

TA GUIDELINES, Math 1075 – 1152, 1172

These guidelines contain rules that TAs should follow when teaching the large, lower division courses at OSU. Instructors of these courses should follow consistent policies in order to be fair to the students. That will help alleviate some common problems and will reduce student complaints.

Roles of Lecture and Recitation Instructor.

- The lecturer introduces the mathematical ideas and techniques to the students, discussing the main topics of each section.
- In Recitation, the TA helps students work through exercises to reinforce the ideas set out in the lecture. It should be a hands-on experience in which students improve their skills and understanding by solving problems, with the TA as a guide. The TA can clarify concepts, but should not re-lecture the course material, despite requests from students!
- The TA keeps accurate grade records throughout the semester. The lecturer determines and posts the letter grades.

Exams.

E1. Review sessions and Exam pick-up.

Don't have a review session just before an evening exam, giving students direct hints about the test. It's not fair to students in other classes when your students get detailed information about the contents of the upcoming exam.

Before an exam, DO NOT discuss the exam with students after you have seen the exam!

Directly or indirectly providing restricted exam information is grounds for dismissal.

Exams can be picked up in the Course Office after **12:30 p.m.** on the day of the exam. The best practice is to read through the exams only after you have held your last recitation session and last review session. Then you can honestly say you don't know exactly what will be on the exam.

E2. Exam Proctoring.

TAs are required to proctor the exams for their classes.

Fairness is a major goal. Here are basic guidelines for exam proctoring:

On the day of the exam, pick up exams by **3:30 p.m.** from the Course Office. Keep them in a secure place. Between the time you pick them up from the course office until you return them graded to your students, you are responsible for the safety and security of the exams. During this time period, either the exams are physically in your possession or are locked inside

your desk (or your locker, if you have a locker). The exams should not be on your desk, or in a backpack next to your desk, or anywhere else where they could be lost or stolen.

- Arrive early at the exam room. Get students to sit at least one seat apart.
- Ask students to get out their OSU IDs, calculators, and pencils. Have them put all other items on the floor (coats, notebooks, phones, etc.)
- Distribute exams quickly and on time.
- Ask everyone to check that they have all the exam pages.
- Circulate around the room. Answer questions minimally, giving no hints.
- Exam rooms should be quiet places where students can concentrate on the math problems. Do not talk during the exam.
- Watch for illegal calculators, cell phones, notes, etc.
- Count bodies in the room and later count test papers.
- Announce the remaining time periodically.
- **Check IDs & names**, especially for those students you don't recognize.
- Pick up papers on time, moving quickly.

Here are further comments on some of these points.

COUNT THE EXAMS.

After you've collected all exams from your students, please count and recount the number of exams you have in your possession before leaving the exam room. Please consult your course coordinator for additional instructions.

START ON TIME.

It's not fair if one student starts 5 minutes later than another because distribution is slow. Don't check IDs as you pass out the papers. It is safest to check IDs and signatures on exam papers as the exams are handed in, as your course policy requires. All students in the room must have a copy of the exam before the exam officially starts.

GIVE NO HINTS.

If a student asks a question during the test, give a minimal answer. Don't say whether their answer is correct or whether they are on the right track. Giving hints to the whole class is not fair to other classes. One exception to this is if there is clearly a misprint on the exam. In that case, correct it in the simplest way and immediately write the correction on the board and announce it to everyone.

END ON TIME.

Collect exams promptly when time expires. Allowing extra time for your students is not fair to students in other test rooms.

E3. Exam Grading.

Exams for large courses are usually graded after the exam at a “grading party”. This helps maintain fairness in grading. A grading guide is provided by the coordinator.

When you accept employment as a TA you are agreeing to attend all class meetings **and** the evening exams and grading sessions. Attendance is part of the job.

- Students read their corrected exams. Do not write inappropriate comments on exam papers.
- Grading guides are not public documents: they should NOT be shown to students. This includes grading guides from past semesters.

E4. Missed Exams and Make-ups.

All large math courses offer a make-up exam the morning after the evening exam. Students who cannot attend the scheduled evening exam must contact the lecturer for permission to take the make-up. Students attending the make-up should bring their ID and permission slip with them to that exam.

Completed make-up exams can be picked up at the Course Office. **Do not** give an exam early. Security problems are just too great. Exceptions might be made in some rare cases, but: special exam arrangements are made by the **lecturer**, not by the TA. Proctoring should be done by the lecturer.

