INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Giving a university course and taking a course are *processes*; like all processes, they can be done well, or badly, or somewhere in between. It is in everyone's interests that these processes be done well and, with the large class sizes now common in our courses, there is added pressure for efficient use of the available contact time between students and instructors. I offer the following guidelines to students, on the basis of considerable experience, to promote the desirable goal of optimizing, as far as feasible, the processes of giving and taking this course.

1. Lecture Attendance

I am increasingly concerned about many students' sporadic lecture attendance for what I consider entirely *in*adequate reasons. I strongly urge each student to try to attend *every* lecture in the course, for the following reasons:

- I believe that significant learning of course material occurs through the processes of repeatedly *hearing* the terminology of the subject area and *listening to* the logical development of a body of knowledge by an informed and prepared professional; some learning opportunities are *unique* to a particular class;
- it is *in*efficient use of an instructor's time to have to deal with students who, for inadequate reasons, miss class and then have difficulty with the course material or need other assistance.

I believe that students' poor class attendance stems mainly from improper *time management*. To assist you with the important task of *effective* time management, the foregoing pages 0.2 to 0.4 provide, in reasonable detail, a description of your responsibilities in the course and their dates. It is highly desirable that you have, *and properly use*, such information for *all* your courses as early as possible in the term. Note the availability at the Audiovisual Centre (E2 1309) of the 25-minute BBC training video: *The Time Manager* (#I91-208); also available for viewing is the 20-minute video: *Managing Pressure at Work* (#I91-205), although its perspective is employment rather than university study. [Both videos have accompanying printed materials.]

- If you choose not to attend a class, it is *your* obligation to familiarize yourself with the material covered, to find out from other students about any announcements or other administrative matters that were dealt with, and to make your own copies of any materials that were distributed.

2. Class Participation

It benefits everyone in a class if there is *active* participation by *all* class members. If you do not understand something, ask about it – it is quite probable that you are not the only person who needs clarification. In addition, it is important to respond to the instructor's questions; there is no penalty for wrong answers, and sometimes we learn more from wrong answers than right ones.

3. Tutorials

I see a vital function of tutorials as enabling students and their instructor and/or T.A.s to interact on a personal basis to address specific concerns or difficulties an *individual* student is having with the course material. This interaction is different from, but complementary to, what occurs in a traditional lecture setting.

- By not attending tutorials, students are missing an opportunity to appreciably *enhance* their understanding of current course material and, hence, to make more effective use of the time spent in lectures.
- In borderline situations or those involving possible special consideration, it is often to a student's advantage if the instructor has *personal* knowledge of their work in the course; such knowledge can be gained as an off-shoot of discussions during tutorials, as well as from class participation.

4. Availability of Additional Help From the Instructor

From students who have been attending class regularly and subject to reasonable time constraints, I welcome inquiries (*e.g.*, after class, during posted office hours) about the course material (lectures, assignments, etc.); however, it is *essential* that students bring with them the *written* work (*e.g.*, their lecture notes, attempts at the solution of a problem) that pertains to their question(s).

- One proviso is that I will *not* answer questions about assignment difficulties on the day the solutions are to be submitted.
- My university telephone number is given on the Course Outline so that, *occasionally*, a student can make an appointment to see me about a legitimate course matter; I anticipate that most students will have no reason to contact me by telephone or by e-mail during the term.
  - I will *not* repeat over the telephone matters of course administration dealt with in class and/or in the printed Course Materials; if you need routine course information you have missed or mislaid, get in touch with a friend in the course.
  - For reasons of confidentiality, I will also not give marks or other course performance information over the telephone.
  - If you have a good *documented* reason for missing class and need assistance with the course, come and see me in person.
- *Routinely* seeking help *outside* tutorial times may indicate poor time management and may result in using the instructor's available time for teaching activities in a less efficient way from an overall perspective.

5. Assignments

Assignments in a course can serve a number of purposes; these may vary with factors such as the subject area, the level and approach of the course, and the instructor, to name only a few.

- In this course, the *primary* purpose of the assignments is to provide students with an opportunity to practise working with all aspects of the course content (*e.g.*, concepts, skill development, terminology); it is *essential* that students devote adequate time to the assignments.
  - It follows from the previous point that the assignments in this course are only incidentally an *assessment* vehicle. I would personally prefer neither to collect nor to grade student assignment solutions for three reasons:
    - ∗ handling assignment solutions involves a considerable amount of my time that I see as detracting significantly from my primary task, as an instructor, of providing learning opportunities for students;
    - ∗ it may be poor training to imply that students should do assignments because they obtain *marks* for them, rather than doing them for the benefits that accrue in terms of *understanding of the course material*;

(*continued overleaf*)

∗ I have an underlying concern about the small percentage of students who try to obtain false credit on the basis of copied assignment solutions.

