

## **Nuts and Bolts: Surviving the First Semester Teaching at Calvin**

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The best place to go for everything you need to know to survive your first semester (and beyond) is online: <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/resources/>. Additional information can be found in the Faculty Handbook: <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/handbook/>.

A few key links and topics are highlighted below.

### ***Where are the dates for the academic calendar?***

On the registrar's page: <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/registrar/calendar/>

### ***What is the modified schedule for the opening day of class?***

Calvin opens the semester with an all-campus Convocation. Note that attendance at Convocation is expected of faculty. Please wear regalia. Classes are adjusted to make room for Convocation. See <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/services/calendar/modifedschedule.html>.

### ***Where do I get my class pictures?***

Go to the Provost's "Instructional Resources" for the ClassPic Generator: <https://www.calvin.edu/cgi-bin/auth/login.pl?l=/cgi-bin/classpic.pl&echo=1>

### ***What should be on my syllabi?***

The Provost has developed a "What to Put on the Syllabus" slide show under "Instructional Resources" to answer this question: <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/teaching/>

Here are a couple of examples of the things you'll want to include:

Syllabi should contain the college's **Disability Statement**: *Calvin College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Office of Academic Services. Students should also notify their instructors during the first two weeks of class.*

And syllabi should also contain the following **Statement on Academic Integrity**: *The student-faculty relationship is based on trust and mutual respect, which can be seriously undermined by the suspicion or reality of academic dishonesty. Academic Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (students plagiarize when they do not credit the sources of their writing—the words, information, ideas, or opinions of others), improper group work, reuse of a paper from another course, and/or cheating on a test. Students are encouraged to speak to their faculty member with specific questions related to academic dishonesty.*

For further clarification or information please visit:

<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/engl/101/tresources/plagiarism.htm>

The course's **Student Learning Objectives** should also be included on the syllabus; discuss with your department chair or mentor for information on developing learning objectives for your courses.

Beyond that, syllabi will vary, and you should consult departmental examples. But you should try to include the following general categories: your contact information and office hour

availability; course objectives; required texts; student assignments and evaluation measures (i.e. description of tests, papers, projects, etc.); course schedule; policies related to grading, attendance, missed exams, late work, etc.

### ***What do I do if a student begins to miss a lot of class?***

If a student starts to miss class regularly, you should first try to contact that student directly by email or phone. If you are unable to reach the student, you may wish to initiate an attendance check through Student Life. An inquiry will be sent to the student's other professors, and information will be communicated to the appropriate dean or resident director. Detailed instructions for requesting an attendance check can be found at:

<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/services/attendance/>

Faculty members can determine arrangements for the student to make up classwork and tests upon his or her return to class. Should legitimate emergencies occur just prior to examinations, faculty members have the option of waiving the final exam and giving a grade on the basis of work done throughout the semester.

With regard to less serious illness, the Health Services policy is as follows:

- Students are expected to make appointments outside of class time unless a serious illness or injury is involved.
- The nurses will supply an ill student with a Health Services visit verification form. This is not an excused absence. Information is given (with the student's permission) for the benefit of the professor, who has the power to grant excuses, makeup work, incompletes, etc. Health Services staff members will not verify an illness or injury for which they have not been seeing the student. Each time a health report is requested, the student will be reminded that this is not an excuse, but a health visit verification.
- If the illness is expected to result in hospitalization, more than three days of missed classes, or the need to go home temporarily, the appropriate dean in Student Life will be notified. With the student's permission, the dean will send a statement to the professors involved.

Further information on student attendance can be found in the Faculty Handbook:

[http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/handbook/chap\\_4/4\\_2.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/handbook/chap_4/4_2.htm)

What do I do for a student who seems to be in crisis?

There are a number of excellent resources available on campus to help students with personal concerns that might interfere with their lives or their learning at Calvin. As John Witte, Dean of Student Life, explains: "The first is obviously the faculty themselves, who can often help mollify some concerns simply by listening well, offering wisdom from their experiences, recommending other resources, and following up with a note or word later." But beyond that, it would depend on the nature of the concern:

For general support with family or adjustment issues, you might recommend that the student visit the Broene Center or talk to his or her Resident Director (if the student lives on campus). The Broene Center is an excellent resource for students struggling with mental health issues,

including depression. It is located at 362-373 Spoelhof College Center. Students may drop-in or make an appointment. There is no cost for students for this service.

Other health-related concerns can be addressed by Health Services. Health Services does a great job caring for students physically, and they can also be a good place to start for students who are initially reluctant to visit the Broene Center. Health Services will often refer students to Broene or to Campus Ministries for further care.

