The following policies, procedures, and guidelines govern all undergraduate and graduate courses taught within the Department of Psychology. In publishing them, the department seeks to:

1. improve the quality and consistency of teaching throughout the department's academic programs.

2. improve communication between faculty and students by providing specific guidelines for course syllabi and other materials.

3. avoid practices that interfere with or reduce the effectiveness of teaching, infringe on the rights of students, violate university policy, precipitate legitimate student complaints, or otherwise interfere with the smooth, professional, and ethical operation of the department.

4. provide guidance to new and occasional faculty.

5. establish who must be consulted when concerns about deviations from policy are raised.

It should be clear that what follows is not intended to alter instructional methods or philosophies or to infringe on academic freedom. These policies are silent on course content, and instructors are encouraged to adopt the teaching style that is best for their particular situation. Otherwise, we seek to do things in a uniform manner. An instructor who feels the need to deviate from these policies should seek the approval of the Psychology Department Chair (currently Karlene Ball: kball@uab.edu) and the relevant undergraduate or graduate program director (Director of Undergraduate Studies and Vice Chair, currently David Schwobel: schwobel@uab.edu; Medical Psychology Director, currently Jesse Milby: jmilby@uab.edu; Behavioral Neuroscience Director, currently Alan Randich: arandich@uab.edu; and Lifespan Developmental Psychology Director, currently Fred Biasini: f biasini@uab.edu). Questions concerning these policies should be directed to the department chair.

I. Course Scheduling and the Agreement to Teach a Course

A. Committing to Teach a Course

The complexities of UAB scheduling requires the department to undertake scheduling of courses and instructors well in advance of the terms the courses will be taught. All instructors (including primary faculty, secondary and adjunct faculty, and other instructors such as graduate students and interns) who agree to teach a course must realize that once the schedule is submitted for publication to the registrar's office, it is very difficult to make changes. Therefore, once an instructor agrees to teach a course, that agreement is considered firm. The department does not generally require instructors to sign written contracts to teach specific courses, but instructors should understand that
their verbal agreement to teach a course is considered binding. This applies to graduate teaching assistants (TAs) as well as course instructors.

Graduate students who agree to teach for the department are required to immediately seek the approval of their graduate program director at the time that they agree to teach. Other required approvals vary by program and if applicable must also be obtained at this time. It is inappropriate to wait to seek this approval until the last minute, when the graduate program's disapproval of the request would leave the department without an instructor or TA for a course.

B. Assignment of Teaching Responsibilities

Instructors may not assign their teaching responsibilities to a third party. When a class has an official TA, some shuffling of responsibilities between the instructor and the TA is possible by mutual consent, as long as the teaching responsibilities of the TA are not increased by these arrangements. Faculty members are not permitted to hire TAs to teach parts of their courses without prior consent of the chair and the relevant program director(s).

II. Course Syllabus and Logistics

A. Contents

The syllabus for each course should minimally contain the following information:

- Course name, number, and section
- Days, times, and location(s) of class meetings
- Instructor's name, office hours and location, and telephone number
- Schedule of class topics and assignments
- List of required and optional readings
- Course requirements (exams, quizzes, term papers, other assignments)
- Descriptions of the requirements (e.g., type of exams)
- Criteria by which non-exam, non-quiz assignments will be evaluated
- Extra credit opportunities, if any
- Weighting scheme for computing the final percentage score
- Thresholds for converting percentages to letter grades
- Make-up exam policy
- Statement on Academic Dishonesty
- Statement on Students with Disabilities

The contents of the syllabus should be sufficient for students to understand what they are to learn, but also for other universities to understand what the students learn. Syllabi are used, for example, when a student wants to transfer course credit to a different institution; without a detailed syllabus, the student’s request for credit transfer might be denied.
Syllabi for QEP-designated undergraduate courses should also include the QEP-related competencies that the course is intended to introduce or reinforce. Information on whether a course is QEP-designated is available from the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

B. Course Requirements

It is expected that all Psychology courses from the 100-300 level will involve the required reading of a textbook. This should also be the case for most 400-level courses. This expectation is present for at least three reasons:

1) A textbook typically covers much more material than an instructor could cover via lectures. It assures both breadth and depth of coverage irrespective of instructor.

2) A textbook allows the instructor to be more selective about material covered in lectures, perhaps providing in-depth coverage of some topics and permitting the textbook to provide detailed information on others.

3) A textbook helps to ensure that our students will engage in “reading behavior” during the term. Simply attending lectures, taking notes and being tested over lecture material actually discourages reading, and that is not a good thing.

Of course, it is not sufficient to just require the purchase of a textbook. Each instructor should make sure not only to assign the textbook, but to assess students on the book’s content as well, regardless of whether or not the material was covered in a classroom lecture.

Beyond the requirement that textbooks be used in 100-, 200-, and 300-level courses, there are no specific requirements for what faculty should require or assign in various classes (currently, there are two exceptions, PY101 and PY214, for which a common textbook is used in all sections department-wide). Most 100-level courses are large and therefore use primarily basic textbooks for out-of-classroom reading and multiple choice exams to evaluate students. In 200-level courses, it is often possible for instructors to incorporate short writing assignments along with objective examinations. Textbooks remain the primary source of classroom reading assignments at the 200-level.