Although some Departments in our Engineering Faculty are successful in greatly restricting submission of student assignment solutions, I recognize with regret that such a policy is probably not currently feasible in the Faculty of Mathematics.

– A proper component of course assignments may be problems for which no assistance and/or no solutions will be provided; for example, such problems might be straight-forward applications of lecture material.

- I believe that most students benefit from working with at least one other class member while solving assignment problems, *provided* that each person in the group makes an adequate contribution to the discussion. However, it is essential that final copies of solutions be written up *independently*, to avoid accusations of plagiarism; I consider as a serious academic offence *any* form of copying on assignment solutions or other submissions.

6. Submission of Assignments

It is your responsibility to know and to meet assignment submission deadlines, *including* cases where a change is made to accommodate an altered rate of coverage of the relevant material. The *only* routinely valid grounds for late submission are *documented* medical difficulties; a plea of heavy workload is generally *not*, to me, an adequate reason, because I announce submission dates well in advance (*e.g.*, at the start of term), and I regard it as a normal part of students' time management to meet such deadlines.

- I will only consider accepting a late assignment if you explain your reason to me *in person* before you submit the assignment.
- A very high percentage of the assignments that are collected are returned to their authors, but *if* you are concerned about possible loss of your assignment solution, take a photocopy before you submit your original.
  - A photocopy may also be useful for assignments submitted just prior to tests or to the end of term, if you wish to use your solution for studying.

7. Presentation of Assignments

A good deal of administrative time is taken up handling assignment solutions, particularly in large classes; *I* view this use of time as relatively unprofitable. It is helpful to instructors and teaching assistants, and it is therefore in your interests, to observe the following points in the presentation of assignment solutions:

- *Staple* the pages with *two* staples; avoid paper clips, which tend to come off or catch on other students' assignments.
- *Print* your name and I.D. number, together with the other requested information, on a copy of the assignment cover page I provide, or give this information in the centre of your own cover page; it is a good practice to label the upper right-hand corner of *all* pages after the cover with your name and I.D. number.
  - Unnamed assignments and those with illegible names will *not* be graded.
- Label questions clearly, and present them in the *same order* as the assignment sheet. Write neatly and set out solutions logically; where appropriate, highlight answers.
- Assignment solutions written on only *one side of the page* are usually more convenient to grade, but students may wish to avoid using the additional paper involved in this form of presentation.
- Assignments on *long paper* are less convenient for markers to handle; in large classes, long paper may be unacceptable.

The instructor (or a teaching assistant) a may refuse to accept, or may deduct marks from, assignments for which a reasonable attempt has not been made to meet these presentation guidelines; use of the assignment cover sheet I supply is recommended. [You may wish to colour code, or otherwise personalize, for easier identification the photocopies you make of this cover page.]

8. Posted Assignment Solutions

I post assignment solutions in the display cases in the hallway outside the Statistics Tutorial Centre (MC 6095) with definite intentions as to how they should be used.

- They are intended primarily for students who have done, or seriously attempted, an assignment, so that answers can be checked or difficulties resolved; come and see me if difficulties are *not* resolved quite quickly from *reading* the posted solutions. I consider that a student who has not *seriously* attempted a problem has *not* earned the right to look at its solution.
  - My posted solutions also provide examples of the *reasoning* that leads to a solution and how solutions should be *presented*.
  - Because I do not use assigments primarily for assessment and because of time constraints, grading may be less thorough than that of midterms and examinations; posted solutions allow students to check the grading of their solutions.
- Part of good time management is to have an assignment done and then to properly use its posted solution *while it is available*. Because of limited space in the Statistics display cases, postings are usually for a *two-week* period and normally can*not* be repeated later in the term.
- I consider it an abuse of the system, and a *most* unprofitable use of time, if students *systematically* copy down my posted solutions for the whole, or substantial parts, of an assignment.
  - Unless I have given you explicit authorization in writing, I regard it as an academic offence for you to have in your possession any complete or substantially complete copy of model answers to the assignments in a course I am teaching.
- I do *not* put hard copies of assignment solutions on reserve in the Library for two reasons:
  - I believe it is an important educational goal that students should develop their *own* assignment solution sets over the course of the term; real-world problems do *not* usually come with ready-made solutions;
  - the extensive photocopying that takes place of library solutions greatly decreases the useful lifetime of particular assignments; in the courses I usually teach, the development of good assignments is *extremely* time-consuming, so that it is in both mine and students' interests to maximize effective assignment lifetime.

