

MEMORANDUM

TO: Visiting and Adjunct Faculty at the University of Iowa College of Law

FROM: Eric Andersen, Senior Associate Dean
Carin Crain, Associate Dean of Students
Peggy Timm, Exam Coordinator

DATE: August 2015

RE: A brief guide to exams and grading

Thank you for teaching at the College of Law. We appreciate the important contribution you make to our students. We hope this brief guide to the process of preparing and administering exams and assigning final grades at the end of a course will be helpful to you. We hit the high points in this memo and refer to other documents that provide more detail. Of course you are always welcome to ask us if you have other questions.

The basis for assigning grades

In many courses the final grade is based entirely on the final exam, which must be graded anonymously. Most of this memo focuses on exams and grades based on them. But some courses, such as seminars, have no exam at all. It is also common for instructors to include some non-anonymous factors such as class participation, short writing exercises, etc. in their final grades.

At the beginning of a course you should provide certain information about exams and grades to your students, even if you have not yet prepared the exam. In particular, tell them what factors will affect their final grades (e.g., exam, paper, participation, attendance) and by what amounts. If possible, tell them the general format of the exam (e.g., timed, in-room; take-home; essay, multiple choice, short answer, or some combination thereof). The best way to communicate that information is in a course information document that provides other information such as the syllabus, required books, your contact information, office hours, etc.

Permitting students to type their exams

The exam process is affected in a number of ways by the practice, allowed by most faculty and followed by most students, of using a laptop computer for exams that call for essays and short-answers. Students who do so must use the ExamSoft software program approved by the law school. The software produces typed answers (easier to read than most handwriting) on pages identified only with exam numbers. Please note the following about using computers for exams:

- A student may bring only one computer into the exam room. It must have ExamSoft installed.
- Law school policy permits the use of computers during exams *only* to answer essay questions. They may not be used for multiple choice questions or by students who choose to handwrite their essay answers.
- During the exam, the software locks out all functions of the computer other than basic word processing and word counts. This is an essential security feature that prevents students from communicating with others electronically or accessing unauthorized material during the exam.
- Students will therefore NOT have access to an *electronic* version of their notes or any other material on their hard drives or on line, even if your rules allow them to use those sources during the exam. They will need to print out any such material in hard copy before they take the exam.

If you plan to allow your students to use ExamSoft, inform our exam coordinator, Peggy Timm (peggy-timm@uiowa.edu, 319-335-9011, room 299).

Preparing a final exam

You should strive to make the exam fairly represent the material covered in the course. Exam lengths should generally be proportional to the credit hours earned for a course, although you have discretion to deviate from this norm. Thus, the exam for a three-credit hour course should take approximately three hours.

Please proofread your exam (both questions and instructions) meticulously. Errors can cause confusion and disruption while the exam is being administered.

Be specific in your exam instructions about particular rules (if you have any) for answering questions. (For example, essay answers may be typed, but students may show calculations in a separate bluebook.)

Your exam instructions should end on a separate page from the first exam question. That permits students to read the instructions and make inquiries before they start reading and writing the exam itself.

If you use a combination of multiple choice, essay, and short-answer questions, you can either include them in a one-part exam, or make each format a separate part, with its own time limits, that begins and ends individually.

We use an exam check sheet (see Appendix I) to make sure the law school staff and proctors have all the information they need to administer the exam. Work with your secretary in completing the check sheet, making sure that it is identical, in all relevant respects, to the exam instructions that will accompany the exam. For example:

- If the students may consult some material during the exam (“limited open book”), that material must be described specifically both on the check sheet and in the instructions. If any and all material may be consulted (“open book”), then both the check sheet and instructions should make that clear.
- Include both on the check sheet and in the instructions information about the length of exam, the type of questions asked (multiple choice, essay, short answer), and whether students may use their computers. (Remember that only one computer may be used to write answers to essay and short-answer questions, not to access notes – even if the exam is open book.)

Your secretary can assist you in completing the exam check sheet and taking it and the exam to Peggy Timm by the deadline that will be sent to you (12-14 days before the exam is to be given). The law school staff will take care of duplicating the exam and administering it to the students.

