



Teaching Guidelines

**Alfaisal University
College of Business
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

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Teaching Guidelines

Preamble:

Academia is a universal culture with certain attributes that all faculty members are aware of, and students become familiar with most of these attributes after their first semester or year. These pertain to teaching, exams, assignments, projects, and College “culture”. Here at Alfaisal University - College of Business (CoB), we strive to build a culture that values, rewards, and promotes excellence in everything we do: research, teaching, and service.

The quality of the learning environment depends on three critical factors: students, professors, and curriculum. All these factors are equally important and their impact on the quality of the learning environment is highly correlated. Any weakness in one of these factors may adversely affect the quality of the learning outcomes. This affects the quality and reputation of the program/s and the college.

To create an excellent, innovative learning environment, our pedagogical approach should reflect three core concepts. First, students learn the most in a positive learning environment in which diversity of opinion is promoted and respected. Second, students take their education seriously when they are encouraged to take responsibility for their educational endeavors. Third, students learn the most when they are challenged to leave their comfort zone, push the envelope, and challenge themselves, i.e., when they work at the higher level of their capabilities. To put it succinctly, students gain new skills, knowledge, and expertise when they struggle, stumble, summon their strengths and keep pushing forward. However, the opposite is also true.

To help our students grow, obtain new knowledge, and develop a new set of skills, our curricula, assignments, examinations, projects, field trips, and other coursework and related materials should be designed to keep our students working at a higher level. This means setting a high standard, demanding coursework, challenging examinations, and guarding against cheating or plagiarism.

Although we should recognize and promote intellectual freedom and diversity, at the same time we should challenge our students to reach their potential by holding them to a uniformly high standard and by being rigorous and demanding, yet fair. By doing so, we help our students succeed not only in our classes, but also in their lives. We help them become independent, self-reliant thinkers, and future business leaders. In short, the quality of our education must be the overriding factor that triumphs any other considerations.

In the following sections we touch on key teaching guidelines that help CoB students achieve their potential and form a unifying guide for CoB faculty. While some of these guidelines are common knowledge to faculty members and we bring them to the students’ attention in the orientation programs, we choose to list them as our experience in the last few years shows the need to list and insist on the implementation of these guidelines.

1. **Course Lectures and Syllabus:**

- A. **Lecture time and preparation:** Faculty members are expected to be well prepared for their classes and use the lecture time effectively without cutting the lecture time for any reason. The total lecture time for any graduate level business course must be no less than 150 minutes of lecturing. Teaching standards should be consistent between courses and faculty. The lecture should involve new material, supporting illustrative examples and cases, relevance to the local economy/business and environment where applicable and possible, current issues, use of computer software and library resources, and followed by relevant assignments. Activities that involve guest speakers, video tapes, fieldtrips, or student presentations must be well planned in advance and reflected in the course syllabus, serve the subject matters, and should not constitute more than a reasonable percentage of the class time (less than 15%). Field trips should be well prepared for with prior written permission from the Dean's office and a statement signed by the student guardian if required.
- B. **Missing lecture/s:** If the professor is to miss a lecture due to other activities, such as attending a conference, then a written request should be submitted to the Dean's office ahead of time explaining the activity, and the arrangements made for the make-up of missed lecture/s. The faculty members should also make sure to communicate the absence and make-up plan to the students, providing them with any necessary materials or resources to cover the content of the missed lecture/s. Faculty members should also attach all the suggested materials in Moodle.
- C. **Course syllabus:** The course syllabus must cover the curriculum stated in the course specification known as "Master Syllabus" and should be prepared using the recommended NCAAA template provided by the Quality Assurance (QA) Office at the College of Business. It should be completed and posted for the students on Moodle ahead of time. The syllabus must include CoB and program missions and specify the course learning objectives and connect them to MOE learning domains on one side, and the course content (outline) on the other side. More can be written on the content of the syllabus; but the template specifies what is required. Two sample syllabi that can be emulated are deposited on Moodle (to access, please login to Moodle using elearning.alfaisal.edu, then under courses select [CoB_Admin_Pot](#)). Main content of the syllabus (learning outcomes, course requirements, grading policy, attendance policy, exams dates/times, and course outline over the 15 weeks of the semester) should not be changed after it is posted and explained to the students in the first or second lecture, unless necessary.
- D. **Course material:** Lecture materials containing power point slides, illustrative examples, cases, homework, and any reading material should be posted on Moodle. Lectures should reflect the learning outcomes (rubrics) outlined in the course syllabi and provide comprehensive coverage of the course content. The lectures should be designed to challenge students and encourage them to reach their potential, including analysis and critical thinking.
- E. **Multi-Section courses:** Professors teaching sections of the same course must coordinate with each other to ensure consistency and coherence across all sections. The coordination should involve using the same syllabus and textbook, as well as administering joint midterms and final exams to maintain equitable assessment standards.
- F. **Textbook/s:** The syllabus must specify the textbook/s used and provide information on how students can obtain a copy, whether in hard or electronic format. It is recommended that a hard and/or a digital copy be made available in the university library, allowing students to access it for a limited time. This should not prohibit students from buying the textbook/s, but it helps those who may not be able to buy the textbook/s. The textbook should not be the major source of information at graduate level. Professors should do all possible, including using quizzes, exams, to have students read the required material in the textbook(s) and any other assigned material.

