

COURSE POLICY REVOLUTION

Maintain rigor without rigidity by teaching with compassion

PREMISE:

- Students manage multiple competing responsibilities outside of the demands of any particular class
- Students truly want to learn
- Punitive, inflexible course policies do not promote learning, but instead result from tradition, illusions of rigor, or instructor convenience
- Harsh policies may cause students to drop, fail, or withdraw even when they otherwise have achieved course learning outcomes
- Negative effects are greater for nontraditional students, creating additional inequity

QUESTION: How can the principles of Universal Design for Learning be used to develop proactive strategies for accommodating students' needs without compromising standards?

How might we teach differently if failure is not an option, but high standards must be maintained? We can incorporate flexibility into the course structure to accommodate the expected and unexpected internal and external obstacles that threaten student success. Using the principles of Universal Design for Learning, participants will develop and exchange ideas for proactive strategies to promote student success and self-regulation. The goal is rigor without rigidity.

Think of a course you teach. On the back of this handout, consider ways to modify your course policies to provide accommodations for students' crises before they occur, without unduly increasing your own workload.

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General principles and examples:

- Multiple opportunities to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes
- Multiple opportunities to improve with feedback (revise and resubmit)
- Pre-planned flexibility to absorb effects of unplanned crises

Traditional structure and policies	Proactive and flexible policies
4 midterm exams	Makeup exam available to all students
10 essays reflecting on assigned readings	Assign 14 papers, take 10 highest scores
15-page research report	Sections due at intervals with chances for feedback and revision, students have limited number of tickets for late submission
10-page review of research literature	Initial due date and last chance due date

Additional resources

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