

## **Impact of Department-Level Teacher Workshop on Reducing Student Complaints**

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# **Impact of Department-Level New Teacher Workshop on Reducing Student Complaints**

## **Abstract**

Since the fall 2017, the mechanical engineering department has conducted a teacher workshops in which the nuts-and-bolts of teaching are covered. The workshops focus on how to improve student learning and subsequently reduce the number of student complaints. The overall perception is that the workshops are effective since problems often stem from common mistakes made by instructors. In this paper, the workshop is summarized as well as lessons learned. Based on our experiences, a successful workshop needs to have (1) a point of contact for questions throughout the semester, (2) time for introduction and socialization with new instructors, (3) iterative review and revision of the syllabus and schedule for first-time instructors, and (4) clear delineation of do's and don'ts, (5) suggestions for how to conduct a class based on student feedback. Common mistakes made by new instructors include: (1) failing to adhere to University/College/Department deadlines and requirements, (2) being too quick to say yes to student requests, (3) failing to seek guidance from faculty who taught the course previously, (4) being either an excessively lenient or harsh grader, (5) not knowing what to do when a problem arises (such as cheating). Feedback from workshop attendees is summarized to document the perceived benefits of the new teacher workshop.

## **Introduction:**

In the past 10 years there has been significant growth in undergraduate student enrollment in mechanical engineering yet there has not been the same rate of growth in tenured and tenure-track faculty who teach undergraduate courses. As a result, there has been increasing dependence on part-time instructors to teach core engineering courses, and this has been a trend in many engineering programs [1-2]. With an increased reliance on part-time faculty there have been challenges such as scheduling flexibility to accommodate travel schedules, increased coordination between full and part-time instructors, unfamiliarity with university policies and procedures [3]. As a result, most programs that rely on part-time instructors have developed a list of do's and don'ts for part-time instructors which cover a wide range of topics. These often boil-down to instructions for how to navigate the university, scheduling and room assignments, on-line course management system, to name a few important topics. There was a sequence of unfortunate events which caused the department chair to initiate a formal half-day new teacher workshop which was initially directed at part-time instructors but has been adapted to any new teacher in the department. The workshops have grown so that new teachers from other departments in the college now attend.

## **The Breaking Point:**

Figure 1 shows the percentage of "A" grades assigned by ten (10) different instructors over 9 years in a junior-level fluid mechanics class. The instructors are designated by the two letters, followed by the year and the last digit is for the semester (1=fall, 2=spring, 3=summer). In the spring 2016 semester, a new instructor taught one of the two sections of offered. This was to be the third time the part-time instructor was to teach this course. Grades from the spring 2015 and fall 2015 semester had been reviewed and it was found that the part-time instructor had assigned a high

percentage of “A” grades which was well-above the historic average. The part-time instructor was extremely popular with the students. When enrollment opened for the next semester, students flooded the enrollment in the part-time instructor’s section. The department chair noticed this and called a meeting of instructors.

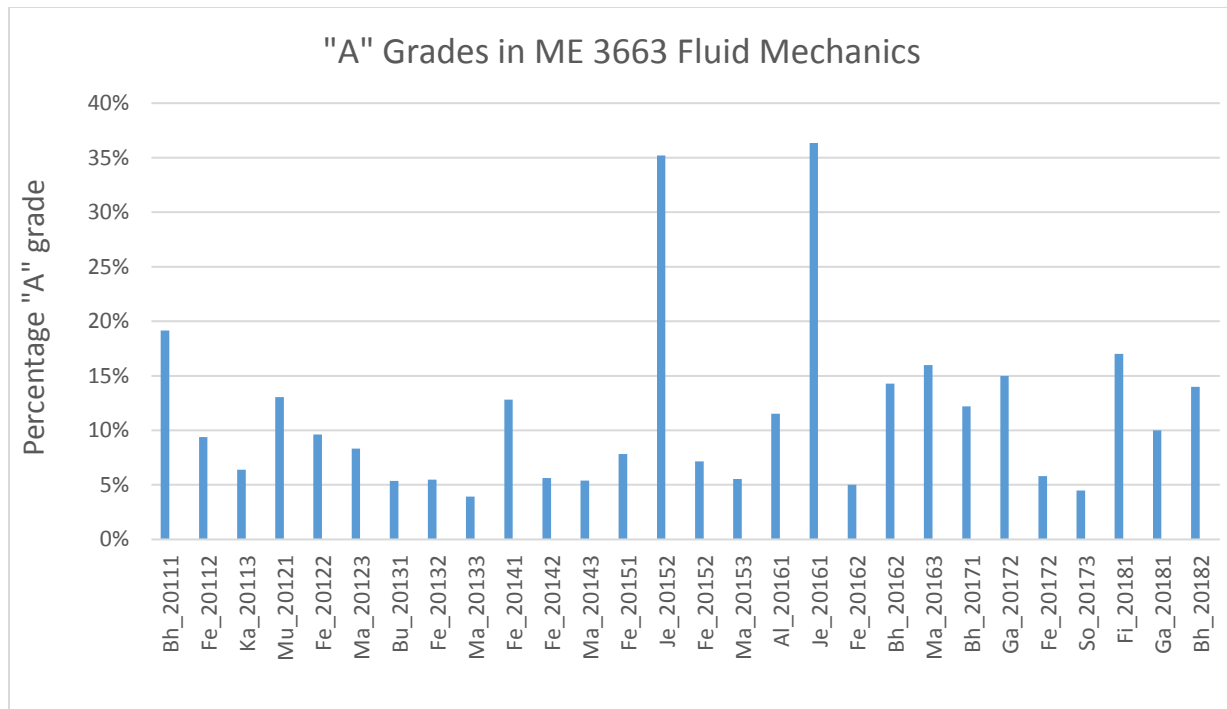


Fig. 1. Percentage of “A” grades assigned in Fluid Mechanics course from 2011 to 2018, showing abnormally high percentage in Spring 2015 and Fall 2015 taught by part-time instructor (Je\_20152 and Je\_20161).

Because of scheduling difficulties, the meeting of fluid mechanics instructors happened after the semester started. The purpose of the meeting was to encourage if not require the common exams and shared grading to reduce the grade discrepancy. These issues had been discussed in email exchanges, but a face-to-face meeting was sought to make final decisions. Common exams and shared grading have been used in other classes and was being promoted by the Department with the effect that grades didn’t tend to be significantly different between sections [4, 5]. As a result of the meeting, the part-time instructor decided to not teach the course and abruptly resigned. This created a significant disruption since the other instructor as asked to teach an overload and there were many student complaints. The Department decided something had to be done to reduce problems with increased number of sections and variability between instructors.

### The Solution:

The Department introduced a half-day training for all part-time instructors. The training was mandatory for all part-time and was focused on the known challenges facing part-time instructors. The format of the training was conversational, with the Chair and Assistant Chair sharing best-practices and common problems. Although some resistance to the training was anticipated, the majority of attendees gave positive feedback and commented that it allowed them the opportunity

to learn new things, although some had taught a few semesters already. Since the fall of 2017, the department has hosted the workshop and requires all new teachers to attend. From the perspective of the department, there has been fewer problems and student complaints. The general outline of the workshop is described here.

## **The Workshop**

The new teacher training is conducted as a half-day workshop before the first day of class. Instructors are encouraged to bring their laptop and syllabus/schedule. There is an overall outline to the workshop, but instructors are encouraged to modify their syllabus/schedule during the workshop. The Assistant Department Chair acts as the workshop “coordinator.” Each workshop typical has 3 to 10 attendees. Each attendee is provided the workshop outline, which is included in the Appendix. The organizer doesn’t use PowerPoint, but follows the printout and encourages discussion. Key parts of the workshop are now discussed.

