are made for one student, all students should receive the same benefit.
- Be clear in your expectations for student performance in your class and include those expectations in your syllabus.
- If changes are necessary to the syllabus or assignments, communicate the change clearly (give all students a handout or send a group email).
- Be available for your students during your office hours in your office; if you are also an academic advisor, make appointments with your advisees separate from your office hours if possible (i.e., students in your class should have priority in connecting with you about class issues during your office hours).
- Model respectful behavior with students.