Carin Crain (carin-crain@uiowa.edu, 335-9648; room 292), the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, would be happy to meet individually with adjunct faculty and visiting professors to discuss exam preparation, exam software, rescheduling of exams, student discipline, etc. Please contact her in October to prepare for December exams; and in March to prepare for spring exams.

Preparing students for the exam

You should have given the students general information about the exam at the beginning of the course. As the end of the course approaches, we recommend that you give them a copy of the exam instructions, so they will be able to ask you questions about them in advance of exam day.

You may choose to give the students advice about preparing for or taking the exam. Sometimes faculty members will respond to questions about the exam during their office hours or otherwise outside of class. **Please note that it is essential that anything you say to one student about the exam MUST be told to the entire class.**

Students with disabilities may be legally entitled to exam accommodations. Dean Crain administers the process. If she concludes that an accommodation is warranted, she will notify you and explain the circumstances, keeping the student’s identity anonymous if possible. Please sign and return the form she sends you promptly, so we can arrange for any needed accommodations.

Some students for whom English is a second language may seek time extensions for their exams. These requests are handled by Dean Crain and Professor John Reitz. They ask the

students for information, review it, and – if they conclude that extra time is warranted – make a recommendation to you. Please respond promptly to the notice and request for approval.

Exam Administration

Exams are administered by proctors, usually law school secretaries. Faculty members are welcome to serve as proctors for their own exams. If you choose to do that, you will need some instruction on the rules and protocols for serving in that capacity. Please notify Dean Crain if you are interested.

The exam administrators must be able to reach you if questions arise before, during or after the exam. If you cannot be in your faculty office during that time, please provide them with a direct phone number. This information is requested on the exam checklist.

If a student arrives late for an exam, the exam administrators will contact you. You may decide either to allow the student to take the full amount of time for the exam or require that the exam be finished in the time remaining.

Professors may permit students who have exams three days in a row to reschedule one exam. If you permit a student to reschedule an exam, it will be administered on the next available makeup day following the regularly scheduled exam date.

Dean Crain permits students to make up exams under other, limited circumstances. If the make-up is scheduled after the two-week exam period is over (to accommodate a serious illness, for example), you may begin grading the remainder of the exams. We will inform the student that anonymity in grading may not be possible.

Grading

Final grades are subject to a mandatory curve in most law classes. The curve requirements (as well as other information about grades) are set out in Appendix II. Note that there is a separate curve for classes with fewer than 30 students. If the final grade is based primarily (i.e., more than 50%) on graded, skills-oriented tasks (including writing) other than a final exam, a mandatory curve does not apply. We nevertheless expect faculty to respect the underlying purpose of the curve by avoiding giving grades that, as a group, are unreasonably high or low.

If the final grade is subject to a curve, but is based in part on non-anonymous factors, you will be required to submit tentative grades or raw scores to Deb Paul (debra-paul@uiowa.edu; 335-9080; room 282), the law school registrar, before you are given the names of students paired with their exam numbers so you can complete your grading. Even when that information is given, we recommend maintaining anonymity to the extent possible. For example, if tentative grades are to be modestly adjusted for class participation, you might ask your secretary to make the adjustments you give her without disclosing the name-exam number information to

you, following which you can make a final check, on an anonymous basis, for compliance with the curve.

You or your secretary submits final grades to the registrar in hard copy and on line. The registrar makes them available to students electronically using University systems. Before that occurs, she will check for compliance with the curve, where it applies. If it is not satisfied, the grades will need to be brought into compliance, or you will need to show good cause to deviate from the curve. Good cause may exist in a number of circumstances, such as when many raw scores are clumped together and there is no principled basis for separating the final grades. Meeting the curve in very small classes can be difficult, or even impossible. If you are having trouble meeting the curve, please see Senior Associate Dean Eric Andersen for assistance and possible approval of an exception.

Grades must be submitted by a deadline sent to you by the registrar. It is, essentially, two weeks after the date of the exam for class size under 40, and three weeks after the date of the exam for larger classes. Please be aware that submitting your grades on time is a significant responsibility. When grades are late, students may be prejudiced in a number of ways including updating their resumes as part of their search for employment, being certified for financial aid, and having their class ranks determined. We do not release any grades to students until after the end of the exam period. If you submit your grades before then, be aware that your students will not see them immediately.