### **Introduce Everyone**

Part-time instructors often didn’t feel connected to the Department and other instructors. They are often very busy with full-time employment in a local company and only visit the campus to teach their class. The workshop starts with introductions and a general opportunity to meet other instructors. Great emphasis is placed on having attendees give more than just name/title/company introductions. Discussion is often directed toward allowing instructor to become connected. As an example, the coordinator is quick to point out points of praise during introductions:

Dr. XX recently retired from ZZ Company and is an expert in the field of AA.

Last semester, XX earned some of the highest student evaluations in the college.

XX worked with YY last semester, how did that go? (Often knowing it went well)

This opening creates a welcoming environment which sets the tone for the workshop. The unique strengths of each new instructors are acknowledged and each are thanked for their willingness to share their knowledge and experiences with our students by teaching a class.

### **Who to Contact**

All key office staff are introduced and are present (if possible) at the beginning of the workshop. It is important for staff to be there to match a name to a face. Staff are asked to describe how they help instructors since it is better for them to say “I can help you with ...” instead of the department chair saying the same thing.

### **Academic Calendar, ASAP, Blackboard, Bluebook**

The workshop covers topics which are unique to the University. The academic calendar is covered with emphasis on the first day of class, census day, mid-term grades deadline, holidays, and final grades deadline. New teachers are shown where to find this critical information. This isn’t just a

data dump on the new instructors, but it is filled with tips on things like how to see the student photos, and how to pull the roster into excel. Each section ends with “who to contact” if there are problems or questions.

Blackboard is the learning management system and is shown. The workshop shows how to add a teaching assistant and/or grader to the learning management system. Adding a TA or grader has been a problem in the past.

Bluebook is where instructors are required to upload their syllabus so it is publically available. Often new instructors confuse Blackboard with Bluebook since they should upload to both.

Automated Student Access Program (ASAP) is a system used by the University for students to access registration information, class schedule, and final class grades. Instructors also obtain the list of students enrolled in their course from ASAP and submit grades at the end of semester in ASAP.

The calendar, ASAP, blackboard and bluebook can all be found from the common University webpage and this is demonstrated for the attendees. If attendees have brought a laptop, they are asked to navigate these sites during the workshop. Often the instructor must stop to help one attendee, yet it is better to navigate these sites before the semester begins.

### **Detailed Syllabus is Essential**

Many problems stem from the lack of a clear understanding of important points that should be covered in the syllabus. All engineering courses have a two part structure for the syllabus. Part “A” describes the standard information for all courses followed by Part “B” which described how the course will be conducted this semester by this instructor. Part A is 2-pages long, which stems from an ABET requirement. It contains the course description, which is exactly the same as the University Undergraduate Catalog. It lists student learning outcomes tied to course topics. It is important that the grading scheme be clearly described in Part B. New instructors are encouraged to talk with the course coordinator and previous instructors to avoid having disproportionate and/or unreasonable grading schemes. Unreasonable grading schemes have caused problems in the past.

### **Detailed Schedule is Essential**

Many problems can be avoided if the instructor has a detailed schedule for the semester. Many instructors don’t want to spend the time up-front to create a detailed schedule and this often causes problems with the most common being a pile-up of assignments and rush thought topics near the end of the semester. It is extremely rare that an instructor complains about running out of material before the end of the semester. They often run out of time. Instructors are strongly encouraged to pick exam dates and then not change the exam date during the semester, but if needed the instructor should adjust the coverage of material for an exam. Experience has shown that students will complain about changed exam dates and have never complained about having fewer topics being covered in an exam as long as it is clearly described by the instructor.

## **iClicker**

The University has standardized on the iClicker classroom electronic polling system. This system is widely used throughout the University so nearly all students are comfortable with the iClicker system after the first semester. Students have already purchased the hand-held responder so faculty can adopt the system with no additional cost to the student. Because this is additional technology which can be problematic, new instructors are encouraged to skip using iClicker their first semester teaching unless they are comfortable with computers and software.

## **Homework**

Homework has become a bigger problem in the past few years since students share solutions electronically. Many academic dishonesty cases have been filed because of copied homework. As a result, it is recommended to have a low weight for homework. In the past, new instructors have assigned a high percentage of the overall final grade to homework, and then complain that homework grades are nearly perfect, yet some students cannot solve simple problems on exams. Sometimes new instructors are naïve about how easy it is to copy homework. As such, it is better to encourage homework but not have the weight very high in the computation of the overall course grade.

## **Scholastic Dishonesty**

It is unfortunate that some students will cheat if given the opportunity. About 5 years ago, honest students were so frustrated with the rampant cheating (homework, lab reports, quizzes, exams) that a group of honest students complained to the Department Chair and College Dean that too many instructors were “turning a blind eye” to cheating. Many instructors don’t want to handle the problems and extra work when they suspect cheating. However unpleasant it may be, an honest discussion is held about the importance of each instructor being diligent to protect the integrity of the educational process. Instructors are strongly encouraged to include a statement in the syllabus describing what will happen if the instructor brings a charge of academic dishonesty against a student, with a recommended penalty. Examples are provided in which cheating on homework has a recommended penalty of zero for all homework assignments and cheating on an exam has a recommended penalty of an “F” grade for the course.

## **Exams**

Instructors are encouraged to adopt the mechanical engineering department exam policy and be diligent to guard against cheating on exams. Nearly all faculty adopt the voluntary policy which bans access to cell phone, limits the type of calculator that can be use, and limits bathroom breaks during exams. Based on experience, instructors are expected to be in the classroom during the entire exam period, and not go to their office or lab. Having the TA proctor exams has caused problems in the past. Likewise, exams are to be given during regularly scheduled class meeting times. It has caused problems in the past when an instructor changes the date, time and/or location of an exam so that it isn’t during a regular class meeting date/time/location.

## Disability Services

There has been a growing number of students with disabilities which often allow them extended time on exams. A few instructors have created problems when they have questioned the disability of a student. The instructor should never question the disability. The instructor should always accommodate the student based on the instructions from the office of disability services. Some instructors at the University have been terminated because of inappropriate handling of the disability accommodations.

## Final Grade and Begging

Based on experience, it is hard for some new instructors to issue a failing grade. They will often request extra time to allow a student to re-take the final exam, or re-do a report, or turn-in a missed lab, etc. This is understandable but not permissible. Part-time instructors don't teach to be "police" or the "bad-guy". They want students to be as excited about the class and pass the class. But the reality is that some students will exploit this. New instructors are forewarned that they should expect heartrending emails and face-to-face begging from students who want to pass without learning. Some students will do almost anything to get a grade changed. Instructors should be open to show a student how the final grade is computed, yet should not alter any grades because the failing grade will bring dire consequences. All students must be graded using the same grading criteria. Examples of recent emails are shared to help prepare new teachers, one is included here:

*Professor XXX,  
I have tried my best to do everything except write you and bother you again. I have truly become desperate and I want you to know that I have dreaded writing this email, but I truly have no other option. My son was kicked out of his school and tomorrow is his last day. Since I am not on course to graduate, the offer I had for work was rescinded and my internship ended, and to top it all off my student loans have kicked in since I am no longer in school. I understand the position you are in, but I truly need to beg you for those 5 points to get me to a D. I desperately need it. I understand that I need to consider why I am in the position I am in, and trust me that my (spouse) and I yell constantly about it. I beg you please for the change in letter grade. Let me leave. Please don't let me stay like this for an entire year. I understand that changing my grade may seem unfair but I assure you no other student in the last semester in your class is in my position. I have to beg you to please help me. I will take the rest of this semester to work on myself and ensure that I do not get back into this position again, I will start again in the summer, under a new major but please do not push me until next spring. I do not think I will last.*

*Sincerely,*

Because of the last sentence, this student was referred to University Counseling Services. Many new instructors are not prepared for the level of begging that they may experience. In the workshop it is stressed that students beg because it is effective with some instructors. It is against University

policies to grade students differently, especially if grades are issued based on the perceived economic or emotional impact of receiving a failing grade.