By the time students reach 300-level courses in our department, it is typical for instructors to require some written assignments, and for students to expect to write essays and/or papers. Many 300-level instructors will begin to introduce a few basic scientific journal articles into their curriculum, along with a textbook. 400-level courses should have written assignments except in very rare cases. Usually 400-level courses will include substantial “term paper” assignments. Most 400-level courses require a substantial amount of reading scientific journal articles along with science-based books or textbooks.

Graduate-level courses should almost always require writing, should often require verbal presentations to the class, and in some cases will not include examinations for
assessment of learning. Graduate-level textbooks may be used in some cases, but should almost always be accompanied by reading of original scientific work.

C. Alterations to the Course Syllabus

In general, the course syllabus should be considered a contract with students. Every effort should be made to avoid altering the arrangements established in the course syllabus during the academic term. It is not acceptable to poll the class to determine if they prefer changes to the syllabus. Such a vote places undue pressure on the individual student to conform to the wishes of the majority of the students or of the instructor, and instructors who make such changes open themselves to complaints and possible litigation from angry students. Where a change seems to be necessary and in the best interests of all or almost all students, the instructor should take extensive care to ensure that no individual student is disadvantaged by the change. When an instructor intends to make such changes, he or she should first consult with the department vice chair.

Issues concerning specific changes to course logistics are presented below.

D. Changing the Course Meeting Time or Location

Instructors may not alter the meeting time or location of a class so that they deviate from the university-published schedule. Very rare exceptions must be cleared with the director(s) of the appropriate program(s) and with the departmental chair.

E. Missed Classes; Altering the Meeting Time for a Single Class

It is every instructor's responsibility to meet each scheduled class. Occasionally, it may be necessary to miss a class for a legitimate reason, such as attending a scientific conference or participating in federal grant reviews. In such circumstances, there are two options. Generally the preferred option is to arrange for a substitute instructor. This is the only acceptable option for large undergraduate classes. On some occasions, particularly with a small seminar, it may be preferable to reschedule an individual class meeting. In doing so, the instructor must take care to make sure that the rescheduled time does not conflict with another class or obligation for any student, and to make sure that all students recognize their individual right to veto a particular change.

When instructors are called to jury duty, they should respond to the court that they are an instructor at UAB, an accredited university, and request postponement of their civic obligation to the next available time when classes are not in session (e.g., December break, summer, etc.). In most cases, the court will grant this request. If the request is denied, instructors should follow the above policy to find substitute instructors to cover their course during the absence.

Instructors in the psychology department should NEVER schedule personal vacations during the time when they are scheduled to teach a course.
Faculty who need to miss a class for a legitimate reason should inform the chair of how their class(es) is (are) being covered in their absence.

It is recognized that it will occasionally be necessary to cancel a class at the last minute due to illness or family emergency, and that in such cases arranging a substitute instructor may be impossible. These instances should be avoided whenever possible, and should be rare events.

F. Class Duration and the Scheduling of Final Exams

Courses are scheduled for a specific number of contact hours, which translate into credit hours. Instructors should make every effort to meet each scheduled class and provide instruction for the entire class period. It is not acceptable to routinely start classes late or to dismiss classes early for any reason, including an excuse such as, “I’ve covered the material for today”. Likewise, it is not acceptable to end class early on the first day so that students have time to do the reading, or to skip the last class meeting because all the material has been covered.

It is university policy that final exams may not be given during regular class meetings. They must be given during the officially scheduled final exam period, which will always come after the regular meetings have been completed. This is true regardless of whether the final exam is cumulative or not. Final exams should be longer than typical class exams, and should require most students to use a large portion of the full final exam time period.

Faculty should rarely cancel final exams. Final exams are designed to test students’ learning over the course of the semester, and studying for finals will generally improve students’ learning and retention of the course material. Final exams should always be offered in lower level (100- and 200-level) undergraduate courses, and almost always in 300-level courses. For 400-level seminars and especially for graduate-level courses, a substantial term paper may be an appropriate substitute for a final exam, but in many cases a final exam should be offered in conjunction with writing assignments.

When an instructor signs a contract to teach an overload course, or a course in an unusual or short-term format such as May miniterm, he or she is agreeing to teach the same course that is taught during the regular term. Nothing of substance should be omitted as a result of an unusual format. For example, if you agree to teach a course requiring four hours of lecture one day of the week, you should meet for the entire four hours. If you feel you cannot speak for four hours, or if you feel that requiring students to listen to you for four hours constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, then you should not teach in this format.

In general, instructors should take no steps that reduce the amount of instructional time associated with a class beyond that allocated in the published class schedule. None of the topics covered by any of our courses is so narrow as to not require all of the allocated time.
G. Distribution of Course Syllabi

The syllabus should be distributed to the class at the first class meeting. For most classes, it also should be posted electronically on the Blackboard Vista website for the course. A copy of the syllabus must be directed to the front office; these copies are kept on file for accreditation and administrative purposes.

