Faculty Guide

The Undergraduate Dean's Office oversees the academic and personal well-being of undergraduates at the College. Faculty work with the Dean’s Office on matters ranging from curriculum and registration to the problems encountered by individual students.

The College has seven deans who serve as primary academic advisers for students until they declare their majors as sophomores. Even after a student has a major adviser, the dean continues to be a resource for students navigating the challenges and opportunities of college life. The deans divide their time between working with advisees and collaborating on various College programs. Based on our experiences, we have put together some information and advice that may be helpful to faculty in their work with students here.

We will discuss the following topics in this guide:

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Recommendations Regarding Syllabi

We encourage all faculty to include the following on their syllabi:

- Office hours and contact information
- Attendance policies
- Grading policies
- Deadlines for all major assignments and assessments
- Policies regarding submission of work, late work, and extensions
- Nature of the final work in the class (i.e. exam or paper in lieu of an exam)

Your syllabi should also include statements regarding accommodations for disabilities and the Honor Code and academic integrity.

Important information regarding many of these topics can be found in the Academic Regulations section of the Catalog. For your convenience, we are providing brief summaries, along with some advice.

Grading

The College uses a 4.0 scale, with 4.0 an A, 3.7 an A-, etc. It is important that faculty understand the distinction between merit grades (2.0 and above), below-merit (1.0, 1.3, and 1.7) and failing grades (0). Please note that courses with below-merit grades cannot be used for requirements, including major requirements, and can lead to a student being placed on academic warning or probation, required to change a major, or required to withdraw.

If you prefer to use another system for grades during the semester, please include information on the syllabus about how that scale translates to our grading system.

Deadlines

In setting deadlines for the semester, please keep the following in mind

- Students must decide whether to sign up for a particular class credit/no credit by the end of the sixth week of the semester. Because of that, please make every effort to arrange your syllabus so that your students will have one piece of graded work submitted and returned by that date.

- While Bryn Mawr does not cancel classes for any religious holidays, it does respect the right of its students to observe holidays that are important to them. Absences around a religious holiday should be excused. Anything you can do to help a student make up work she misses because of such absences would be appreciated. It makes life simpler for both faculty and students if tests and assignments are not scheduled on or very near holidays that you know many students will want to observe. The following is a list of some holidays to be aware of.
### Holiday Dates (2017-18)

- **Ramadan:** June 6 – July 5
- **Eid Al-Adwa:** Sundown Sept. 1
- **Rosh Hashanah:** Sundown Sept. 20
- **Yom Kippur:** Sundown Oct. 11–Sundown Oct. 12
- **Sukkot:** Sundown Oct. 16–Sundown Oct. 23
- **Sh’mini Atzeret:** Sundown Oct. 23–Sundown Oct. 24
- **Simhat Torah:** Sundown October 24–Sundown Oct. 25
- **Diwali:** Oct. 28–Nov. 1
- **Chinese New Year/Spring Festival:** Jan. 28
- **Passover:** Sundown April 10–Sundown April 18
- **Good Friday:** April 14
- **Easter:** April 16

### Deadlines at the End of the Semester

We remind faculty of three official College-wide deadlines: the deadline for written work, the deadline for exams and papers in lieu of exams, and the senior deadline.

- **The Deadline for Written Work:** 5:00 p.m. on the last day on which classes are held. This deadline applies to all written work assigned in courses except final exams or a paper assigned in lieu of a final exam. All other essays, exercises, projects, reports, problem sets, and other forms of written work must be turned in at this time. The intention of this deadline is to ensure that students have only one major commitment in each of their courses during the exam period and to protect their ability to concentrate on their finals.

- **The Deadline for Exams and Papers in Lieu of Exams:** Under faculty rules, all self-scheduled examinations and papers assigned in lieu of exams are due at 12:30 p.m. on the last day for exams.

- **Senior Deadlines:** The deadline for senior work in the spring is generally the Saturday of the first week of the examination period, in order to allow for review of work and processing of grades in time for Commencement. It is useful if you remind seniors of this early and often.

### Final Work

Professors may arrange for self-scheduled final exams, scheduled final exams, or take-home exams. All exams may be either closed-book or open-book. Professors may also elect to assign a paper (or project) in lieu of an exam.

