Today’s Discussion

Brief Overview of Academic Ombud Services

Student Rights and the Syllabus

Academic Responsibilities and Academic Offenses
Problems Handled by the Academic Ombud Services Office:

- Grade Disputes
- Admission/Registration Problems
- Disciplinary Matters
- Perceived Favoritism
- Fear of Retaliation
- Determinations and Sanctions for Academic Offenses
Office of Academic Ombud Services

109 Bradley Hall - 859-257-8737 - Confidential FAX 859-257-5546 - Email: ombud@uky.edu

The national government of Sweden first coined the term “Ombudsman” to designate “the people’s deputy” who was charged with facilitating smooth and fair interactions between individual citizens and agencies of government. The contemporary term “Ombud” or “Ombudsperson,” denotes “a person who is designated within an organization to investigate individual complaints, problems, and conflicts and to mediate their resolution or solution.”

At the University of Kentucky, the Office of Academic Ombud Services is responsible for assisting students and instructors work through and resolve academic related problems and conflicts. The major areas of activity for UK’s Academic Ombud include both Student Academic Rights and Academic Offenses. The primary focus of Academic Ombud Services is the process by which decisions are made, and the positive role of the Ombud is
What does the Academic Ombud Do?

• The Ombud works with all persons engaged in teaching and learning activities of the university.
• Provides a safe, neutral, and confidential setting for raising questions, discussing problems, and seeking assistance with academic issues.
• Explains university policies and procedures and their application.
• Investigates student grievances.
• Recommends changes in policies and procedures to better ensure fairness in teaching and grading.
Core Academic Rights of Students

Substantive Rights

• Fair and just evaluation of student’s performance in University courses based on standards defined in the course syllabus.
• Notice of midterm performance for undergraduate students
• Limits on dead week activities
• Rules for excused absences

Procedural Rights

• Notice and hearing rights in case of an academic offense
• Right of appeal regarding grades and academic offenses
Academic Rights of Students

University Senate Rule 6.1.0

- 6.1.1 Information about Course Content
- 6.1.2 Contrary Opinion
- 6.1.3 Academic Evaluation
- 6.1.4 Academic Records
- 6.1.5 Evaluation of Student Character and Ability
- 6.1.6 Student Participation in Academic Affairs
- 6.1.7 Attendance and Participation During Appeal
The Course Syllabus

Four Core Areas:

• General Course Information
• Instructor Contact Information
• Course Description
• Course Policies
The Course Syllabus

- Establishes expectations of students, instructor, department, college, and university
- Explicit and complete
- Avoids vague, ambiguous statements
- Available at no charge
- Available the first or second class meeting
The Course Syllabus

Course Information:

• Course ID (prefix, course number, section number )

• Course Name

• Location(s) and meeting time(s) including common exams
The Course Syllabus

Instructor Information:

- Name
- Contact Information (Office Location, Office Phone Number, Instructor(s) Email Address)
- Office Hours and Location; Instructors should be reasonably available for consultation outside of class
- Policies regarding appointments
- Alternate contact options (department phone number)
The Course Syllabus

Course Descriptions:

- Course descriptions should match the UK Bulletin
- Provide a reasonably detailed overview of the course
- Identify components of the final grade and their relative weight; clarify expectations for assignments; the relations of scores to letter grade
- Provide a timeline that includes due dates for major assignments
- Provide the time, date, and nature of the final exam
The Course Syllabus

Grading Policy:

- Letter Grades – How are these related to the final grade?
- Rounding Grades – Will the final grade be rounded?
- Curving Grades – If there is a curve, how is the curve established?
- Midterm Evaluation – What assignments are included?
The Course Syllabus

Dead Week (Senate Rule 5.2.4.6)

- Intent is to avoid undue hardship on students before final exams.

- If the course has a final exam:
  - No quizzes, exams, laboratory practicals, projects, or student presentations may be scheduled during dead week (make-up exams are excepted).
  - Attendance and participation may be graded and regularly scheduled homework identified in the syllabus is allowed.

- If the course has no final exam:
  - Quizzes, exams, laboratory practicals, projects, and student presentations may be scheduled in the syllabus to fall during dead week.
  - If these items are not identified in the syllabus provided during one of the first two class periods, they may not be scheduled during dead week.
The Course Syllabus

Course Policies

- Clarify policies and sanctions for violations
- Attendance, including late arrivals and early departures
- Excused absence policy; refer to University Senate Rule 5.2.4.2
  - Documentation requirements
  - Requirements for make-ups
- Expectations of classroom decorum and behavior
  - Penalties for improper decorum and behavior
The Course Syllabus

Course Policies

- Process for assignment submission
  - Format, deadlines (by date of, by time of, by class period, by time during class)
- Academic integrity reminders
- Group work and collaboration guidelines
- Disability resources
Academic Integrity

- Essential to the University and society
  - Share your perspective with your students

- Student rights, including most importantly the right to a fair and just evaluation, impose the responsibilities of academic integrity on all students.
Academic Integrity

Procedures for Academic Determinations

- Discretely collect evidence.
- Consult with course director or department chair.
  - For further rules and guidelines, contact Academic Ombud Services.
- Meet with the student and the department chair.
- Hear the student’s perspective.
  - Notify the student of his or her right of appeal.
  - Notify the student that the Ombud will assist him or her.
- Determine if an offense occurred, and if so, the penalty to be imposed.
- Notify the student in writing within seven days of the penalty imposed.
- Notify Academic Ombud Services of the penalty imposed, if any.
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act is a federal law that helps protect the privacy of student educational records.

Discussing a student’s record with any person who does not have a legitimate educational interest (including, but not limited to, parents, spouses, and employers) is a violation of FERPA. This pertains to all conversations and communications.
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

Faculty and staff with access to student education records are legally responsible for protecting the privacy of the student by using information only for legitimate educational purposes to instruct, advise, or otherwise assist students.

Unless your position involves the release of information and you have been trained in that function, any requests for disclosure of information, especially from outside UK, should be referred to the Registrar’s Office.
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

For further information or questions regarding FERPA, please contact the Senior Registrar, Sean Cooper.

Sean.Cooper@uky.edu
Academic Ombud Services

Please contact our office with any questions you encounter throughout the semester.

109 Bradley Hall
(859) 257-3737
ombud@uky.edu