H. Make-Up Exam Policy

Students who have a valid excuse should be permitted to make up exams. Some excuses are indisputable (e.g., documented medical illness, documented death in family, university-sponsored athletics). The validity of other excuses (e.g., personal vacations, transportation problems) should be determined at the instructor’s discretion. Students can and should be expected to produce written documentation of any excuse.

Make-up exams may be offered by the instructor or by the psychology department main office. If the psychology department office administers the exam, students must complete the exam within work hours (currently 8 AM – 5 PM). Instructors are responsible for leaving the exam, including scantrons that are required, with a cover sheet in the psychology office. The cover sheet should indicate the student’s name, the expected date the student will complete the exam, the amount of time the student is permitted to complete the exam, the course name, and the instructor’s name and contact information. If there are any special circumstances (e.g., student can use calculator; exam is open-book, essay should be written in ink, etc.), those should be noted also. Psychology department office staff will leave the student in a quiet room to complete the exam, and will intermittently supervise the student. The student will not be permitted to carry books or phones into the exam room. Completed exams will be left in a sealed envelope in the instructor’s mailbox.

III. Issues Related to Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

A. Overview and Suggested Wording for Syllabus

Cheating and other acts of academic dishonesty should not be tolerated, overlooked, or taken lightly. Such practices reduce the value of the academic achievements of honest students and assault the integrity of the academic process.

Instructors who suspect academic dishonesty should immediately consult the policy on Academic Misconduct that is published in the undergraduate catalog (currently available at http://main.uab.edu/show.asp?durki=1934). In most cases, they should also contact the Vice Chair before contacting the student about the charges. One purpose of this contact is to ensure that the current version of the policy is followed. In the psychology department, the Vice Chair generally serves as the Chair's designate in the implementation of this policy.
All instructors are strongly encouraged to include language concerning the penalty for cheating and plagiarism in their syllabi. The following paragraphs provide one model:

_The Department of Psychology considers academic dishonesty to be a very serious matter. Cheating devalues the honest efforts of other students, consumes enormous amounts of faculty and staff time, and is never justifiable. The undergraduate catalog presents the university's policy on Academic Misconduct, which the Department scrupulously follows. Note that academic dishonesty can take various forms, including cheating on an exam, assisting someone else in cheating, and plagiarizing or presenting someone else's written material as your own._

_The Department routinely uses sophisticated mathematical and computer-based techniques to detect cheating and plagiarism in its classes. Students may be asked to present evidence of independent scholarship or re-take an exam if cheating or plagiarism is suspected._

_In general, the Department of Psychology will seek the most severe penalty for acts of academic misconduct that are detected. First offenses typically result in an “F” in the course. Second offenses typically result in expulsion from the university. For further details, consult the catalog._

Faculty are also strongly encouraged to emphasize these policies at the first class, or at other appropriate times during the term.

**B. In-class Exams and Quizzes**

Instructors should take steps to avoid cheating on in-class exams and quizzes, and to identify it if it occurs. Such steps would generally include:

1. **Protecting exams and quizzes from being passed among students.** In classes utilizing multiple choice exams, instructors should not allow students to keep the exams. This is especially pertinent to introductory courses where several instructors utilize the same test-item file. The selective availability of old exams provides an unfair advantage for some students.

   Balancing the need to protect exams is the desirability of students learning from specific errors on exams. One possibility is to allow students to view their exams during office hours, but as a practical matter that will discourage many students. A preferable strategy is to take some time to go over the exam in class. This will allow students to learn the correct answers, why they are correct, and why the student’s wrong answers are indeed wrong.

2. **Proctoring exams in a diligent manner.** In general, faculty should not leave the room while a test is being administered, particularly if the ratio of students to seats in the room requires students to sit in adjacent seats.
3. **Using alternate forms of the exam for alternate seats.** Generally this involves developing two test forms (and therefore two keys) that contain the same items but differ in the order in which the items are presented.

4. **Taking advantage of the department’s ability to scan multiple choice exams for evidence of cheating.** Psychology office staff are able to scan your exams for evidence of cheating and send you a report by e-mail. The methodology uses statistical methods to identify pairs of exams with unusually high levels of agreement. When such pairs of exams are identified, instructors should strongly consider asking the two students to re-take the exam without warning, simultaneously, and under secure conditions. Note that the narrow blue Scantron forms (Form #19641) must be used to take advantage of this service at this time.

C. **Writing Assignments**

Faculty are encouraged to give written assignments to students, as development of writing skill is a critical aspects of undergraduate education and a critical skill for psychology majors to hone.

To prevent plagiarism on written assignments, instructors are encouraged to require students to provide independent evidence of individual scholarship, such as notes on readings, preliminary drafts, and in-class presentations. To detect plagiarism, have students submit papers through Turn-it-in®, which utilizes extensive databases to identify suspected cases of plagiarism. More information about Turn-it-in is currently available at [http://www.uab.edu/it/instech/docs/tii_BbVista_instructor.pdf](http://www.uab.edu/it/instech/docs/tii_BbVista_instructor.pdf). Another option is to change the assignment regularly (in small or significant ways), to discourage students further from passing papers among themselves.