It is the **lecturer’s** responsibility to deal with students who miss exams. Students who cannot find the lecturer should be sent to the Director of Undergraduate Instruction (not to the course coordinator).

E5. Changes to Exam Grades.

It is the **lecturer’s** responsibility to deal with changes in exam scores. TAs should not make changes to student exam scores, except to correct addition errors in scoring. The student should submit his exam to the lecturer, together with a list of the exam problems to be reviewed and why. Then the lecturer can make all adjustments in a consistent fashion. The TA should record the changes and return papers to the student.

- Do not comment to students on whether a particular problem will receive more points. That makes it more difficult for the lecturer if extra points aren’t warranted.
- The lecturer needs to inform the TA of adjustments to the student’s score since the TA keeps the grade records. The simplest method is for the adjusted exam paper to go first to the TA, then returned to the student. **Students should not be the ones to inform the TA of changes to exam grades!**

E6. There is no curve.

Exam scores will not be “curved” or adjusted. We never curve individual exam scores. Letter grades depend only on total points at the end of the semester, not on individual test performances. In rare cases adjustments might be made to letter grade cut-off scores at the end of the semester. Discuss grade adjustments only if they have been clearly announced by the course coordinator or the Director of Undergraduate Instruction. Do not tell the students your guesses and conjectures about future adjustments to the scores.

Details about grade adjustment policies can be found from the course coordinator.

E7. Student Life Disability Services (SLDS).

Some students have disabilities and require special accommodations for testing. In order to get those accommodations they must go through SLDS and have an official evaluation.

EXAMS: All the SLDS paperwork for Midterm and Final Exams (in coordinated math courses) is done by the Course Office, but the students should show official SLDS forms to the instructors. The student makes all Exam arrangements through SLDS. Completed exams are returned to the Course Office for the TA to pick up and grade.

QUIZZES: Typically quizzes are written by the TA and given during recitation. If an SLDS student requests accommodations for quizzes then these accommodations should be arranged through SLDS. In such cases, the TA will fill out an SLDS form specifying the quiz dates, duration, allowed calculators, etc. The TA should also arrange to send a copy of the quiz to SLDS (usually by email, or by fax done through the Course Office). The student will take the quiz at a time scheduled through SLDS, with the completed quiz returned to the Course Office. For further details on this process, check with Ann Logan.

E8. Exam scores and privacy.

There are federal laws ensuring privacy. Students should receive their graded papers and exams directly: don't give their papers to friends. They also have the right to check whether the scores and grades are recorded correctly in the instructor's records. You may send grades to students by email using the student's official “osu.edu” account.

- DO NOT send grades to any other email address.
- DO NOT give out grade information over the phone.
- Give grade information to the student only (not to parents!).
- DO NOT post grades publicly (even with secret codes hiding identities).

However, some OSU administrators are authorized to get information on a student's academic progress. For example, advisors from the Department of Athletics ask about attendance, quiz scores and midterm grades of student-athletes. Sometimes the Math Advisors need midterm score information in order to advise students.

Please respond to those requests quickly.

If you have a question of who is authorized to know exam scores, ask the Math Advisors, Dan Boros, or the Director for Undergraduate Instruction.

E9. Academic Misconduct.

If you notice cheating, report the information immediately to the Director of Undergraduate Instruction. If there is sufficient evidence the Director of Undergraduate Instruction can begin the process of reporting the case to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct. That process results in a grade of “incomplete”, with final actions depending on the outcome of a hearing.

- DO NOT take any action yourself in these cases.
- Never state that a student cheated. Simply say that there is concern about the student’s work.
- Do not communicate information about academic misconduct cases to anyone else! Even the student’s academic advisors are not authorized to know about a pending case.

Final Grades.

F1. Recitation Points.

Homework and quiz grading policies for each course are usually set by the course coordinator. It is the TA’s responsibility to make sure that the recitation grades are reasonable. The course coordinator should set guidelines to ensure some uniformity for recitation points. Such guidelines help avoid situations where one class has significantly higher recitation points than another, although the students are doing equivalent work.

F2. Final Grades.

Note: At OSU the grades *A+* and *D–* do not exist, and *E* is the failing grade. The special grades *I* and *EN* are discussed below. Grades for “pass/non-pass” and “audit” are rarely used by students in mathematics. For more information about these grades, see the Course Office or Vice Chair.

