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

A noteworthy component of the course is what are called *tutorials*; these consist of between one and three questions, usually dealing with the topic(s) of the previous class or two, which form the basis of open-book group discussion and for which group answers are submitted for grading after a specified period of class time.

- Provided we progress through the course topics at a suitable rate, there will be 13 tutorials during the term.
- Students form their own groups of *three* people, in time for Tutorial 1 in the second class; groups remain fixed throughout the term.
- The length of tutorial problems may mean that groups whose members are unprepared to work with the relevant topic(s) may have difficulty finishing in the time available.
- The instructor and a teaching assistant are available for consultation during tutorials, which therefore provide a significant opportunity for each group member to enhance their understanding of current course topics and, hence, to make more effective use of the time spent in class.
- Because tutorials are held in scheduled class time, attendance is the expected norm; if you have *documented* medical or other unavoidable reason for missing a tutorial, please contact the instructor without delay.
- Tutorial questions will be graded on a 3-point scale to reduce marking time and simplify assessment.
- A few tutorials have a bonus question but it will be graded *only* if the answer(s) of the mandatory question(s) are worth full marks.
- Provided that a tutorial is completed in a reasonable time period, its answer will be discussed briefly in class immediately following submission of the group answers.

Presentation of Tutorial Answers

A good deal of administrative time is taken up handling tutorial answers, 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 tutorial answers:

- If your have more than one page, *staple* them with *two* staples; avoid paper clips, which tend to come off and to catch on other students' submissions
- *Print* the names and I.D. numbers, in alphabetical order of last names, of your group members on *all* pages.
  - Unnamed submissions and those with illegible names will *not* be graded.
- Label questions clearly, and present them in the *same order* as the tutorial sheet. Write neatly and set out answers logically; where appropriate, highlight answers.
- Answers written on only *one side of the page* are usually more convenient to grade, but students may wish to avoid using the additional paper that is involved in this form of presentation.

The instructor (or a teaching assistant) a may refuse to accept, or may deduct marks from, answers for which a reasonable attempt has not been made to meet these presentation guidelines.

- Your own copy of your answers may be useful in the case of submissions made just prior to tests or to the end of term, if you wish to use these answers for study purposes.

(*continued overleaf*)

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 purpose of the assignments is to provide students with an opportunity to practise working with all aspects of the course material (*e.g.*, concepts, skill development, terminology); it is *essential* that students devote adequate time to the assignments.
  - Assignment are *not* used for assessment in this course for three reasons:
    - handling assignment answers 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*;
    - I have an underlying concern about the small percentage of students who try to obtain false credit on the basis of copied assignment answers.
  - A proper component of course assignments may be qustionms for which no assistance and/or no answers will be provided; for example, such questions might be straight-forward applications of lecture material.
- I believe that most students benefit from working with at least one other person while answering assignment questions, *provided* that each member of the group makes an adequate contribution to the discussion.

Posted Assignment Answers

I post assignment answers in the display cases in the hallway outside the Statistics Tutorial Centre (MC 6095) with definite ideas 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 dfficulties are *not* resolved quite quickly from *reading* the posted answers. I consider that a student who has not *seriously* attempted a question has *not* earned the right to look at its answer.
  - Some of my posted answers also provide examples of how answers should be *presented*.
- Part of good time management is to have an assignment done and then to properly use its posted nanswers *while they are 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 answers 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 answers on reserve in the Library for two reasons:
  - I believe it is an important educational goal that students should develop their *own* assignment answer sets over the course of the term; real-world questions do *not* usually come with ready-made answers;
  - the extensive photocopying that takes place of library answers 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 answers in the courses I teach, there may be occasions when time does not allow me to prepare such answers; it is therefore *not* appropriate for you to base your study plan in the course on the premise that assignment questions will *necessarily* have their anwers posted.

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 (lectures, tutorials, assignments, etc.); however, it is *essential* that students bring with them the written work (*e.g.*, their lecture notes, attempts at the answer to a question) that pertains to their inquiry.

- 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 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 another person in the class.
  - For reasons of confidentiality, I will also not give marks or other course performance information to students 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* class 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.

Assessment

Assessment in this course is based on a combination of tutorials, quizzes and final examination marks, as described on page #0.4 of the Course Outline. The rationale for this scheme is as follows:

- The heaviest (but not excessive) weight is 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 final examination as a significant addition to knowledge of appreciably *smaller* course segments as exhibited on quizzes (and tutorials).
- 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.

(*continued*)

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS FROM THE INSTRUCTOR (continued)

Assessment (continued)

– 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* grade in the course. Two *extreme* examples are, assuming no tutorial or quiz marks, a final examination mark of 100% yields a course grade of 54%, and a final examination mark of 75% yields 41%.

∗ As indicated on page #0.4 of the Course Outline, a failing mark on the final examination will normally become the grade in the course, *regardless of the term mark*; *e.g.*, 40% on the final examination becomes a grade of 40% in the course.

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 a tutorial, 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 of 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 tutorials 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 tutorials 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; *if* there has been no mistake in grading, 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 examination as a whole, combined with multiple checks of the accuracy of all components of the grade calculation; it is therefore extremely rare that a failing grade I give in a course 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 time to think adequately about borderline cases.

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, or the *shorter* the elapsed time after a problem occurs, 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 often an important insurance policy for sickness or other unanticipated difficulties around examination time.

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 final 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, *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.

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 – in order to appreciate many important implications of the ideas which will be of value regardless of your statistical background or year of study.
  – For students with a more limited statistical background, the course provides both an opportunity to gain an appreciation of what a major area of the subject of statistics has to offer, and additional background for later statistics courses.
  – For students with greater 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 statistics.

(*continued overleaf*)

Proper Use of the Course Materials (continued)

- The Course Materials are *not* intended to serve only as course *notes*, in that they contain considerably more than expository sections of the type which form a substantial part of many survey sampling texts.

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 posted 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 or 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.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites for a course are generally 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 giving.
  - 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.