D. **Take-Home Exams, Projects, and Assignments**

For traditional (not online) courses at the undergraduate level, take-home and online exams are vigorously discouraged. Take-home or online exams should never be given in large classes or in classes where the range of correct answers is narrow, because both of these factors make it difficult to detect plagiarism or cheating.

Individual projects completed outside of class should be supplemented with in-class examinations or other activities that do not allow for unapproved assistance. Only in very rare circumstances should take-home or online assignments account for more than half of the final grade in a class, and in most cases that fraction should be considerably smaller.

Students may misperceive take-home or online assignments as an invitation to work in teams, and indeed in some cases it may be positive for students to work together to comprehend the material. In such cases, it is worth some class time and syllabus space to describe the boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate collaboration, and to encourage students to consult with the instructor if ambiguous situations arise.
IV. Grading

A. Considerations in Setting Performance Thresholds for Grades

To the extent possible, the means by which students' performance will ultimately be translated into a letter grade should be established prior to the term, and should be distributed in the syllabus, as noted above.

B. Types of Assignments

The types of assignments given to students will vary widely across sub-areas of psychology, the size of the class, the level of the students, and so on. Nonetheless, there are certain overarching departmental guidelines that will be useful, especially to novice instructors.

First, all students should have the same assignments and the same opportunities to earn a grade in the course. The only exception to this rule is for combined undergraduate and graduate level courses; in that case, graduate students should have more challenging and extensive assignments.

In upper level undergraduate courses (300- and 400-level) and in graduate-level courses, writing assignments are expected to comprise at least part of student’s grades. These writing assignments might be completed at home, in class during exam periods, or in both situations. Students should be expected to use appropriate grammar and spelling, and to use APA style, although instructors can decide whether or not those aspects of the written assignment will be considered in assigning a grade or not. Lower level undergraduate courses (100- and 200-level) may be too large to permit written assignments, although instructors should consider ways to encourage written work in those courses as well.

Most psychology topics lend themselves to opportunities for instructors to teach basic mathematics and problem-solving skills. The department encourages such training in all undergraduate courses. This instruction might occur in the context of class lectures, class activities, or evaluations and examinations.

Ethics and citizenship also form a critical part of UAB’s mission for undergraduate teaching. Psychology courses frequently overlap with issues of ethics and citizenship, and the department encourages instructors to weave these topics into their lectures, class activities, and evaluations.

Finally, all psychology majors are expected to develop basic knowledge of core areas of the field of psychological science, including developmental and clinical psychology; behavioral neuroscience, statistical methods and research design. We encourage instructors to review these topics throughout the curriculum. In particular, statistical
methods and design are a critical aspect of our curriculum that students tend to forget, and that should be reviewed at appropriate opportunities throughout the curriculum.

C. Extra-Credit Work

It is absolutely essential that every student in a particular class has the same opportunities with respect to his or her grade. No special opportunities should be offered or provided to an individual student on an ad-hoc basis. All opportunities for extra credit should be published in the syllabus, and distributed on the first day of class or other handouts distributed during the first two or three class meetings. There should never be any impromptu, mid-term possibilities for raising one’s grade.

Students should never be permitted to raise their grade with extra-credit work completed after the term ends. Once the term is over, it's over! Begging, threatening, bribing, and/or flattery should never alter this basic principle of higher education.

D. Clicker Systems

Clicker systems offer a handy and sophisticated way to obtain feedback from students. Some instructors choose to use them as a learning tool, others as an assessment or attendance tool, and still others for both purposes. The department encourages faculty to learn and use clicker and other educational technologies.

If students complain their clicker is not registering responses, the faculty member should carefully evaluate the complaint and provide credit or alternative make-up opportunities to the students if there is ambiguity in whether the students lost credit unfairly.

Currently, UAB recommends faculty use the e-Instruction clicker system. Several psychology department faculty members have had concerns about the e-Instruction system, however, so the department has initiated a policy to permit faculty to use I-Clicker as an alternative. Faculty should not use any system besides e-Instruction or I-Clicker.

E. Absences and Tardiness

Penalties for absence from and tardiness to class are likely to vary greatly across instructors, classes, and course content. It is appropriate and perhaps even healthy for students to be exposed to differing expectations concerning absence and tardiness. No matter what the instructor’s policy is, however, it should be stated clearly at the outset of the term and should not change over the course of the term. In fact, instructors should outline in their syllabi what the consequence (if any) is for absence and tardiness, and how students who are habitually absent or tardy will be penalized.
F. Athletes

Instructors should not agree to special consideration for athletes, regardless of any pressure applied by the Athletic Department. All students should be treated equally regardless of playing status: first-string, second-string, or no string at all. Instructors should, however, make allowances for student-athletes who cannot be present for exams due to travel conflicts. The same rules hold true for students participating in other university-sponsored travel commitments (e.g., band members) and certain other university-approved activities (e.g., service in the United States military). Instructors who are unsure of whether students are telling the truth about travel commitments should contact athletic department or other relevant administrators to verify team travel schedules.