### **Incomplete Grade**

The University has policies and procedures for nearly every case. When a student can't finish the semester for good cause, the instructor can issue an incomplete grade. This is more difficult for part-time instructors since they are responsible to grade the paper/report/exam which was not completed during the semester. Part-time instructors may not teach next semester or next year. The student has up to one year to complete the missing work, hence the instructor has to agree to grade the work after their teaching appointment has ended.

### **Missing Class**

Part-time instructors often have full-time jobs and are very busy individuals. As such, we have had complaints when they miss or cancel classes, especially with little or no notice. The workshop covers how to handle missing a class with the expectation that they inform the ME Chair and Assistant Chair every time a class is cancelled or missed. It has happened that the Chair first learns that numerous classes have been cancelled only after a student complains.

### **Sexual Harassment**

It is unfortunate that nearly every line in the workshop covered in Appendix A is the result of an actual occurrence at the University. Some lessons are the result of occurrences outside the Department. In the recent past there have been multiple student allegations concerning sexual misconduct of faculty which has led to the termination of faculty. This has reached to the highest levels of the University [6]. Even a "consensual" sexual relationship when the student is no longer in the instructor's class, is prohibited by University policies, as long as the student is a student.

### **Feedback from Instructors**

Overall there has been a noticeable decrease in student complaints. Complaints haven't been eliminated, but they are less likely to either catch the Department Chair by surprise or to be found to be such that the instructor is corrected or told to change practices. More often the Department supports the instructor because the instructor is in compliance with Department/College/University policies.

A survey was conducted to seek feedback from instructors who had attended the workshop in the past to gauge its effectiveness. In the first part of the survey asked the instructors whether the discussion of the following items during the workshop was helpful

1. ...Introduction of new instructors
2. Introduction of department chair
3. Introduction of department office staff
4. Who to contact when you have questions
5. Academic calendar for the semester



6. ASAP (Automated Student Access Program)
7. Blackboard
8. Bluebook
9. Course syllabus
10. Semester schedule
11. iClickers
12. Homework
13. Scholastic dishonesty
14. ME Dept. exam policy
15. Disability services
16. Student begging
17. Incomplete grade
18. When you must miss a class
19. Sexual Harassment

Eleven instructors who attended the workshop responded to the survey questionnaire. . Instructors were asked to agree or disagree to each items listed above was helpful with the following:

*(SA) strongly agree, (A) agree, (N) neutral, (D) disagree, (SD) strongly disagree.*

The result of response to the instructor's responses is summarized in figures 2 and 3. These figures show that the instructors indicted that all 19 topics covered in the workshop were either very useful or useful. No one disagreed with the helpfulness of any topics covered in the workshop.

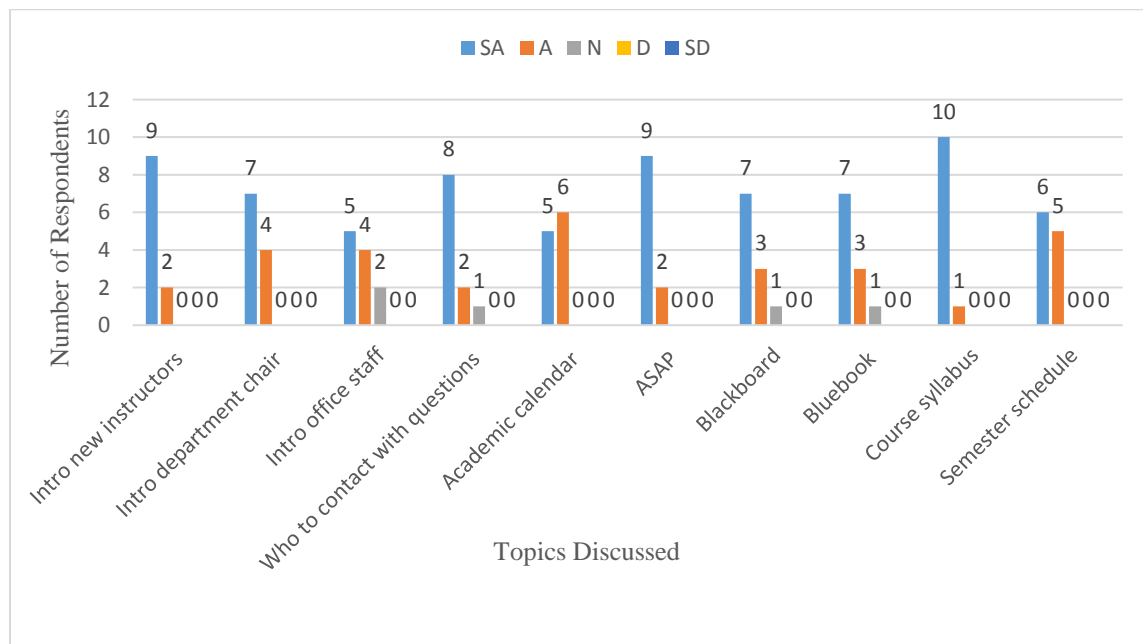


Fig. 2. Instructors' level of agreements in the usefulness of the first 10 topics covered in the workshops

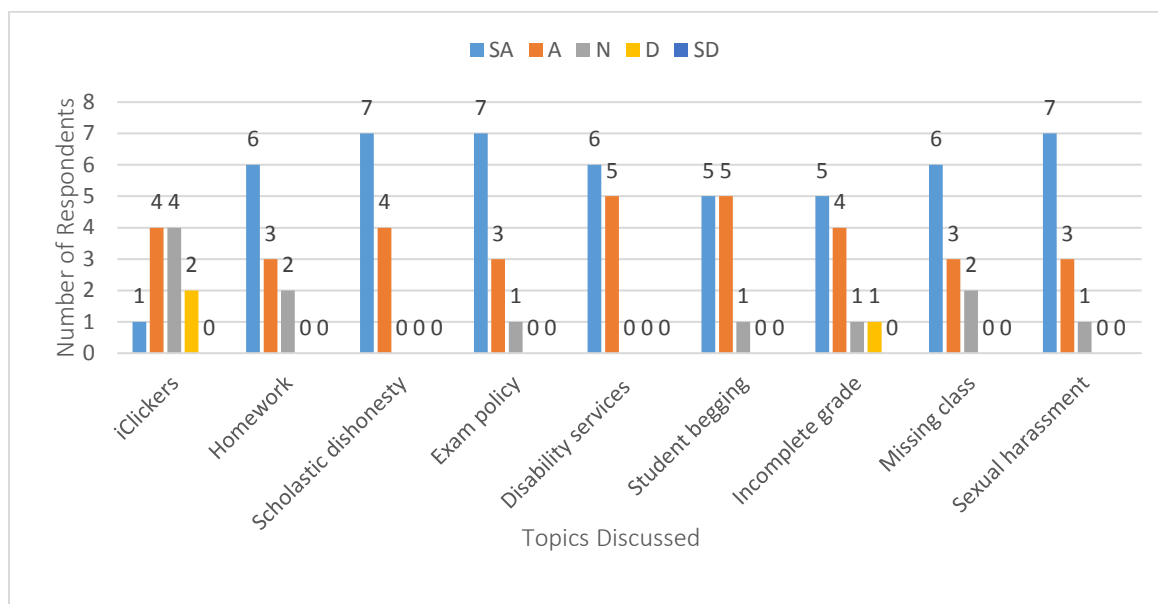


Fig. 3. Instructors' level of agreements in the usefulness of the last10 topics covered in the workshops