The course coordinator provides letter grade cut-off scores. The TA computes the letter grades following those cut-offs, noting any borderline cases. The TA then meets with the lecturer to discuss all grades. Student grades should never be lowered below the cut-off percentages announced on the syllabus or set by the coordinator. In addition, “nudging” student grades up for improved performance should be done sparingly. The lecturer makes the final decisions and submits the letter grades.

The grade of “**incomplete**” or *I* may be given only when the student is unable to complete the semester and has met ALL of the following criteria:

- the student has completed the majority of the coursework (at least half of the work),
- the student has a passing grade in the work he/she has completed, and

- the student has discussed this with the lecturer and the lecturer agrees that the circumstances are legitimate to allow for a delay in completing the work.

An *I* means that the lecturer and the student have discussed the situation and have agreed on the schedule for completing the missing work. Students who miss the Final Exam and make no prior arrangements should get the grade *E*, not *I*.

The *EN* grade is for students who either never attended or stopped attending class. For this grade you **must** indicate the number of weeks (from 0 to 15) that the student attended class. The *EN* is computed as an *E* in the student's GPA.

F3. Departmental Grade Reports.

At the end of the semester, the lecturers submit the letter grades of students officially enrolled in the class. The lecturer should give to the Course Office a paper copy of the official letter grades (printed from the faculty center's page). In addition to that record, the lecturer is responsible to submit detailed Departmental Grade Reports (on paper) to the course office. Sometimes, the lecturer may ask the TA to submit these documents on their behalf to the Course Office. Even when all records are kept electronically on Carmen, **the Course Office needs a paper copy.** Those reports provide an accessible permanent record of test and exam scores. It is important to provide them by the end of the Semester and to make them readable. Here is the format. (A sample Grade Report is given on the last page.)

Make the report for each class section on one readable page, displaying:

- Instructor name, course, and call number,
- Student last names in **alphabetical order**,
- Student ID Numbers

- Total Recitation score,
- Exam scores (Midterms, Final, & modifications),

- Total points for the Semester,
- Letter grade.

Details of the quiz and homework scores (which make up the Recitation score) do not need to be included. Grade report sheets can be done conveniently using Excel or similar software, or by using paper forms provided in the TA mail room.

It is important to **include ALL students who were registered for or who attended class at some point during the semester**, whether or not their names appear on the official roster. Sometimes students claim they attended (or did not attend) a class some time ago. Our department needs accurate records to verify those claims.

Other Points of Concern.

P1. Student Messages.

Respond promptly to students email messages and phone calls!

If a delay is needed, tell the student you received the message and will get back to them later. The Vice- Chairs frequently see students who are frustrated because they sent messages, left voicemail, and wrote paper notes, but got no response from the instructor.

P2. TA mailroom.

We try to keep that room as secure as possible.

DO NOT send students to the TA mail room.

Do not leave sensitive materials in the mail room.

Have students pick up or leave materials at the front desk in the Math Tower. If more than a few students are involved, make other arrangements.

P3. Student Questions and Complaints.

Students often have questions about the mathematical material. They may go to the TA's office hours, and to the lecturer's office hours. Students should certainly be reminded of the Tutor Rooms in the MSLC. There may be some additional evening tutoring opportunities in the MSLC. Students who want to hire private tutors should be referred to the reception desk in the Math Tower, where there is a list of qualified private tutors.

Lecturers should handle student complaints. If that is not sufficient, send the student to the Director of Undergraduate Instruction.

DO NOT send students to the course coordinators! Don't even mention the coordinator's name to the students. The names of course coordinators is not public information.

P4. Course Methods.

Keep in mind the mathematical level of the students that you are teaching.

Stick with the announced course plan.

Work the problems as they are shown in the textbook or in lecture. Real difficulties arise when math problems are solved by non-standard methods.

TECHNOLOGY. Some courses use graphing calculators, others use MyMathLab. Students are expected to use those technologies, so all the instructors should learn to use them too. Please let the Director of Undergraduate Instruction know if there is a problem with this.

P5. Communication

It is too easy to have courses where the TAs and lecturers never talk to one another. Email is an easy and effective means of communication, but face-to-face meetings help build good

professional relationships. You can talk about how the course is going, what topics should be stressed, which exam problems were hardest for the students, etc. Lecturers are asked to visit the recitation classes of each TA at least once per semester. The lecturer will fill out a short evaluation form and submit it to Dan Boros.

P6. Behavior.

You represent the Department of Mathematics and OSU.