G. Students with Disabilities

UAB has a diverse student body, and most instructors will have students with disabilities in most classes. Instructors should never provide special accommodations to a student with a disability on their own. Instead, the student should be referred to the Disability Support Services (DSS) office at UAB.

When a student provides documentation of a disability from the DSS office, departmental faculty must adhere to DSS requirements and requests carefully. Faculty should work with DSS and the student to be sure students who have a disability are accommodated in their education.

H. Submission of Final Grades

Each instructor is responsible for submitting his or her signed final grade sheet on time via the internet portal on BlazerNet. The academic advisor(s) can provide guidance to faculty who are unsure of how to submit their grades online.

All grading records, including student exams and written work, should be retained by instructors for at least the full term following their submission, and preferably for a full calendar year. Basic electronic information about grades (e.g., Excel spreadsheets) should be retained indefinitely on password-protected computer systems.

I. Grade Changes and Incompletes

The university has very specific policies concerning the circumstances under which a grade can be changed after the class is over, and these must be followed. Both the department chair and the dean are required to sign off on grade changes, and such changes should occur very rarely.

An Incomplete (I) is assigned only when extenuating circumstances exist (usually a medical emergency) and the student has made a bona fide arrangement with the instructor for completion of class work within a reasonable period after the term ends.
Even in situations involving illness, an “I” should only be assigned if the student has completed most of the work in a course. If a student has been in class only a few weeks, he or she should withdraw from the course. Most important, the instructor should never allow the student to start over and delete the grades earned up to that point. If a student is not doing well, and would like to retake the course in a subsequent term, the only option is withdrawal from the course, and that option ends partway through the term. The instructor should not assign an Incomplete in this situation.

Incomplete grades must be completed with the original instructor of the course. That original instructor is responsible for assigning appropriate assessments of the student, grading those assessments, and changing the student’s grade when the course has been completed. Students may not be assigned an Incomplete, and then complete the course in the subsequent term with a different instructor.

The above comments notwithstanding, the department's policy is to assign a grade of Incomplete to PY 101 students who have not completed their research requirement and to students in PY 396, PY 397, and PY 398 who fail to submit log sheets.

Note also the grades of “I” automatically convert to “F” at the end of the subsequent term (not counting mini-terms).

J. Grade Distributions

Each instructor should use his or her judgment in assigning grades to a class, both after particular assignments and at the end of the term. Within the flexibility of assigning grades, however, instructors must use wisdom and rationale to assign a fair distribution of grades. It is an extremely rare instance when an entire class at UAB is deserving of an A; it is equally rare than an entire class is deserving of Ds and Fs. Even graduate-level courses should have a reasonable percentage of Bs and perhaps lower grades assigned; almost all undergraduate classes will have a large number of Cs, and some Ds and Fs. Instructors must ensure that the full spectrum of grades are used, as earned by the students, and that grading distributions are not top-heavy (the more common error) or bottom-heavy.

K. Posting Grades

In certain classes – especially those that are rather large – instructors must distribute grades to students by posting them, either on paper or on the Internet. These postings should be done very cautiously, to be sure that confidentiality is maintained. Social security numbers may not be used, nor may other non-anonymous identifiers. Grades should never be announced publicly to a group of students or a class. Blackboard offers a good and confidential way to post grades to large classes of students.

Note also that all grades – including good ones – should remain confidential. As an example, it would be inappropriate to identify the student who scored highest in the
class because this information must remain just as confidential as identifying the student who scored lowest in the class.

L. Retaining Paperwork

Students sometimes complain about the grades they receive or the way they were treated. In the case of students submitting grievances, it is necessary for the Vice Chair, Chair, Dean, and others to have access to all paperwork related to the grieved issue. For this reason, instructors should save all email and written correspondences with students that involve complaints about grades or treatment in a class. These materials should be saved for at least three years. All exams and papers that students complete, if the instructor does not return them to students, should be kept at least until the end of the next academic term, and preferably for one full year, before they are shredded (or, if they are completely anonymous, properly disposed of).

V. Miscellaneous Issues

A. Administrative Drops

Although instructors may drop from their class rolls any students who fail to appear for the first class, this policy has not been workable for many classes taught in our department. Therefore, we typically apply the first-day attendance policy to the following classes: PY 214, 217, and all undergraduate classes numbered above 300. Instructors of these classes are not required to exercise the policy, but we recommend that it be used when there are students on the waiting list who need the course for the major or core requirements. To make use of the policy, instructors should do the following:

1. Note the number of seats that are available in the class. This information is provided at the bottom of the class waiting list that you receive from the Academic Advisor(s) prior to your first class.

2. Call the class roll on the first day. This must be done very carefully if the roll will be used as a basis for dropping students. For example, you might call the entire roll at the beginning of class, and then check on apparently-absent students midway through the period and again at the end of class. You should also announce that you will be exercising the policy, so that students will understand the importance of making their presence known and so that students on the waiting list will recognize their status may change by the end of the course period.