Although individual grades are sent to students electronically, we are required to provide to all students in the class information about the distribution of the grades in the course. That information permits them to see how they performed relative the rest of the class and to confirm that the grades match up to the mandatory curve, if one applies. This requirement can be satisfied either by sending the information to students electronically via the ICON course management system or by putting a hard copy of the information outside your or your secretary's office.

Retention of Exams

Law school practice is to retain students' exams for two years or until after they have graduated from law school, whichever is longer. If you would like the law school to store and ultimately dispose of your students' exams after they have been read, grades have been submitted, and students have had time to consult with you about them, please contact the exam coordinator Peggy Timm (peggy-timm@uiowa.edu, 319-335-9011, room 299).

Appendix I

University of Iowa College of Law Exam Check Sheet – Fall 2015

Course Title: _____ Exam Date: _____ Time: _____
Course Number LAW: _____ Class Count: _____ Grad Students Taking Exam? (Y / N) _____ # students _____
Professor's Name (and phone #): _____ Secretary's Name (and phone) _____
Day of Exam Contact Numbers: _____

If one part exam, complete Part I below. If two-part exam, complete Part I and Part II below.

PART I

Exam Length

- Time allotted for Part I: _____
 - Mandatory reading-only period? (Y / N) _____
 - If yes, how long? _____ minutes
 - May students take notes while reading? (Y / N) _____

Laptops allowed? (Y / N) _____

Exam Type: _____ Essay
_____ Multiple Choice
_____ 5-answer (green form)
_____ 10-answer (purple form)
_____ Short Answer
Write directly on exam? (Y/N) _____

- _____ Closed Book Exam
_____ Open Book Exam – No restrictions
_____ Limited Open Book Exam- Only materials checked
below will be allowed at students' seats:
_____ Course book (provide 4 copies of book cover)
_____ Supplements (specify) _____
_____ Self-prepared class notes
_____ Self/study group-prepared outlines
_____ Class handouts
_____ Materials provided by professor on day of exam
_____ Commercial outlines
_____ Calculator
_____ Dictionary - paper only
_____ Other (specify) _____
_____ All materials allowed except _____

Scratch Paper Allowed:

- _____ Yes – exam copied single sided – use back of page
_____ No scratch paper – exam copied double sided

Total Exam Time: _____ If two-part exam, time allotted for break: _____ minutes

PART II

Exam Length

- Time allotted for Part II: _____
 - Mandatory reading-only period? (Y / N) _____
 - If yes, how long? _____ minutes
 - May students take notes while reading? (Y / N) _____

Laptops allowed? (Y / N) _____

Exam Type: _____ Essay
_____ Multiple Choice
_____ 5-answer (green form)
_____ 10-answer (purple form)
_____ Short Answer
Write directly on exam? (Y/N) _____

- _____ Closed Book Exam
_____ Open Book Exam – No restrictions
_____ Limited Open Book Exam- Only materials checked
below will be allowed at students' seats:
_____ Course book (provide 4 copies of book cover)
_____ Supplements (specify) _____
_____ Self-prepared class notes
_____ Self/study group-prepared outlines
_____ Class handouts
_____ Materials provided by professor on day of exam
_____ Commercial outlines
_____ Calculator
_____ Dictionary - paper only
_____ Other (specify) _____
_____ All materials allowed except _____

Scratch Paper Allowed:

- _____ Yes – exam copied single sided – use back of page
_____ No scratch paper – exam copied double sided

NOTE: If your exam consists of more than two parts (e.g. Essay + Multiple Choice + Short Answer), please provide clear instructions on how you would like your exam administered on a separate sheet of paper.