Students should recognize that, despite my commitment to posting assignment solutions in the courses I teach, there may be occasions when time does not allow me to prepare such solutions; it is therefore *not* appropriate for you to base your study plan in the course on the premise that *all* assignment problems *will* have their solutions posted.

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INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS FROM THE INSTRUCTOR (continued)

9. Assessment

Assessment in this course is based on a combination of assignment, quiz and final examination marks, as described on the Course Outline. The rationale for this scheme is as follows:

- The heaviest (but not excessive) weight is always attached to the final examination because I believe it is essential for students to be able to demonstrate, under test conditions, mastery of a body of knowledge of reasonable size (*e.g.*, a one-term course). I see this aspect of the the final examination as a significant addition to knowledge of appreciably *smaller* course segments as exhibited on quizzes (and assignments).
- Because I believe that more useful learning of the course material occurs when the process of its assimilation takes place gradually over a whole *term*, rather than in a short interval just prior to the final examination, term work *always* has appreciable weight in the course grade; *i.e.*, there is *no* 100% final examination option.
  - As a consequence of the previous point, I do *not* regard a pass on the final examination as an absolute criterion for 'success' in this course – it is possible to pass the final examination and still obtain a *failing* overall final mark. Two extreme examples are, assuming no assignment or quiz marks, a final examination mark in the range 60-66% yields a course grade below 50%, and a final examination mark of 59% yields 35%.
    - ∗ Note also that, again with no term work, a final examination mark of 100% becomes 75% overall.
- To help protect the vast majority of conscientious students from cases of false credit based on copied assignment solutions, the weight of the assignment component in each student's course grade is determined by her or his final examination mark; in this way, a conscientious student can obtain appropriate credit for the work represented by good assignment solutions.

10. Requests for Remarking

There may be times when a student wishes the instructor to reconsider the mark given to part of a submission such as an assignment, quiz or final examination. In doing so, students should recognize that, even in mathematics, marking is *not* an exact science, and there may be legitimate differences in opinion among instructors about the fraction of the possible marks that should be awarded to a particular answer. Other points are:

- For marked submissions (like assignments and quizzes) which are returned to the student, a claim of incorrect marking is *much* weaker in the situation where the work is erasable (*e.g.*, written in pencil) rather than in permanent form (*e.g.*, written in non-erasable pen).
  - Requests for remarking must be made within a reasonable time period; *e.g.*, for assignments and quizzes, within a week of the date at which the submission became available for return to students.
- When I receive a final examination for remarking (*e.g.*, from a student grade appeal), I approach the task *independently* (as far as practicable) from the previous marking; any change in mark is therefore potentially as likely to be a *de*crease as an increase.
  - I do not normally submit a grade revision unless the change is more than two (2) marks.
- When I submit a failing course grade for any student, it is the result of a careful reconsideration of the completely marked exami- nation as a whole, combined with multiple checks of the accuracy of all components of the mark calculation. It is therefore extremely rare that a failing grade in a course I teach becomes a pass on appeal.
  - For a course grade of 47%, in addition to the precautions just described, I usually discuss the whole case with another experienced instructor; I also try to allow at least 24 hours to elapse between calculation and submission of course grades, so that I have adequate time to reflect on borderline cases.

11. Special Consideration

Students can normally expect little or nothing in the way of special consideration unless they provide proper documentation (*e.g.*, for illness, a medical certificate from a doctor or other recognized health professional). The medical certificates provided by UW Health and Safety have places to show both the *severity* and *duration* of illness; these are important pieces of information for an instructor trying to assess whether special consideration is warranted.

- It is easy to see one's own problems as more important than those of other people; however, when requesting special consideration, it is essential to remember that it is an instructor's responsibility to consider *all* students in a course.
  - The *earlier* in a term that a properly documented request for special consideration is made, the easier it usually is to deal with.
- Remember that properly completed term work is an insurance policy for sickness or other unanticipated difficulties around examination time.
- As indicated when the examination timetable is posted, student travel plans are *not* considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time. If you make such plans before examination dates are known, it is sensible to avoid times within the relevant examination period, whose dates are published well in advance in the University Calendar.