3. At the end of class, determine how many seats are available in your class (i.e., the number of seats originally marked available on your waiting list, plus the number of absentee). Sign add slips for students you are adding off the waiting list. Do not exceed your class enrollment limit.
4. Email, send or fax to the Academic Advisor(s) a list of names and student numbers for the absentees you wish to drop. They will contact the students and inform them that they have been dropped. Excuses will be referred back to the instructor, who must inform the advisor(s) immediately of any changes in the list of students to drop.

B. Special Topics and Readings Courses

Such courses must be approved each term they are offered. A memo describing such a course, along with a syllabus and/or relevant reading list, should be submitted to the relevant program director(s) and the department chair. The chair approves or disapproves such courses after consultation with relevant program director(s). Credit hours for such courses are awarded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Hours</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13-25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-38</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 or more</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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Contact hours must be documented for credit to be awarded.

Special Topics courses must be publicly announced (e.g., in the published class schedule or via the Academic Advisor listserv) at least one month prior to the beginning of the term in which they are offered.

C. Course Evaluations

Course evaluations must be obtained from students in every course taught in the Department of Psychology. When completed on paper, blank evaluation forms are distributed by the Academic Advisor(s) before the beginning of the last week of the term. They must be returned to the Psychology office by the date listed on them, usually the end of final exam period. When completed online, instructors are not involved in the process but should encourage students to complete the evaluations.

For written completion of evaluations, at least 15 minutes of class time during the last week of classes must be dedicated to course evaluations. Procedures are detailed in a memo distributed with the forms. Note that the instructor must be out of the room while the evaluations are being completed. Allowing students to evaluate your courses is not optional. It is department policy. Students should be encouraged to take the evaluations seriously.

Course evaluations are potentially sensitive documents, and serve two functions. First, they allow instructors to identify the methods and techniques that worked well in their course – as well as those that did not work as well. Instructors should consider feedback very carefully, and should consider ways to alter their courses in future terms as a response to student feedback.

Second, course evaluations are useful for personnel decisions. In general, besides the instructor, evaluations are made available only to the department chair and the dean, who
may in the case of non-primary faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and other instructors make the evaluations available to the relevant program director(s). Teaching evaluations of primary faculty members will be distributed more widely within the department and school if the faculty member applies for promotion. They are also used in the department chair’s annual faculty evaluations and salary increase recommendations.

To encourage honest feedback, students are permitted and indeed encouraged to respond anonymously. In small classes, it is possible that individual students' comments may be recognizable on the basis of content, handwriting, etc. To avoid even the perception of intimidation, instructors may not approach any individual student regarding his or her evaluations for a course. It is highly inappropriate to take any action against a student on the basis of a belief that he or she has submitted or will submit a negative evaluation.

D. Compensation

In general, instructors paid on a course-by-course basis are paid at midterm and at the end of the term. No more than three courses can be taught by the same faculty member in any given term.

**Credentialed Course Instructors, Adjunct and Secondary Faculty**

Credentialed course instructors, adjunct and secondary faculty will be paid per course at the following rates by rank:

- **Assistant Professor Rank:** $6,000
- **Associate Professor Rank:** $7,000
- **Professor Rank:** $8,000

**Graduate Students and Teaching Assistants**

Graduate students will be paid $1,250 per credit hour taught.

Most Teaching Assistant’s are performing these duties either for course credit, or as part of an assistantship. Other situations will be handled on an individual basis.

**Summer Teaching: Pay Guidelines for Primary Faculty**

Primary faculty will be paid to teach in the summer at the rate of 10% of their 9-month salary base. Faculty can teach up to 3 courses per summer under this plan.

E. Recruiting Students as Undergraduate Research Assistants

An instructor may take a few minutes of class time to provide information on research assistantship opportunities in the instructor's laboratory. This is especially appropriate in advanced and more specialized classes where the course content and the research opportunity overlap. However, it is the department's policy that students may not be asked to commit to or begin a research assistant position (whether paid, or for PY 398 credit) with an instructor while they are enrolled in an instructor's course. The purpose of
this policy is to prevent any perception that agreeing to serve as a research assistant could contribute to a higher course grade.

For similar reasons, students may not be recruited to serve as research subjects by an instructor, outside of the usual PY 101 subject pool procedures.

F. Email Distributions to Classes

All UAB students are required to have a uab.edu email address and are instructed to check that email account regularly. Instructors can send a single email to all students enrolled in their classes, and it will be forwarded to the uab.edu email account of the students in the class (some students then choose to have their uab.edu email forwarded to other accounts). To do this, send an email to PYXXX@class.uab.edu, where the XXX is replaced with the course number. Instructors are recommended to use the email system within Blackboard to communicate with students that are enrolled in online courses. Details, including instructions for complicated situations (e.g., course sections, multiple instructors) are currently available at http://www.dpo.uab.edu/classdist.html#criteria. This capability is also provided to instructors through BlazerNET.