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Special Instructions (e.g., word limitations for laptops; page limitations for hand writers; grad students writing papers):

Return and Disposal of Exam Materials:

___ **Used exams have answers on them, return to professor for grading!!**

Return: ___ original exams, ___ extra copies, ___ used exams

Shred: ___ original exams, ___ extra copies, ___ used exams

Provide the following to exam administration:

___ Original and four (4) copies of this form

___ Four (4) copies of the exam instructions

___ Four (4) copies of allowed course books and/or supplements if limited open book exam (covers of the books allowed)

___ Original and one (1) copy of the Copy Center duplication form.

Professor's Signature:

Updated: August 21, 2015

Appendix II

Grading Curve Requirements

B. Grades

1. Grading Policy

*Effective for students entering the College in May 2004 and thereafter*¹

Grades will be awarded on a scale of 1.5 to 4.3. No academic credit shall be given for a grade below 1.8 or for a grade of Fail. A 2.1 average (the lowest C average) will be required for retention and graduation. A student who earns a grade of lower than 1.8 in LAWR I or withdraws from LAWR I is not eligible to take LAWR II. A student who has not earned a grade of at least 1.8 in LAWR I and LAWR II is referred to the Retention Committee. (University of Iowa College of Law Faculty meeting minutes adopted May 17, 2011.) A numerical grade may be translated into a letter grade for purposes of comparison as follows:

4.3-4.2=A+	2.9-2.7=B-
4.1-3.9=A	2.6-2.4=C+
3.8-3.6=A-	2.3-2.1=C
3.5-3.3=B+	2.0-1.8=D
3.2-3.0=B	1.7-1.5=F

2. Grade Distribution Policy (effective September 2006)

The following grading norms shall be followed in all courses in the College of Law, except as otherwise provided below:

The median grade in a class shall be 3.3, with the following distribution:

4.2-4.3	A+	0% - 5%, with a norm of 2.5%
3.9-4.1	A	5% - 10%, with a norm of 7.5%
3.6-3.8	A-	10% - 20%, with a norm of 15%
3.3-3.5	B+	20% - 30%, with a norm of 25%
3.0-3.2	B	20% - 30%, with a norm of 25%
2.7-2.9	B-	10% - 20%, with a norm of 15%
2.4-2.6	C+	5%-10% with a norm of 7.5%
2.3 & under	C, D, F	0% to 5% with a norm of 2.5%

When awarding grades at the extremes of the scale (i.e., "A+" grades or "D/F" grades), faculty members must exercise their own judgment concerning what performances are outstanding ("A+") or seriously deficient ("D," "F"). To the extent a faculty member's grades at the extremes are below the distributional norms, the distribution of grades at

¹ In November 2005, the faculty decided to adjust the grading scale and grading curve applicable to the students who entered the College in May 2004 and thereafter. This change included a retroactive adjustment of the grades of students entering in May 2004 or thereafter. Thus, transcripts for those students issued after December 9, 2005 will show correct grades. Earlier transcripts for those students are no longer correct. The new policy (as of November 17, 2005) is set out above.

adjacent grade levels can be adjusted to achieve the overall distributional norms of 25% of grades at the "A+/A/A-" level and 25% of grades at "B-" or below.

3. LAWR and Upper-Level Courses

For LAWR and upper-level courses with fewer than 30 students in which the final grade is based primarily on a final exam, an alternative curve is mandatory. The median grade in such courses shall be between 3.2 and 3.4 with the following distribution:

3.7-4.3	A+/A/A-	15-35%
3.3-3.5	B+	20-30%
3.0-3.2	B	20-30%
2.9 & below	B-/C+/C/C-D/F	15-35%

The curve is not applicable in upper-level seminars and other upper-level classes in which a student's grade is based primarily on the student's performance on graded skills-oriented tasks (including writing) other than a final exam.

There shall be no deviations from this policy without showing good cause to the Dean of the College of Law. University of Iowa College of Law Faculty Meeting Minutes adopted (Apr. 20, 2006).

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6. Faculty Submission and Posting of Grades

Faculty members teaching small classes (40 or fewer students) are expected to submit their grades two weeks after the exam is given.

Three weeks are allowed for larger classes. When faculty have exams from two classes to grade, the time period for the second exam begins at the end of the time period for the first.

Each faculty member shall post in some form the grade distribution for each course he or she teaches. Such posting of grades shall be done anonymously. The instructor makes available to students their respective grades by posting through the Iowa Student Information System ("ISIS"). No grades or grade distributions should be posted before the end of the last day of the exam period.

Students must take responsibility for getting their grades by checking ISIS at <http://isis.uiowa.edu>