Based on the instructors' responses, figure 4 shows the order of effectiveness of topics covered in the workshops. The following steps were used to evaluate the low quartile (or 25% percentile) presented on the vertical axis. First the following numerical values were assigned to each of the possible responses

$$(SA) = 5, (A) = 4, (N) = 3, (D) = 2, (SD) = 1$$

Then for each item on the survey, low quartile = the numerical average of all responses – the standard deviation

In the second part of the survey the instructors were asked if they feel better prepared to avoid common mistake made by new instructors in the following areas:

- failing to adhere to University deadlines and policies
- being too quick to say yes to student requests (such as signing forms)
- failing to seek guidance from faculty who taught the course previously
- being either an excessively lenient or harsh grader
- not knowing what to do when a problem arises (such as cheating)

Figure 5 shows the results of instructors' responses related to the areas listed above. It shows that in most areas instructors felt that they are more prepared.

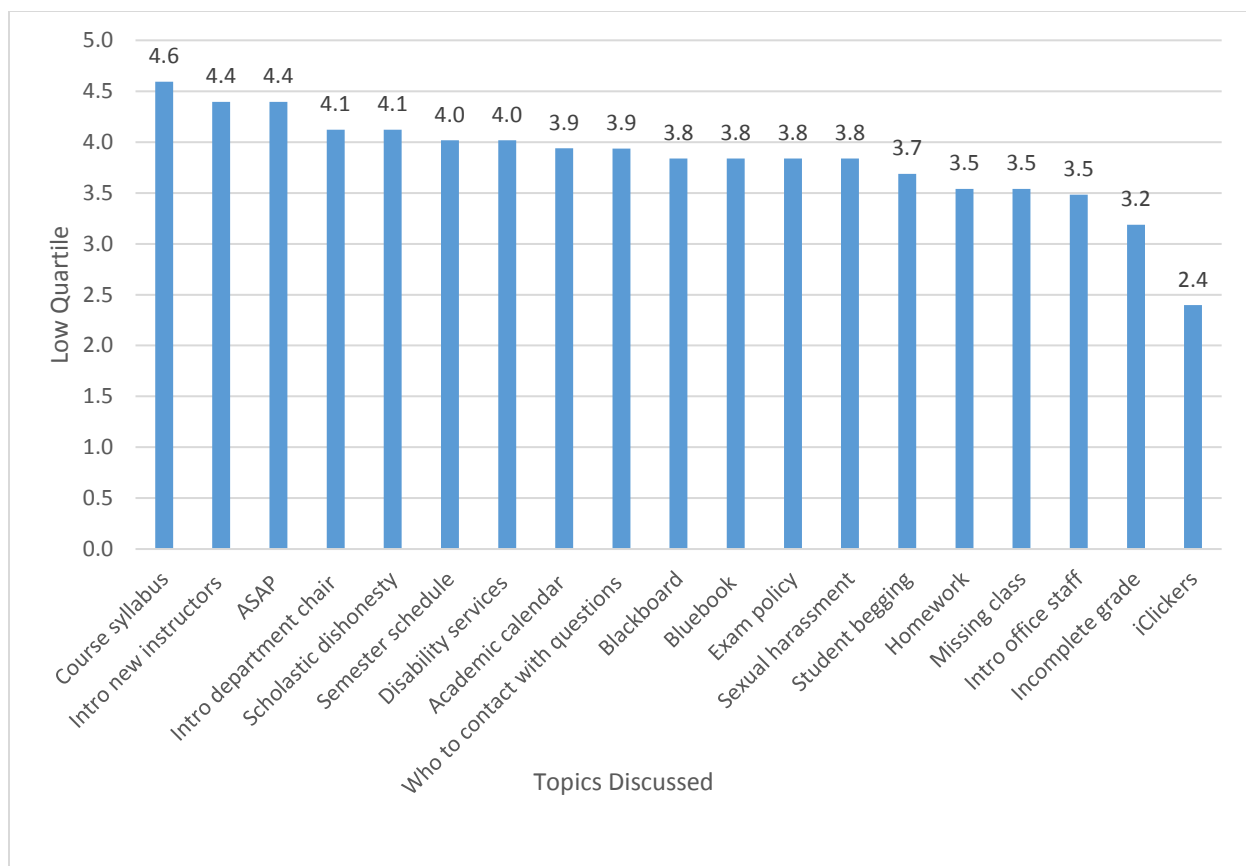


Fig. 4 Effectiveness of topics covered in the workshops

The following are written comments in response to what was most helpful in the workshop:

- This workshop was instrumental in guiding me through the basics of teaching at UTSA and also helped me in learning about the rules and regulations. Also helped me in meeting other faculty members and learning from them
- Sharing about the real experience and some great tips for class was very helpful. Introducing about ASAP and blackboard app was very helpful
- Test policies, anticipating problems and becoming best prepared to deal with them. Also, introduction to the UTSA service person as a P>OC. For Blackboard training
- Taking about past experience with cheating helped me reason/justify to my students every semester as why we do things the way we do!
- All aspects covered are helpful
- In my opinion, Randy is doing a fantastic job with this workshop. If possible, I would recommend to extend the length of workshop so he can go deeper in some of the topics. Personally, the conversation about student begging, scholastic dishonesty, and general policies was very helpful
- (1) Contact information of Faculty for solving problems/questions (2) ASAP, (3) Course syllabus, (4) scholastic dishonesty, (5) disability services, (incomplete grade, and (7) sexual harassment