G. Photocopying of Course Materials

The department will pay for photocopying of syllabi, exams, and a modest amount of course-relevant handouts for all students. The department will not cover the cost of multiple copies of articles for class distribution. At least one full working day should be allowed for office staff to do the photocopying for instructors. If two-color exams or complex photocopying tasks are required, at least two working days should be allowed. If less time is available, instructors should complete the photocopying themselves.

H. Psychology Subject Pool

Guidelines for using the Introductory Psychology Subject Pool are currently available at links from http://www.uab.edu/psychology/resources/faculty-resources. Introductory Psychology instructors should be highly familiar with these guidelines before the term begins. This subject pool should not be used for course assignments to students in any other classes.

I. Handling Discipline Problems in the Classroom

Understandably, most faculty are loathe to deal with discipline problems in the classroom. Some view it as a problem that should be restricted to middle school classrooms rather than university ones. Others believe it is not the instructor’s problem if students choose to listen to a lecture or not. Still others feel they are skilled enough instructors to maintain student’s attention at all times.

The fact is, whether we like it or not, most instructors will occasionally encounter unruly students. The disruptions might include whispering or talking during lectures; answering phones or forgetting to silence phone ringers; text-messaging; using a
computer during class to IM, write email, or surf the internet; entering class late or leaving class early; or any number of other disrupting activities. These activities are certainly detrimental to the offending student’s education, but of greater concern is the possibility they might disrupt the learning of “bystander students” in the classroom.

To a certain extent, disruptions must be endured. Birmingham-area traffic will inevitably cause students to be late on occasion. One student or another will inevitably forget to turn off his or her phone ringer. Broad and general warnings about discipline problems should be made on course syllabi and in opening sessions of courses, but we recommend instructors ignore occasional lapses in student discipline. When occasional lapses become more chronic, however, instructors must take action. At all times, instructors must have control of their classroom, and of the students in their classroom. Failure to do so is a form of inadequate teaching.

The action taken should vary somewhat by situation. In most (but not all) cases, public warning (that is, in front of the full classroom) will be more effective than private warnings. Public warnings will serve the full class, but also embarrass the guilty student. The first warning should usually be admonishing but kind; future warnings should be delivered in a stricter, more threatening tone. If the inappropriate behavior continues, instructors have the right and responsibility to ask offending students to leave the classroom. Students should not be expelled permanently from a classroom without approval of department administration, but instructors have the right to remove a student from a particular session whenever they deem it appropriate.

If disciplinary problems continue despite repeated warnings but appear to be non-threatening, instructors should request the student to meet jointly with them and the chair or vice-chair of the department so that appropriate action can be taken to curtail the disrupting behavior or expel the student from the class. If disciplinary problems appear to be threatening – to the instructor, the other students, or to others – then UAB police should be notified. More broadly, instructors should feel comfortable calling UAB police and/or the office of the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs (currently, Andy Marsch) to gain assistance with matters involving threats to the security of themselves or their students.

J. Online Courses and Testing

Online courses offer tremendous advantages. They are convenient to today’s busy modern students. They can be taken from anywhere in the world. From an educational perspective, they make it easy for faculty members to link to various electronic resources that are available online. They also permit regular electronic interchanges between the faculty member and students.

One critical aspect of teaching courses online is that faculty members must maintain the same rigor and intellectual content in online courses as they do in traditional classroom courses. Some students assume online courses might be easier, have a relaxed timeline for completing assignments, or generally require less work. This is a false assumption,
and we should ensure that all online courses in the UAB Psychology Department are rigorous and demanding.

As in traditional courses, online courses should have detailed syllabi that outline course requirements, the schedule for course materials and exams, and the topics to be covered. The syllabus should be distributed electronically and posted within the course shell in Blackboard where students can easily access it.

Exams should be offered online. They should be open for students to take sometime in a 48 hour period or longer. Shorter time windows to take exams are not recommended given the nature of online classes. Test opening and closing times should be specified in the syllabus and should not be altered unless a very unusual event occurs. Specific times for tests should be stated, not just dates. Using midnight as a time is not recommended, as midnight is somewhat ambiguous concerning which date it falls on. Instead, use 11:59 PM or 12:01 AM.

Faculty members teaching online courses are likely to receive a large volume of email and electronic messages from students. Despite the volume, faculty members are obligated to respond to students in a timely manner, or to have a TA respond. All messages should be individually answered, and a professional tone should be maintained, even when questions become repetitive and petty. Remember that email does not permit nonverbal cues to communication, so particular care should be taken to express oneself professionally and politely via email or other electronic messaging systems.

There are several disadvantages of online education that we as faculty must overcome. First, there is risk of breach of confidentiality when conducting assessments online. Instructors should take great care to maintain FERPA standards and use whatever strategies are possible to reduce risk of breach of confidential student assessment data. We recommend use of code numbers rather than student names and we recommend use of only the Blackboard testing environment for student assessment, as that environment is verified to be FERPA-compliant.