**Self-scheduled final exams**, made possible by Bryn Mawr's Honor Code, are an important part
of Bryn Mawr’s academic culture. Students take the exam during one of the designated time-blocks and in a designated location. This allows students more flexibility, while freeing faculty from the responsibility of administering an exam during finals.

If a class has a strong visual or auditory component (for example, History of Art or an elementary or intermediate language), a scheduled exam may be appropriate. The Registrar’s office will assign you a date and location for the exam and will communicate that to you by mid-terms.

Certain other classes will sometimes elect to use scheduled exams in order to ensure that students have access to the professor if they have questions during the exams.

**Take-home exams**: Some professors give take-home exams.

There may be situations in which an extended take-home exam is truly the most effective way to assess student learning, but faculty should be aware of problems which can arise. These may include:

- An exam goes missing, either before or after the student took it. This may require Honor Board investigation, which is difficult for all involved.

- The lack of proctoring may cause undue temptation towards dishonesty, especially in high-pressure courses.

- Students may be unclear about what is acceptable in doing such an exam: Does time spent proofreading an answer count? In an open-book exam, are they to consult course texts only or can they essentially do further research?

- Finally, we have found that when students are given a 24 or 48 hour take-home exam, many will spend the full time doing the exam, getting no sleep. At a time of the year when stress levels are already high, this kind of frenzy is not helpful to the student nor is it conducive to a student doing her best.

In many cases, a self-scheduled exam serves the same purpose of giving students flexibility without causing any of these risks.

If there is no final exam, then the final piece of work should be seen as a paper in lieu of an exam and should be due at the end of the finals period. Imposing earlier deadlines on take-home exams or papers in lieu of exams is not authorized by faculty rules, and the Dean's Office cannot help enforce such deadlines.

**Mid-Semester Reports and Working with Students Experiencing Difficulties**

During the semester, the Dean’s Office solicits periodic reports from all faculty regarding students who may be struggling. Faculty are asked to contact the student regarding their concerns and to suggest actions the student should take. These include but are not limited to:

- Your office hours.
• **TA and review sessions**

• **Writing Center**: Working in Canaday, peer writing tutors provide individual writing tutorials for every stage of the writing process and for all majors.

• **Quantitative Center** Working in Canwyll House (behind the Campus Center) peer Q mentors facilitate problem-solving sessions with small groups of students.

• **Academic Support and Learning Resources Specialist** Working in Guild, specialist Rachel Heier assists students in identifying and implementing techniques for more effective learning, studying, test-taking and note-taking. The specialist also helps students explore effective techniques for time and stress management so that they feel confident and motivated in their academic work.

• **Peer Mentoring Program** Residentially-based peer mentors are strong students who have been trained to help others improve their study skills and manage their time.

• **Peer Tutors**: Nominated by faculty, peer tutors provide subject-specific help for students enrolled in elementary and intermediate language courses and introductory science, math, economics, and computer science courses.

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**Communications with Deans**

**What to Expect:** Deans work closely with students and faculty. As a faculty member, you may encounter one or more of the following:

During the **shopping period** (the first week-and-a-half of the semester), you may hear from a dean who is helping an advisee manage difficulties finding an appropriate course schedule.

Immediately after the shopping period, you may hear from deans regarding students who are seeking late drops or adds. **Exceptions to the add/drop deadlines are rare and made only with the joint permission of the instructor and the student’s dean.** It is therefore important that the student, dean, and faculty member all be in communication regarding these issues.

**Absences and Late Work During the Semester**

As much as possible, students communicate directly with faculty regarding illness or other complications that they encounter during the semester. We advise students to email their professors and cc their deans if they are sick or if they have a family or other commitment or some other situation that requires them to miss class or request an extension.

In case of illness or other circumstances beyond a student’s control, excused absences and penalty-free extensions are generally appropriate. In other circumstances, it is entirely up to you to decide whether to grant an extension or not, with or without grade penalty. It is helpful to remember that granting extensions involves both issues of justice to the individual requesting the extension and fairness to the other students in your class who may have struggled hard to meet the deadline. **If you have a general policy about how you will handle matters of extension and penalty, please make sure this policy is announced to all your students and stated on your syllabus.** If you prefer to handle such requests on a case-by-case basis, you may wish to
announce this and indicate your criteria.