If the student is struggling with spiritual questions, the Campus Ministries staff can provide pastoral care and offer spiritual conversations and counseling. Campus Ministries and the college Chaplain's office are located in the Commons Annex.

If the student confides in you concerns regarding sexual abuse or harassment, information to assist students in addressing those concerns can be found at:  
[http://www.calvin.edu/admin/broene/sexualassault/sexual\\_harassment.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/admin/broene/sexualassault/sexual_harassment.htm).

### ***What about a student who is struggling academically and requests a tutor?***

These students will need to secure a Tutor Request form from the SAS office. The form needs your signature – be sure that the student has worked with you first, before asking for a tutor. In general, a tutor meets with the student for one hour, once weekly. Students are not charged for tutoring services.

### ***My student can't seem to write a decent sentence. Help?***

The Rhetoric Center (Library 207) is available for students in all majors and at all academic levels. It is staffed by tutors drawn from a range of academic disciplines. Students can obtain help at each stage of writing from idea generation to final editing. Like other tutoring services, the Rhetoric Center is free.

You may want to add this paragraph to your syllabus: **Library Research and Writing Assistance:** Consider visiting the Research librarian at the library's Help Desk and/or the Rhetoric Center. The Desk is located at the main entrance and staffed most hours that the library is open. The Research Librarian is skilled at using all the research tools located on the library's website and quickly can point you in the right direction. You can contact the research librarian four ways - 1) visit the Help Desk, 2) call 526-6307, 3) use the Ask-A-Librarian e-mail service, or 4) chat in real time. These services are outlined on this web page [http://library.calvin.edu/services/reference\\_service](http://library.calvin.edu/services/reference_service). The Rhetoric Center is also located in the library (L207); many students find the Rhetoric Center to be extremely helpful in the writing process. Be sure to plan ahead to have enough time for revisions.

### ***How do I deal with a student whom I suspect of cheating?***

The first recourse is to speak to the student about your suspicions and see if the matter can be resolved. You should also notify your chair. You may wish, if the matter remains unresolved, to have the chair present for a second meeting. You should have established on your syllabi clear consequences for academic dishonesty. However, if the student denies the allegation, you may not take unilateral action and the case will need to proceed to adjudication by the office of the

Dean of Judicial Affairs for Student Life (see Faculty Handbook, 4.2.8: [http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/handbook/chap\\_4/4\\_2.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/handbook/chap_4/4_2.htm)).

**Note:** Calvin College requires that instructors report all cases of academic dishonesty—including all cases of plagiarism—to the Student Life Office. Reporting forms can be found at: <http://www.calvin.edu/student-life/forms-policies/pdf/academic-dishonesty.pdf>. The Vice President for Student Life then decides what additional measures, if any, the case merits.

### ***What is FERPA?***

[The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) places significant restrictions on how and with whom faculty members may discuss the educational progress of their students. In short, don't disclose information about grades or performance of a student to anyone unless you are sure that this disclosure falls under one of the exception clauses of the policy. For example, don't leave graded student work in a box out in the hallway for students to collect. For more information on FERPA, please consult the following webpage: <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/services/ferpa/>

### ***What if I have to miss class because of an emergency? For conferences and the like?***

In case of emergency, notify your department chair or secretary. For scheduled absences, you should inform the chair and make provisions to have the class taught by some other person or to have some specified and scheduled activity take place during the class time.

### ***How do I know how I'm doing?***

Formal student evaluations will be conducted at the end of the semester. However, you may wish to obtain feedback earlier in the semester. A variety of ideas for course evaluation can be found at: <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/provost/teaching/instructional/tools/>. You may also request that a faculty teaching fellow observe your class to give you feedback (this is confidential). Additionally, you should expect that a member of your department will observe one or more of your classes during the first year as part of your evaluation (this is not confidential insofar as it is part of your reappointment process).

### ***When are grades due?***

Mid-term grades for first year students are due October 21. Final grades for all students are due December 23 by 4:30 p.m.

### ***How do I get to know people outside my department?***

There are a number of ways you can leave your departmental cocoon. Consider having lunch at the Staff Dining Hall, attending campus talks, participating in noon basketball or volleyball games, or joining an inter-disciplinary reading group. You may want to join Calvin-matters, a campus-wide list serve where a number of lively discussions take place. Women@calvin is another (less active) list serve available for women. For directions on how to subscribe to either list, see: [http://www.calvin.edu/it/core/email/mailling\\_lists.html](http://www.calvin.edu/it/core/email/mailling_lists.html). For an online forum for buying and selling things, check out “Calvin eDeals” under the Moodle “community” tab.