A second disadvantage of online education is the risk of academic dishonesty and cheating. Instructors should take all possible precautions to prevent cheating in the course. All written material should be submitted through Turnitin. Objective (multiple choice) tests should have time limits. Questions should be presented one at a time. Instructors should carefully review student responses to detect similarities in responding to multiple choice questions, unusual patterns in test-taking (e.g., tests that are completed extremely quickly), and other suspicious patterns in assessment data. Academic dishonesty guidelines and consequences should be outlined in detail in the course syllabus.

A third disadvantage of online education is that students might be physically located anywhere in the world. Because of this, students in online courses should never be required to appear on campus, including to meet with the professor or to complete
make-up exams. All students should be given the same opportunities in the course, including those who live elsewhere. Any teaching should be conducted electronically. All students should have the opportunity to complete all course requirements in the online environment without penalty.

VI. Ethics, Professionalism, and Sexual Harassment

A. Ethics

Instructors in the psychology departmental faculty must be familiar with the APA Ethics Code, and must abide by it at all times. The ethics code is currently available at http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx.

Of particular importance are knowledge and obedience to the code’s statements about unfair discrimination, boundaries of competence, accuracy in teaching, and dual relationships. Instructors who are not familiar with the APA Ethics Code are advised to study it carefully before teaching in this department. Questions about ethical behavior in teaching may be referred to the Vice Chair or Chair of the department.

B. Professionalism

One would hope it does not need to be said, but it must. Instructors should engage themselves in a professional manner at all times. Proper English should be used during instruction, and foul language avoided except in very rare instances, when it should be used “with quotations” to make an important point that could not otherwise be made. References to sexuality, politics, religion, and the instructor’s personal life should only be offered when relevant to the course material, and in those cases should be offered cautiously.

Emails sent to students, either individually or to the full class, should always use professional language and tone. Email hides nonverbal communication cues, so particular caution must be taken to avoid offensive, immature, or unprofessional comments delivered electronically.

There is no required dress code, but instructors should always wear professional attire when teaching or interacting with students.

C. Sexual Harassment and Meetings with Students

Sexual harassment is a sensitive and difficult issue. Along with familiarity with the APA Ethics Code, all faculty should be highly familiar with the University’s formal policy on this matter, which is currently available at http://www.iss.uab.edu/Pol/SexHarasStab.pdf.

To avoid any risk of sexual harassment charges, the psychology department strongly recommends that faculty do not date undergraduate or graduate students studying in the
Similarly, flirtatious behavior with students, other faculty, and staff should be avoided.

Faculty frequently have reason to meet one-on-one with students, including students of the opposite sex; students who may be angry; or students who are psychologically vulnerable. In most cases, it is wise for faculty to meet with students with their office door open. If there are particular concerns about students who are angry or who have acted strangely around the faculty member recently, faculty could even consider asking another faculty or staff member sit in on meetings.

VII. Some Recommendations for Improving the Quality of Teaching

Instructors are strongly encouraged to communicate with other instructors with regard to every aspect of teaching. Within the department (including secondary and adjunct faculty), we have a vast resource of content expertise as well as teaching experience. When lecturing outside of one’s area of expertise, it is very helpful to seek information and advice from someone who is an expert in a particular area. This is especially true for dealing with some of the oversimplifications we find in textbooks and in obtaining updates on research areas that are represented in textbooks with data that are 3, 4, or more years old. One good place to receive such current information is in the Department’s colloquium series. Of course, instructors should also read the current literature in relevant scientific journals and attend relevant scientific meetings in their sub-discipline.

With respect to teaching experience, when an instructor is faced with a particular problem, he or she can rest assured that another instructor has faced this or a similar problem in the past and is available for worthwhile consultation. Each instructor also develops a large number of examples to assist in the description of various psychological concepts. For example, Introductory Psychology students typically have a great deal of trouble with the concepts of independent and dependent variables, and they tend to struggle with the basic framework in a classical conditioning experiment. These situations call for creative approaches and unusual examples. It is surely the case that a wealth of such information is available within the Department.

There is also a wealth of information on teaching psychology available at Sterne and Lister Hill Libraries. Included are books full of active, experiential learning exercises, a large number of instructional videos, and electronic access to the Teaching of Psychology journal. Instructors are encouraged to read appropriate books and resources in preparation for teaching in our department. They may also choose to consult reputable websites, such as www.teachpsych.org, which is sponsored by the Society for the Teaching of Psychology.

Believe it or not, some instructors lecture straight from a textbook or by reading PowerPoint slides verbatim. They tend to move through the book by explaining various highlighted concepts and commenting on the issues identified on each page. Many of these instructors go so far as to read big chunks of the textbook to the class. This should
not be regarded as university-level instruction. It requires very little preparation, it essentially makes the textbook the *de facto* instructor of the course, and it is an embarrassment to this department. Students rarely complain about such teaching because it does prepare them for exams based closely on the textbook. What it *does not* do is present students with any reason to think that professors are necessary at a university. We should be able to present our material with some inherent excitement, wonder, creativity, and originality that cannot be matched by a textbook, videotape, or software program. Otherwise, we are an unnecessary luxury.