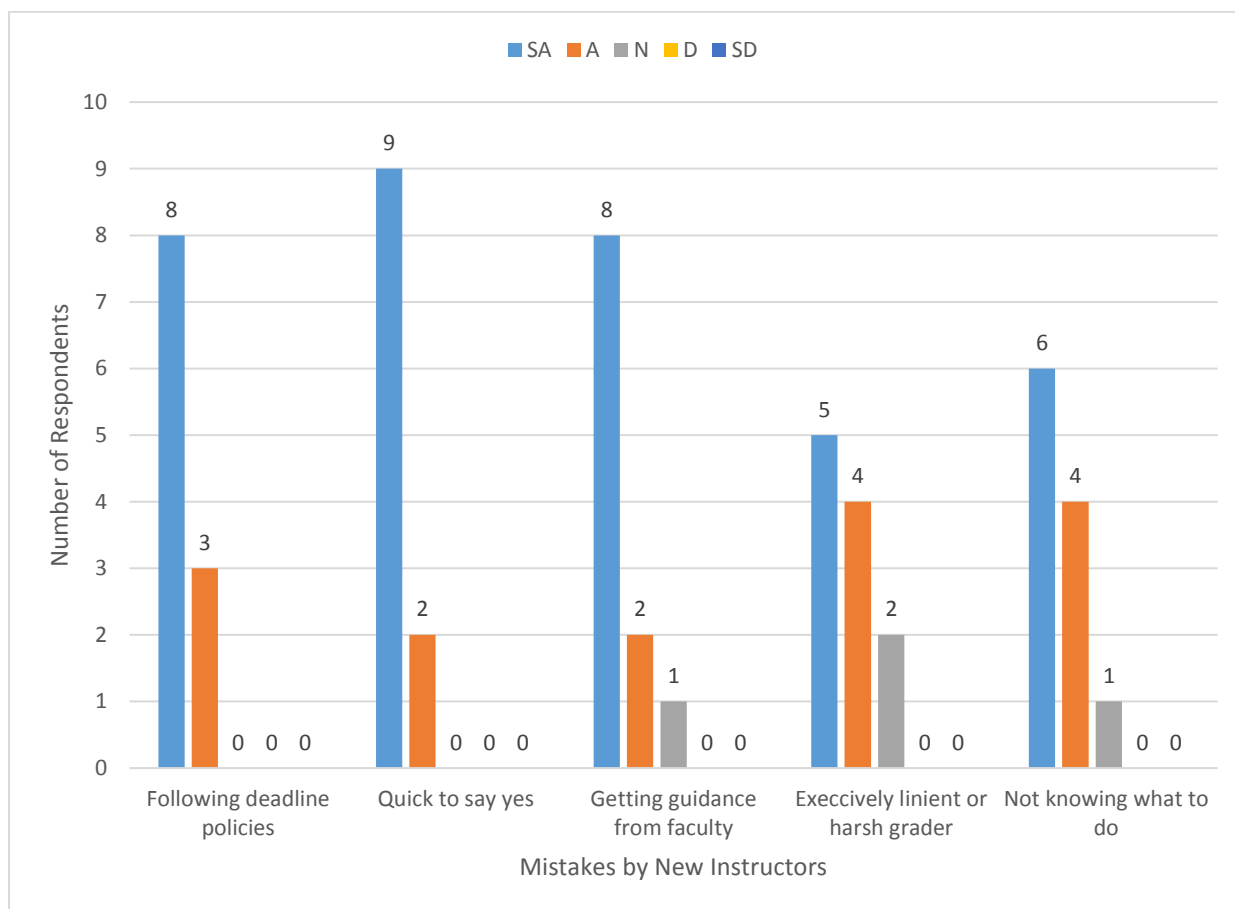


Fig. 5. Instructors' perception on being better prepared to avoid common mistake made by new instructors

- I am trying to remember back when I attended. It was most helpful at addressing general doubts and leaving me comfortable asking follow-up questions
- It was like an one-stop service for a new instructor so that s/he can save a lot of time finding the right people to ask and avoid mistakes, which eventually cost students dissatisfaction
- I found it extremely helpful! I had no experience on any of the topics we discussed about, except sexual harassment. Therefore, it was a very nice way to guide us briefly in so many areas in a such short amount of time
- Learning how to put content onto Blackboard

The followings are the written comments by instructors on how could the workshop be improved?

- Some hands-on exercise such as development of syllabus or assignment examples will be also very beneficial
- It would be nice to talk about UTSA campus area (about building, or service center, etc.) for the new teachers

- Having been an adjunct in several other universities, this department has, by far, the most effective prep/training and resources for the new instructors-very much appreciated
- Maybe more information on what to do when students ask for different excuses (i.e. incomplete grade) and where to find information. potentially it was discussed but I had to obtain more when faced later in the semester
- None. Already excellent
- I mostly enjoyed the workshop and it was very helpful. Perhaps adding more discussion about the following topics may be of interest
  - Activities to manage a large class – considering the completely different background of our students
  - Discussion-with data if possible – about the type of students that we have in our classes – considering technical background
  - Discussion on how to decrease DFW rates in Gateway courses.
- Overall, this is a great workshop; all topics are important. However, I would spend more time describing the course syllabus (structure, policies and general recommendations), ASAP, scholastic dishonesty and disability services. UTSA offers Blackboard and iClicker workshops throughout the semester and new faculty should attend those
- Expand coverage of troubleshooting iClickers, more examples/case studies of grading dilemmas with discussed solutions
- I think that probably a quick review for those who took it could be done after the first semester teaching classes. Also, faculty members should bring at least one example to be discussed. Thank you so much for the help throughout +2.5 years! I deeply appreciate it!
- Getting into Blackboard and Bluebook is difficult if you don't use it every day

## **Workshop format**

A half-day workshop is about the appropriate length. Lunch is always provided to extend the time for social interaction so that new instructors feel plugged into the program. New instructors often walk around the Department offices to be shown the photocopier, shown where to find supplies, and shown the shared office provided to part-time instructors for office hours. The Assistant Chair often walks new instructors to the classroom they will teach in, to show them the computer, lights, projector, controls, etc. New instructors can either bring a USB drive and use the computer in the room, or bring a laptop and just use the projector. Some may use the marker/chalk board if one is in the room. Although these may be seemingly trivial items for experienced instructors, they can be significant issues that have a negative impact on the first day of class for a new instructor.

## **Student complaints**

There are a number of issues that are the source of student complaints. Student complaints that reach the Department Chair level are often sporadic since most are resolved directly with the instructor. The complaints often stem from grading issues such as dispute on exams, homework, lab reports, and accusations of cheating. The second greatest area of complaints stem from inappropriate instructor behavior, such as being unprepared for lecture, late/missing class, instructor ranting/belittling, or incoherent lectures. Complaints are difficult to quantify since there is minimal tracking except if a student files a formal grade grievance which must be filed within 90 days of the end of a semester. Otherwise complaints are often handled by email exchanges or

office visits to the Department Chair, Assistant Department Chair or Undergraduate Advisor of Record (who handles grade grievances). There has been a reduction in student complaints since the fall 2016 with the introduction of the new teacher workshops.

Not all workshop have been the same. In the spring 2018, the workshop focused on faculty who recently received low student evaluations. The workshop focused on teaching fundamentals and stressed how to improve student learning without increased instructor effort. It covered much of the information in the new teacher workshop. The feedback from one attendee having around 3+ years of teaching experience was:

*I wanted to tell you that this workshop that you organized was extremely helpful and just by following the techniques you taught us, I was able to perform much better than previous semesters even with less effort. My course evaluation (I am attaching this semester and the previous one) has greatly improved (from almost 3 to almost 4.5). So thank you for this amazing workshop.*

The University uses a 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) scale for student responses to “My overall rating of the teaching of this course is”. The instructor shared the complete set of student comments, and a one is reproduced here to show how student complaints were avoided.

*Much better than last semester when I first took this class. The exams are actually over what we learned in class. Unlike the previous semester.*

The instructor previously believed he needed to create “challenging” exams and this led very low exam scores and numerous student complaints. Students said they didn’t know how to prepare for exams because the exams were unlike homework and unlike lecture problems. The instructor was encouraged to create exam problems similar in wording and style to those covered in lecture and in homework. Students then knew how to prepare for exams. The instructor provided additional unsolicited feedback the following semester (one year after the workshop):

*Once again I want to thank you for the workshop you organized two semesters ago. It really helped me to improve my teaching performance. Spring 2018 my overall rating for Mechatronics was 4.58 and this semester, fall 2018, it is 4.5 for Vibrations. Thanks a lot.*

Figure 6 shows the number of grade- and instructor-related complaint. The workshops were introduced in the fall 2016. Although some complaints are still received, there has been a reduction in the total number, especially in the number of complaints related to instructor behavior. A significant number of grade related complaints have recently stemmed from team design and laboratory class work, and this will probably be discussed to the workshop. Some instructors have already reduced the percentage of final senior design grade from student team assessments and have implemented a policy when student-to-student evaluation vary by more than 30%, then the whole team must meet with the instructor so that the individual receiving low peer evaluation can hear directly from the team members doing the evaluation.