Faculty may wish to involve a student’s dean in discussions of absences/extensions if there appears to be a pattern of missing class and turning in late work. Conversely, a dean may contact you if a student is missing class or needs an extension for a reason she prefers not to disclose to faculty, when injury or illness prevents her from communicating directly, or when the condition is likely to be ongoing. These may include mental health issues, concussion, or complicated family situations.

Please note that the Health Center does not issue excuse notes, and the deans cannot be in the position of routinely confirming that a student is ill.

**Withdrawals:** As a reminder, a student may not withdraw from a course because she is doing poorly in it, doesn’t like it, doesn’t feel she has time for it, hasn’t been attending it, or no longer considers it important to her program. **Only when the professor and dean agree that she has been prevented from completing a course for reasons she couldn’t control or foresee—such as a significant illness, a family emergency or inappropriate placement—may she withdraw from it.** Students are often in consultation with their deans about these issues and often have medical or counseling professionals communicate with their dean. In these cases, deans will often contact a professor on a student’s behalf to let them know that there is a medical recommendation for a withdrawal.

**Extensions at the End of the Semester**

Extensions that go beyond the deadline for written work or the last day of exams require approval from both the dean and the faculty member. Deans will generally support extensions without penalties only in cases in which the student is prevented from completing her work in a timely fashion by circumstances she could not have foreseen or prevented. In other circumstances, the deans may support an extension but recommend a penalty, or they may withhold their approval for the extension altogether. In any case, the dean and the faculty member will consult before any such extension is arranged. Together, they will determine an appropriate resolution.

**Deferred Exams**

In the rare event that a student is prevented from taking an exam during the exam period by a medical or personal emergency, the exam can be deferred by the student's dean. **Exams deferred from May are taken the following June or September; exams deferred in December are taken the following January.** Faculty rules do not allow for any other kind of extension for self-scheduled exams. Obviously, since deferred exams create a significant burden for the student, they are granted only in very serious circumstances.

**FERPA, Confidentiality, and Privacy**

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** requires all faculty and staff at Bryn Mawr to maintain the confidentiality of any student academic records in their possession, including course schedules and grades. FERPA guidelines allow for the exchange of information among college faculty and staff so that we can do our jobs, but they do not permit the release of a
student’s information to individuals outside the College without her written permission. The registrar and deans are always available to answer any questions about FERPA or to provide advice when you receive requests for information about a student.

In your role as a course instructor or major adviser at Bryn Mawr, there is a small possibility that a student’s parents or guardian may contact you directly with concerns about the student’s grades, choice of major or preparation for graduate school. Please direct all third party inquiries about an individual student’s academic progress to her dean. Your primary relationship is with the student, not her family, and by referring questions and concerns to the Dean’s Office you are not only protecting your students’ privacy but also preserving the trust in your relationship with them.

Beyond legal obligations, please note that confidentiality and privacy are valued very highly by Bryn Mawr students, in part because of the student interpretation of the Honor Code. This means that some practices common elsewhere are considered rather shocking here, such as posting actual grades (even in disguised form) or publicly identifying strong or weak performances. Your sensitivity and consideration will be greatly appreciated by your students. Hand back work in such a way that grades are not visible to other students. Make sure that difficult conversations are held where they cannot be overheard or seen by other students. Refrain from discussing one student’s work or difficulties with another. If you wish to help each student see how her performance compares to that of her classmates, consider posting an overall grade distribution.

The Honor Code

The Honor Code is a distinctive and important aspect of both academic and social life at Bryn Mawr. In the most general sense, the academic Honor Code means that faculty can and do treat students with confidence in their integrity. Therefore, while on other campuses it may be common to take measures designed to prevent cheating--staying in the room during quizzes or hour exams, insisting that students leave coats or bags by the door, and so on--such efforts are inconsistent with the spirit of trust and responsibility characteristic of Bryn Mawr.