Even though it might not be obvious, students often view their TAs and lecturers as mentors and role models. **Be professional** at all times when you interact with students and colleagues.

- Do not use offensive language in class.
- Do not comment on a student's personal life, life style, ethnic group, or religion.
- It's best not to discuss politics.

Do not have a close personal relationship with someone in your class! Such behavior can be grounds for dismissal from the University.

P7. Prompt return of student work.

Midterm exams, quizzes, homework, and other assessment should be returned to students as quickly as possible. Students need the feedback on their work, since there are firm deadlines for withdrawing and dropping classes.

Midterm exams should be returned within two days.

P8. Exam Papers and Shredding.

Students may review their Final Exam papers, but they may not keep them.

Final exams need to be kept in the Department for one year. These are usually kept by the lecturer, but in special circumstances they may be stored in the Course Office. Care must be taken with documents containing student information (like old exams and class rosters). They should be stored in a secure location. Dispose of them by shredding, not just throwing them into the trash. Shredding can be done in the Math Duplicating Facility.

P9. Be in class.

DO NOT cancel any classes. If you have to miss a class, complete the appropriate Absence Report and arrange for a qualified substitute. If an emergency will cause you to miss class, quickly email TAemergency@math.osu.edu before class start time. If email is not an option and time is short, contact the Math Department front desk (292-4975) to report your absence. Possibly, someone from TA support will be able to arrange for a substitute.

- If you know ahead of time that you will miss more than one day of classes you teach during the semester, then you should not take a TA job that semester.

You are expected to be in your office during scheduled office hours. You are also responsible for being in the tutor room during your scheduled times there.

P10. Carmen (Canvas).

Most courses use Carmen (Canvas), which is an electronic class management system. The TAs will enter Midterm grades and quiz grades promptly so that students can find their own grades. Lecturers have access to the Carmen records of all students in their classes. Carmen (Canvas) questions may be addressed to Elizabeth Miller (miller.4962@osu.edu).

For further discussion of these policies contact the Director of Undergraduate Instruction, Dr. Bill Husen (husen.1@osu.edu), or the TA Coordinator, Dr. Dan Boros (boros.9@osu.edu).

Here are two sample Grade Reports. In addition, printed standard Grade Reports are available in the TA mailroom.

COURSE : MATH 1130

Lecturer: Prof. Rstt TA: Mr. Tsrr

AU 2003 Call #: 27182-8 Lecture: TR 8:30 Recitation: MW 9:30

First Name	Last Name	Student ID	MT 1	MT 2	MT 3	Final	Rec	Tot	Grade
Marcus	Aurelius	100-00-0000						0	EN 0
Benjamin	Dover	100-00-0001	95	92	98	180	45	510	A
Michael	Jackson	100-00-0002	65	51	38	65	18	237	E
Clark	Kent	100-00-0003	88	82	78	166	38	452	B
Willy	Makit	100-00-0004	72	79	81	126	48	406	C+
Alfred	Newman	100-00-0005	26	42	51	77	21	217	E
Tom	Terrific	100-00-0006	52	48			12	112	EN 6
Alison	Wonderland	100-00-0007	75	68	57		39	239	I/E

Some people believe that you should **include more detail about quiz scores** (which are part of the Recitation Total). That information allows us to read off which students did not attend recitation classes.

Some courses have automatic methods of modifying midterm grades depending on performance on parts of the Final Exam. Here is a sample of that type:

COURSE : MATH 1148

Lecturer: Prof. Xyzz TA: Mr. Zyxx

AU 2003 Call #: 31415-9 Lecture: TR 2:30 Recitation: MW 3:30

First Name	Last Name	Student ID	Exam 1	Exam 2	Adj E1	Adj E2	Final PT 1	Final PT 2	Final PT 3	Rec	Total	Grade
Marcus	Aurelius	100-00-0000										EN 0
Benjamin	Dover	100-00-0001	95	92	82.5	86	35	40	45	45	352	A
Michael	Jackson	100-00-0002	65	51	60.5	55.5	28	30	26	18	222.5	E
Clark	Kent	100-00-0003	88	82	84	83	40	42	46	38	337	B
Willy	Makit	100-00-0004	72		84	45	48	45	32	48	302	C+
Alfred	Newman	100-00-0005	26	42	31	50	18	29	25	21	174	E
Tom	Terrific	100-00-0006	48	52						12	112	EN 6
Alison	Wonderland	100-00-0007	75	68						39	182	I/E