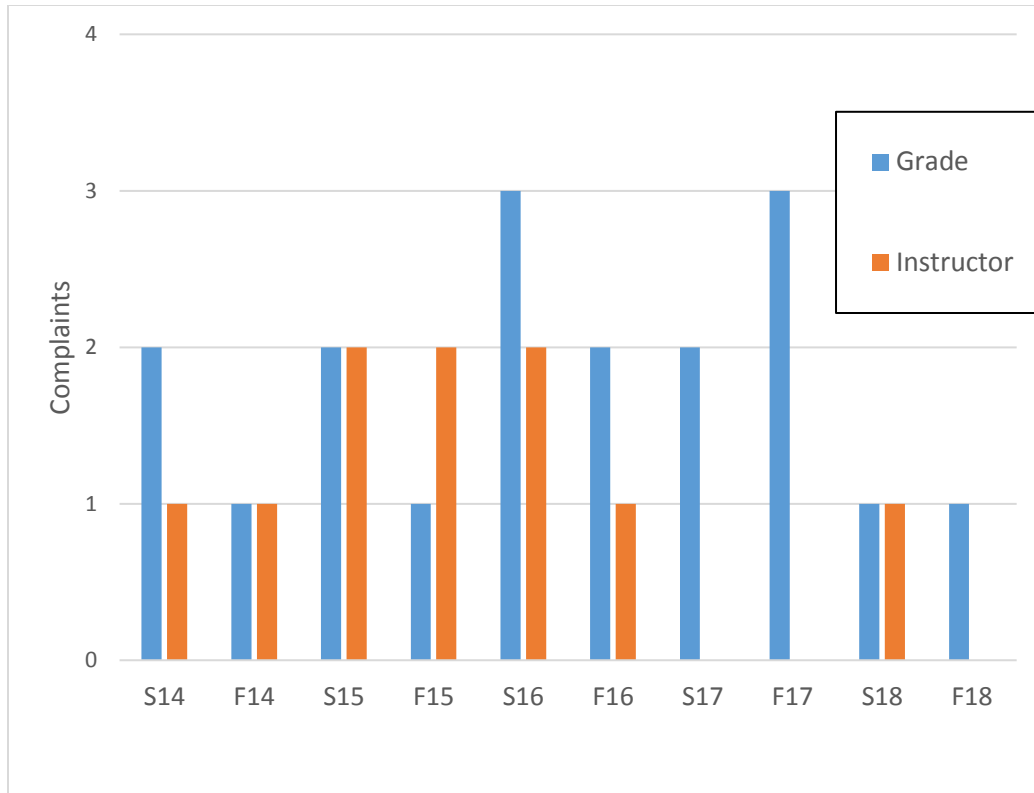


Fig. 6. Student complaints stemming from either grades or instructor-behavior showing decrease starting in fall 2016 after the introduction of new teacher workshops.

### Recommendations:

General recommendations are summarized in five areas here:

- (1) It is unreasonable to expect that a new instructor will remember all of the information covered in the workshop, so it is important that they know who to contact when they have questions. Currently the Assistant Chair is the main person available if instructors have questions. Regardless of how well the topic may have been covered in the workshop, the Assistant Chair must be willing to engage in a discussion with the new instructor, to fully understand the question and then answer the question, even if the question was anticipated in the workshop and answered in the workshop.
- (2) The purpose of the workshop is to have new instructors feel they are welcome and the Department cares about their success. Introduction and socialization is an important part of the workshop.
- (3) The workshop should allow each instructor to work on their syllabus and schedule. Many problems are the result of a poor syllabus and/or schedule. For a first-time instructor, this will likely require much effort. New instructors are encourage to solicit feedback from experienced instructors, and often that helps improve the syllabus/schedule.

- (4) New instructors often like clear guidelines. They often appreciate clear dos and don'ts. This is often balanced with academic freedom. Each instructor is encouraged to provide unique learning opportunities based on their personality and experiences. One might expect more resistance to do's and don'ts, but that hasn't been the experience from our workshop. Those that attend appreciate frank discussions and clear suggestions on how to handle difficult situations.
- (5) Some new instructors are surprised when a problem or student complaint develops in their class. It helps if new instructors are given specific suggestions for how to conduct a class with suggestions gleaned from experienced teachers. So the workshop often provides common complaints voiced by students, and lessons learned by experienced instructors on both how to avoid problems as well as how to handle complaints when they arise.

## Conclusions

Common mistakes made by new instructors often fall into a few categories and the workshops have evolved to address each of these categories:

- (1) failing to adhere to University/College/Department deadlines and requirements,
- (2) being too quick to say yes to student requests,
- (3) failing to seek guidance from faculty who taught the course previously,
- (4) being either an excessively lenient or harsh grader,
- (5) not knowing what to do when a problem arises (such as cheating).

These are emphasized throughout the workshop to help avoid these common pitfalls.

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6. Watkins, M. (2017) *UTSA President Ricardo Romo resigns after sexual harassment investigation*, The Texas Tribune, [www.texastribune.org/2017/03/03](http://www.texastribune.org/2017/03/03) (accessed March 2019)



## Appendix A

### New Teacher Workshop

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August 2018

- **Focus on the “Nuts-and-Bolts” of Teaching at UTSA**
- **New Teachers**
  - Instructor Name Here
    - ME 3113 Measurements & Instrumentation
    - contact Francisco XXX or Jim YYY with ME 3113 questions
  - Instructor Name Here
    - EGR 2103 Statics
    - contact CE faculty (Sazzad Bin-Shafique or Patricio Santamaria) as well as Randy XXX with EGR 2103 questions
  - Instructor Name Here
    - EGR 6013 Adv. Engineering Math
    - ME 3293 Thermodynamics I
    - ME 4312 Thermal & Fluids Lab
    - contact: Yusheng XXX with EGR 6013 questions
    - contact: Ender XXX or Amir YYY with ME 3293 questions
    - contact: Jim XXX with ME 4312 questions
- **ME Department:**
  - Hai-Chao XXX, Chair, 458-xxxx, [hai-chao.XXX@utsa.edu](mailto:hai-chao.XXX@utsa.edu)
  - Randy YYY, Assistant Chair, 458- xxxx, [randall.YYY@utsa.edu](mailto:randall.YYY@utsa.edu)
  - Ben AAA, Administrative Manager, 458- xxxx, [ben.AAA@utsa.edu](mailto:ben.AAA@utsa.edu)
  - Cayla BBB, Program Coordinator, 458- xxxx, [Cayla.BBB@utsa.edu](mailto:Cayla.BBB@utsa.edu)
- **Fall 2018 Academic Calendar**
  - find from “[my.utsa.edu](http://my.utsa.edu)”
  - find in ASAP - reg\_calendar\_fall.pdf
  - Tuesday Aug 21, First day of class
  - Monday, Sept 3, Labor Day Holiday
  - Thursday, Sept 6, Census Date, 5pm
  - Tuesday, Sept 18, Students Dropped for Non-Payment
  - Wednesday, Oct 10, Midterm Grades Due, 2pm
  - Tuesday, Oct 23 Drop Deadline via ASAP, single class
    - can drop all classes Oct 24 – Dec 3
  - Thru-Fri, Nov 22-23, Thanksgiving Holiday
  - Thru-Fri, Dec 6-7, Student Study Day, no classes
  - Dec 8-14 Final Exams
  - Mon Dec 17, Final Grades due, 2pm
- **ASAP (Automated Student Access Program)**
  - find from “[my.utsa.edu](http://my.utsa.edu)”
  - class meeting days and times
  - building and room number for your class
  - final exam day, time and location
  - logon using utsa “abc123” & passphrase
    - student roster by names