This is not to say that our students always understand standards of academic integrity. They may not know, for example, what kinds of collaboration between students are acceptable, and indeed, the degree of permissible collaboration will differ from course to course and discipline to discipline. They may also wonder about such issues as whether it is appropriate to use ideas gathered from lectures in their papers, or whether they may rely on materials studied in other courses. Finally, online resources raise their own temptations and questions. Please address such issues in class and make your expectations about the integrity of student work clear from the beginning, as well as making clear your willingness to address any questions or concerns your students may have. In essence, Bryn Mawr faculty operate on the assumption that students will sincerely try to honor standards of academic integrity while recognizing that these standards are not always self-evident.

In the end, many faculty members find the honor code liberating. At the same time, just as students have a responsibility to be honorable in their approach to their academic work, faculty have a responsibility to make their classes conducive to doing honorable work. Many faculty take precautions to lessen the temptation students may experience. These include: limiting
Moodle access during scheduled midterms and finals and not giving high-stakes closed book take-home exams.

**An Overview of the Honor Board Process at Bryn Mawr College**

At Bryn Mawr, instructors do not determine whether academic misconduct has taken place, nor do they impose penalties for suspected or proved violations. The Honor Board, which in academic cases consists of faculty members, deans and students, serves as the objective third party that determines whether an infraction has occurred and that decides the appropriate penalty.

If you suspect a student has engaged in academic dishonesty, you should proceed as follows:

- **Contact the student** and ask the student to come see you so you can talk about the work in question. This conversation should take place in person.

- The goal of the conversation is to **confront the problem** with the student. Explain the reasons that the student’s work raised concerns and ask the student to explain exactly what happened. We encourage you to enter this conversation with an open mind. Occasionally, a student will provide an explanation that the instructor hadn’t thought of, one that makes clear that no academic misconduct took place. Should that happen, the situation is resolved. You can grade the assignment and put the incident behind you.

- If, however, you remain concerned that academic misconduct—even inadvertent—took place, College policy and culture require you to refer the situation to the Honor Board. Tell the student to **report the issue to the head of the Honor Board** (see [https://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/council/](https://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/council/)). The student has 48 hours to contact the Head of the Honor Board. If you have not heard from the Head within 48 hours, you should submit a report of the possible infraction and the student’s name to the Head. Please note that you should not grade the assignment or determine the student’s final grade in the class.

- Both you and the student will **submit statements** to the Head of the Honor Board. Together, the Head and the Dean of the Undergraduate College determine if a hearing should be held. Your statement might include a summary of what happened, how the confrontation proceeded, and your thoughts about what the outcome of the situation should be. It might include supporting materials such as a syllabus or the source of plagiarized material. The statement can be as brief as one or two pages, or it can be longer. The “Faculty Statement Template” on the SGA website can assist you in preparing your statement. See [https://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/for-faculty/](https://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/for-faculty/)

- If a **hearing** is held, you will appear before the Honor Board. The board members will have read your statement and will ask you questions to give you a chance to clarify anything or offer any additional thoughts. The student will be present while you speak, but you will leave before the student is asked to speak about her own statement.

- Once the Board is done speaking with the student, the student and her dean will be excused so that the Honor Board can deliberate. The student will be notified shortly thereafter of the Board’s decision, often but not always on that same day. The instructor will be notified of the Board's decision by the dean involved in the hearing.
• The Honor Board has discretion to assign a wide range of outcomes, ranging from no penalty at all, to failing the assignment, to failing the class, to temporary separation from the College, to permanent exclusion. The student may appeal the decision to the President in some situations, but the **instructor must abide by the decision of the Board** or, upon appeal, that of the President.

It can be upsetting to find oneself in the position of suspecting that a violation of the Honor Code took place. In this situation, do not hesitate to consult with a senior colleague, dean, or faculty member of the Honor Board. Please keep in mind issues of confidentiality and avoid sharing the name of the student at this early stage. Please also avoid contacting the student’s own dean, who will be her support person at the Honor Board hearing, if there is one.

The Honor Board process has proven itself to be a valuable means of addressing academic dishonesty. Hearings communicate the norms around academic honesty and ensure responsiveness and fairness across departments and across instructors. They reinforce the value our community puts on trust between community members, responsibility, and academic integrity. And perhaps most importantly, they give a student the chance to take responsibility for her actions and to begin to reinstate herself in the good graces of the community.

For more details, see the Student Handbook or the information on the SGA website: [https://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/for-faculty/](https://sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/for-faculty/)