

Policies on make-up exams, cheating and unofficial withdrawals

Make-up exams

During the semester: there is no departmental policy regarding make up exams during the semester (quizzes, midterms, etc). Some faculty have a strict "no make- up policy" and do not offer make up exams regardless of cause. These faculty members simply weight the final exam more heavily for students who miss exams during the semester. Other faculty members allow students to make up missed exams provided they have a good excuse for missing the test. Whichever option you choose, you should make it clear on your syllabus and you should mention it in class when discussing the class administration. So long as students are informed at the beginning of the semester what the policy is then they will not have cause to complain about the policy later on.

At the end of the semester: the university governs the administration of missed final exams. Students who cannot take your final exam (for whatever reason) must petition their school for an incomplete. If the school grants the incomplete, then the student has the right to take a make- up exam. That exam will be administered by the school at the start of the next semester. Last year, I negotiated with the undergraduate schools a deal whereby only one make up exam will be administered for each class regardless of the number of students who need an exam for the class (surprisingly this had not been the policy) and that the school would contact me rather than the faculty member to get the exams. I then follow up with individual faculty members to get make- up exams.

Unofficial Withdrawal

The college/GS policy on the grade of *UW* is that it is to be granted only to students who have completed no substantial work in a class. The example given in the bulletin is that a student who has taken a midterm for a class is not eligible for this grade. The economics department enforces this policy. Unfortunately many departments at Columbia use the *UW* as a way to avoid failing a student (either by granting it to students who do not show up to the final or who take the final and fail). Many students simply stop participating in the class after a poor midterm hoping that you will give them a *UW*. These students are dismayed to see the *F* on their transcript. To avoid this you should make the departmental policy explicit on your syllabus and in the first class - students who complete a midterm (or any substantial work that you would like to name) are not eligible for the *UW*.

Cheating

Cheating on exams is obviously not tolerated and if you or your TAs suspect cheating on an exam then you should bring it to my attention. Plagiarizing is equally egregious and should be brought to me. A grey area is cheating on other types of assignments such as a homework assignment. There is no set

policy on what constitutes cheating on such assignments and what the penalty should be. You are free to set the rules that you would like students to follow regarding collaboration on work on and submissions of assignments (work alone, work in groups, open conversations between students, copying old answer sheets) and free to set the penalty for failure to comply with the rules (0 on an assignment, 0 on all assignments etc). Whatever policy you choose, you should make it explicit at the beginning of the semester by putting it on your syllabus and pointing it out in class.

To sum up - my best advice for dealing with all three of these issues is to make the policy explicit at the beginning of the semester. If one of these issues crops up during the semester then it is better for both you and the students to have a clear policy that you can rely on.