- student roster by photos
  - check your roster before census date
  - double check your roster after census date
  - double check your roster after unpaid drop date
  - double check your roster when midterm grades due
  - enter final course grades
- [OITSupportServices@utsa.edu](mailto:OITSupportServices@utsa.edu) , 458-5522, if any problems/questions
- **Blackboard Learn (Learning Management System used at UTSA)**
  - find from “my.utsa.edu”
  - Great place to upload course files
    - syllabus
    - schedule
    - word files, pdf files, excel files, ...
  - Online tests (rarely used)
  - Grade center (used)
  - Add TA and/or graders
    - select “Users and Groups”
    - select “Users”
    - select “Find Users to Enroll” (near top)
    - select “Browse”
    - input TA or grader “abc123” and select “Go”
    - check box for TA or grader, select “Submit”
    - select Role: probably “Instructor” then select “Submit”
  - [OITSupportServices@utsa.edu](mailto:OITSupportServices@utsa.edu) , 458-5522, if any problems/questions
- **Bluebook**
  - find from “my.utsa.edu”
  - State Legislative requirement to make syllabus publically available
  - instructor must upload syllabus before 1<sup>st</sup> day of class
  - syllabus can include schedule, I often don't include
  - after semester ends, student evaluation of course and instructor will be added by UTSA
  - [OITSupportServices@utsa.edu](mailto:OITSupportServices@utsa.edu) , 458-5522, if any problems/questions
- **Syllabus:**
  - course syllabus can be regarded as a “legally binding contract” between instructor, student, university
  - Use standard ME Department format (helps with ABET accreditation)
  - Part A – don't change
    - describes course basics, regardless of instructor
    - double check everything in Part A
    - course description, must be exactly the same as current catalog
      - use ASAP to check
    - prerequisites, must be exactly the same as current catalog
      - use ASAP to check
    - course objectives, do they make sense?
    - ABET outcomes, do they make sense?
    - faculty update every ~2 years, so prepare to help update

- Part B – do change
    - describes how you will teach the course this semester
    - class info (meeting days, times, room)
    - your contact information (office, phone, email)
    - your office hours, recommend ~3 hours per week
      - also for mentoring students
      - also for public to meet with you
    - TA and/or grader contact info
    - **Grading Policy:**
      - mandatory part of syllabus
        - discussing on 1<sup>st</sup> day of class is NOT sufficient
      - do **NOT** change grading policy in middle of semester
      - strongly recommend you keep it straightforward
    - recommend ME exam policy (Mar, 2015)
    - recommend a schedule for the semester (more below)
    - scholastic dishonesty policy, with recommended penalties
    - campus carry, <http://www.utsa.edu/campuscarry/facultystaff.html>
  - is your syllabus consistent with academic regulations and policies at UTSA?
    - asked other faculty to review
  - common syllabus information
    - <http://provost.utsa.edu/syllabus.asp>
  - post to Bluebook by 1<sup>st</sup> day of class (required)
  - post to Blackboard Learn (recommended but not required)
  - don't spend all of 1<sup>st</sup> day covering syllabus
    - maybe post to BB/Learn and have quiz after 1<sup>st</sup> week
    - maybe post to BB/Learn and review before 1<sup>st</sup> exam
  - send Word file to Ben Campos (required)
- **Schedule:**
    - strongly recommend you make a plan for the entire semester
    - should include
      - material covered (often by chapter of book)
      - due dates for homework
      - due dates for reports/projects
      - exam dates
      - holidays
      - student study days (no class)
      - final exam date/time
    - give yourself flexibility
      - "All dates tentative. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class."
    - revise the schedule as needed
      - post revised schedules to BB/Learn
    - how will you collect, grade and return HW before exam
      - common student complaint, "didn't return homework before exam"
    - strongly recommend you do **NOT** change exam dates
      - changing exam dates often creates problems

- if needed, adjust coverage of material for an exam
  - **iClicker:**
    - student classroom response system adopted at UTSA in Fall 2017
    - iClicker hardware is installed in every classroom
    - students register in Cloud
      - <https://www.utsa.edu/oit/FacultyAndStaffServices/ClassroomAndMedia/iClickerCloudClassroomStudentResponseSystem.html>
    - learn about iClicker from Office of Information Technology (OIT)
      - training, webpages
      - 210-458-5555 or [oit@utsa.edu](mailto:oit@utsa.edu) or April Valdez, 458-6195
    - NOT recommended for new instructors, unless really want to use
  - **Homework:**
    - Do not be naive
    - Chegg and solution manuals are used by some students
    - Some students (and faculty) think using solution manual is OK to do HW
    - Some homework will be copied from solution manual
    - does textbook publisher offer online homework tool?
    - Recommend low weight toward overall course grade (~5%)
    - Can down weight if student can't pass exams
      - for example: "average of all HW can't be higher than the average of all midterm exam grades"
  - **Scholastic Dishonesty:**
    - don't "*turn a blind eye*" to cheating
    - follow UTSA policies to charge student with scholastic dishonesty
      - <http://www.utsa.edu/conduct/resources-programs/forms.html>
    - have scholastic dishonesty statement in syllabus
    - recommended description of penalty in syllabus
- "Cases of suspected scholastic dishonesty during an exam will be prosecuted through the UTSA Office of Student Life, with the recommended penalty that the student receive an "F" grade for the class."**
- **Course Coordinators:**
    - Get feedback from experienced instructors
    - Ask other faculty to review syllabus and schedule
  - **Multiple sections**
    - Work with other instructors to make sections consistent
    - Work with other instructors to create equally rigorous exams
    - Work with other instructors to have consistent grading
    - Use common exams, if possible
  - **Teaching Assistant (TA), Lab Assistant (LA) and Grader:**
    - TA – graduate student
      - cover recitation, labs, and grade reports/projects/hw/exams
    - LA –an experienced undergraduate student
      - cover labs and grades lab reports
    - grader – almost always an undergraduate student, but can be grad student
      - grade hw/labs/etc.
      - typically 10 hr/week or 20 hr/week