After course grades are posted, students whose mark is appreciably lower than they expected or needed should note the following:

- I will *not* normally discuss marks – I check all marks with considerable care and an appeal procedure is available (*e.g.*, through the undergraduate office of the faculty in which you are registered).
- I will *not* normally discuss special consideration – this is the task of the appropriate Standings and Promotions Committee, based on relevant information supplied by the student.
  - In (the relatively rare) cases where special consideration *is* warranted after grades are posted, its *primary* purpose is to provide another chance for a student to exhibit mastery of course material(s), *not* to raise existing grade(s).
- I *will* offer academic advice pertaining to the subject area, within the limits of my knowledge and experience and subject to reasonable time constraints.

An additional matter to note is that, because STAT 220 and STAT 221 are *required* courses for the 3-year Bachelor of Mathematics degree but are offered only *once* a year on campus, a student who is taking these courses late in their program should ensure that they devote adequate time to the courses to achieve a pass. A failing final grade in STAT 220 or STAT 221 can*not* be reconsidered merely because credit in the course is needed to graduate before the next course offering.

(*continued overleaf*)

12. Proper Use of the Course Materials

The Course Materials for this course are provided as a service to students and as an adjunct to lecture attendance and an incentive to class participation; they are *NOT* a substitute for these two vital activities and, if you misuse them in this way, you can expect to derive little benefit from the course or to do actual *harm* to your understanding of the subject.

- The Materials present a sequence of important ideas, and they are intended to facilitate proper coverage of the course content and to avoid excessive copying of material during class. It is essential for students to *study* the Materials – to read them, to think about and discuss the ideas, to answer questions they contain, to consider the illustrations and elaborations of them presented in class, and to *re*-read them – to appreciate many important implications of the ideas which will be of value regardless of your year of study.
  - For lower year students or those with limited statistical background, the course provides both an opportunity to gain an appreciation of what the subject of statistics has to offer, and a framework within which to view later statistics courses.
  - For upper year students and those with formal statistical training, the material can yield, in addition, new and important insights into concepts encountered in earlier courses, and a chance to gain the broader perspective needed for proper understanding and practice of the subject.
- The Course Materials are *not* primarily intended to serve as course *notes*, in that they contain fewer expository sections of the type which form the major part of a typical introductory statistics text.

13. Teaching and Learning

In my experience, learning has to be one's own *personal* responsibility – in the final analysis, no one else can do it for you. I therefore see an instructor's task as being to provide *opportunities* for students to learn, but *you* must make the *use* of these opportunities.

- An instructor can provide opportunities for learning by a wide range of techniques, which include:
  - organized presentations of ideas and concepts;
  - interesting and/or stimulating presentations of examples and illustrations;
  - providing suitable practice materials, including tutorials and/or laboratories where appropriate;
  - supplementing the usual oral presentations with written and/or video materials;
  - informal discussion with individuals or small groups.
- You should use the materials and opportunities in ways that are best suited to your individual learning style(s).

In this course, you will be provided with a wealth of learning opportunities, but you must recognize that you will gain little unless *you* make the effort to avail yourself of the opportunities presented to you.

- You can greatly help yourself in this matter by organizing your time effectively so that, as indicated above:
  - you attend class regularly;
  - you keep up with your reading in the course;
  - you complete term work to the best of your ability and submit it for grading as required;
  - you make proper use of the posted model answers while they are available;
  - you seek help with the course material as soon as you need it, so that you can continue to follow new ideas as they arise.

My experience is that students who have difficulty learning the course concepts, and/or difficulty learning to apply them are, with few exceptions, students who do not observe one or more of these guidelines.

I see the provision of learning opportunities (like those described above) as defining a *professional* relationship between instructor and student; to me, this type of relationship has only limited aspects of the characteristics normally associated with relationships between friends and between members of a family, for instance.

- Illustrations of the differences among these types of relationships are asking the instructor (not a friend or family member) for help with the course material after an enforced absence due to illness, but asking a friend (not the instructor) for a temporary loan of a course text or lecture notes, and asking a family member (not the instructor) for assistance with a personal problem.

14. Prerequisites

Prerequisites for a course are set for good reasons; I therefore do not take lightly the matter of over-riding prerequisite requirements.

- Although I regard it as academically undesirable, *occasionally* there are adequate reasons for me to allow a student without a necessary prerequisite to take a course I am teaching.
  - In these circumstances, I expect the student to acknowledge explicitly that he or she has been given special dispensation and that he or she takes *sole* responsibility for his or her success or failure in the course; *i.e.*, no later appeal for special consideration can be based on a claim of lack of prerequisites or inadequate preparation.