- Large classes can have both TA(s) and grader(s)
- Check with Hai-Chao and Ben if class has TA, LA or Grader hours
- Interview TA/LA/graders before class begins
  - Be clear with TA/LA/grader about your expectations
  - Maybe request different TA/LA/grader early, before problems develop
- Instructor is responsible for TA/LA/grader work, so review their work
- Timesheets, if they need to be filed then check that they are filed promptly
- **Exams:**
  - Don't "*turn a blind eye*" to cheating
  - Adopt ME Department exam policy recommendations
    - no bathroom breaks during exam, unless medical condition
      - need flexibility with 2.5 hour final exam
      - some students do consult internet ... during bathroom visits
    - no phone/camera/electronics during exam
    - approved calculators only (TI-36x, Casio fx-115, Casio fx-991)
    - students miss an exam, for good reason
      - give makeup exam, but do NOT give same exam
      - maybe drop one exam
      - maybe use final exam score for missed exam
      - decide what you will do, clearly explain in syllabus
    - students miss an exam, for unexcused reason
      - instructor not forced by UTSA to accommodate
  - Instructors need to be in room during exams
    - many problems when instructor leaves the room
    - do not do more important things in your office/lab
    - be in the room during exams
  - Require TA to help proctor exams
    - require them to be early
  - Do things to prevent cheating
    - walk around room and look for cheating
    - prepare multiple versions of exam
    - have assigned seating (R. Manteufel can share excel file)
  - Don't answer questions during exams
    - some questions are legitimate, (typo questions)
    - underprepared students often ask questions
    - answering questions is disruptive to other students
    - all students must be treated equally
      - answer some questions but not all
- **Final Exam**
  - final exam is not required by UTSA or COE or ME Dept.
  - final exam is recommended for most classes
  - final exam room is the same room used for lecture
  - you **MUST** use final exam room, date and time assigned in ASAP
    - do **NOT** change location of final exam

- do **NOT** change date of final exam
  - do **NOT** change time of final exam
  - why is **NOT** being repeated?
- **Disability Students:**
  - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1992
  - Instructor informed by email from UTSA Disability Services Office
  - do NOT question the disability
  - do NOT provide accommodations without letter from UTSA Disability Services
    - student may tell you letter is in process, so you know to expect it
  - Recommend
    - read the letter from UTSA Disability Services
    - meet with student during office hours
    - ask student what they expect for accommodations based on letter
    - make sure you understand accommodations you need to provide
    - very often accommodation is extended time on exams, quizzes, ...
    - decide how to accommodate extended time, clarify with student
      - quiz: start with class, finish in instructor's office
      - exam: use Disability Service Adaptive Test Center
      - exam: start exam early in instructor's office, finish with class
      - exam: start exam with class, finish in instructor's office
      - make sure you and student agree on the accommodation
    - ask other faculty how they handle accommodations
  - UTSA has Adaptive Test Center
    - <http://www.utsa.edu/disability/services/tests.html>
    - check latest rules about exam instructions & deadlines
  - UTSA Office of Student Affairs, Student Disability Services, 458-4157
    - contact them if you have questions
- **Final Grade:**
  - You must issue final course grade at end of semester
  - Be consistent with syllabus
  - do NOT make a mistake, double check your calculations
  - Only way UTSA allows grade change is in case of "*instructor error*"
  - "*Additional work performed by a student may not be used to raise a grade that has been reported...*" <http://www.utsa.edu/registrar/students/grades.html#change>
- **Bargaining and/or begging for better grade:**
  - expect begging
  - be able to defend your grading
  - some students are desperate to pass
    - stories can be heartrending
  - be prepared, be clear, be consistent
  - treat all students equally, or you will violate UTSA policies
- **Grade grievance:**
  - student can file a grade grievance
  - <http://catalog.utsa.edu/informationbulletin/appendices/studentgrievances/>

- “student must first make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the faculty member with whom the grievance originated”
- student has 90 calendar days from the end of the semester
  - Tuesday, Dec 18, Students can view final grades in ASAP
- UTSA policy says: “faculty member’s judgment regarding grades and evaluations is final unless compelling evidence shows
  - discrimination,
  - differential treatment,
  - factual mistake, or
  - violation of a relevant University policy.”
- **Incomplete Grade:**
  - Follow UTSA policy: <http://www.utsa.edu/registrar/students/grades.html>
  - Assign incomplete grade only when
    - part of work in course has, for **good reason**, not been completed
      - GOOD: medical issue
      - GOOD: death in family
      - NOT: didn’t pass final exam
      - NOT: didn’t turn in final report on time
      - NOT: need to improve report
    - student attended at least 3/4<sup>th</sup> of semester
    - remainder of student’s work in course was satisfactorily completed
      - must not be failing the course
  - Can NOT be used to re-take the course
    - student avoids paying tuition/fees with incomplete grade
  - some students will beg for “incomplete” grade
    - UTSA strictly forbids incomplete grade to avoid paying tuition/fees
  - student has 1 year to complete missing work,
    - after 1 year, “IN” is automatically changed to a grade of “F”
- **Signing Forms:**
  - Students may ask you to sign “add”, “override” or other forms
  - Instructor does NOT have right to waive prerequisites
  - Recommend new instructors do NOT sign forms unless first signed by Undergraduate Advisor of Record (UGAR) or Department Chair
- **Independent Study and/or Engineering Co-op:**
  - Do NOT agree to supervise
    - ME 4913 Independent Study
    - EGR 3303 Engineering Co-op
  - Direct students to the Undergraduate Advisor of Record (UGAR) or Department Chair
- **Missing a Class:**
  - for planned absence
    - get substitute teacher
    - reschedule (extend time for a few lectures if room available)
    - record lectures and post to YouTube or BB/Learn
  - for emergency absence

- notify students using
    - notification in BB/Learn
    - email within ASAP, bottom of “summary class list”
  - 8-5 M-F, call ME office (458-5516)
    - ask for sign on classroom door
  - after hours, call UTSA Police Non-Emergency 458-4242
    - ask for sign on classroom door
- **Student complaints**
  - Once a complaint starts, it is hard to stop
    - prevent complaints before they begin
    - be clear, be consistent, be fair
  - Recommend 48 hour cool-down
    - return graded exam, ask students to review, and discuss next class
  - Listen and understand the student
  - Be consistent with syllabus
  - Be consistent in grading
  - Nothing is private. Assume what you say to one student will be repeated to other students. Phone conversations, office conversations, emails, etc., all are not private.
- **Gifts and favors from students**
  - Accept none
- **Sexual Harassment**
  - University has policies, operating procedures, etc.
    - <http://www.utsa.edu/hop/chapter9/9-24.html>
  - Consensual relationship between faculty and student or staff is prohibited
    - <http://www.utsa.edu/hop/chapter9/9-4.html>
  - Recommend
    - keep office door fully open when with student or staff
  - Protect yourself, protect your students, protect your staff
- **If you have a complaint about UTSA or Department or Dean or ...**
  - Do NOT share complaints with students in your class
  - Do share your complaint with ME Chair, Dean, ...
- **Peer Observation of your teaching:**
  - Required for faculty performance reviews
    - 1yr
    - 3yr
    - 6yr
  - ME department has policy and template for observations
  - You pick faculty peer to observe your teaching
- **Handouts with this workshop**
  - Example syllabus
  - Example schedule
  - ME Dept. Exam policy
  - ME policy and template for observation of teaching



- **Active Learning (only if time allows):**
  - Inactive/sleeping/distracted students do not learn
  - Do things to keep students engaged
  - Recommend interactive activities
    - iClicker
    - ask them to answer a question
    - ask them to solve a problem
- **Basics of Teaching (only if time allows):**
  - what students like
    - teacher who likes teaching
    - teacher who is prepared
    - teacher who knows the material
    - teacher who is excited about the class
    - real-world applications in the lecture (not all theory)
    - teacher who is understandable
      - speak clearly
      - speak loudly (or use electronic amplification)
    - teacher who starts and stops on time
  - what students do NOT like
    - teacher who doesn't want to teach (your attitude shows)
    - unprepared teacher
    - teacher who doesn't know the material
    - teacher who starts late or ends late
    - teacher who is not understandable
      - weak voice
    - teacher who "clicks through PowerPoint"
  - tell them what you will cover, cover it, then summarize what you covered