- G. **Courses Material:** Faculty members are encouraged to diversify their sources of materials beyond textbooks. This can include incorporating case studies, academic and practitioner-oriented journals, simulations, and reports as supplementary materials to enrich the learning experience and provide a broader perspective on the course content. By leveraging a variety of resources, faculty can enhance critical thinking, analytical skills, and practical application of knowledge among students.
- H. **Exams:** should be carefully designed to align with the course learning objectives and the covered course material. Exams must test specific knowledge as outlined in course specifications. Exams should be challenging to help measure students' creativity and analytical skills, performance and reward the students who takes the learning process seriously; and be designed and conducted to prevent cheating. To ensure smooth administration, it is recommended to have the exams prepared and reviewed at least 24 hours before the scheduled exam time. In classes with a relatively large number of students, arrangements for additional proctors should be made in advance by contacting the college administration. Students should have the results of the first midterm exam before the end of the 8th week of the semester allowing them to make informed decisions, such as withdrawing from the course if necessary. Furthermore, students with poor performance (expected grade lower than C+) should be notified and **a list of their names should be reported to Graduate School**. Graded exams, not just the grades themselves, should be made available to the students within one week after they have been conducted. This enables students to review their performance and learn from their mistakes.

The following practices are expressly prohibited:

1. *Dropping the lowest grade exam score.*
2. *Duplicating original exams to give as make-up exams.*
3. *Providing multiple opportunities to make up exams; only one opportunity is allowed.*
4. *Duplicating old exams from previous semesters for use during the current semester. Exams should be substantially different from previous semesters' exams.*

- I. **All courses are expected to have two individualized midterms and a final. The final is conducted in its scheduled time, cannot be optional, and cannot be cancelled without the written approval from the Dean. Substituting a mid-term with another form of examination must also be approved by the Dean and Program office in advance.** For the final exam to have more value, it should have more weight than that assigned to any of the midterms. Individualized activity (such as exams) must form no less than 60% of each of the core courses grade, and no less than 50% of the elective course grade. This is vital to help differentiate students' performance as they often work in groups and end up obtaining the same grade. Any deviation from this must be approved by the Program office and Dean's office. Cheating or attempted cheating cannot be tolerated and is to be dealt with according to AU policy. Finally, old exams should not account for more than 25% of new exams. Faculty cannot use old exams as a substitute for creating new exams.
- II. **Exam Format:** Various exams formats are permissible, with an emphasize on promoting independent thinking. Examples of suitable formats include case exams, short answers, reflective questions, and essays. The use of multiple-choice questions should be limited to examination of 50 percent of the exam grade. The use of test banks is discouraged. If test banks are utilized, faculty members are required to modify the questions in a manner that prevents students who have access to the test bank from gaining an unfair advantage. Examples include changing the wording of a problem, rearranging the order of the answers, changing numerical values or terminology, and transforming the questions to negative statements or vice versa. In addition, true and false questions are not allowed, as are multiple-choice questions that essentially function as true and false substitutes, lacking substantial depth or complexity.

- III. Office hours:** It is important to provide office hours that accommodate the needs of all students while respecting any specific requirements related to gender separation. These should be assigned at convenient times for the students to benefit from them. A suggested time frame for office hours is between **5:00-6:00 PM and after class, if necessary**. Using phone, email, or online Zoom meeting in requesting to students' questions is strongly encouraged. It is recommended to clearly communicate office hours by posting them on the course syllabus and the faculty's office door. This ensures transparency and allows students to be aware of when they can seek assistance or clarification from their professors.

Graduate Teaching:

- I. **Lectures:** The teaching of graduate courses should be rigorous and consistent across courses and faculty and challenging to the MBA students who come in with at least one year of working experience. Students should be challenged to excel and reach their potential. All graduate courses should have meaningful weekly or biweekly assignments and an activity (such as a term project) that requires students to research, collect data/information, and perform some types of analysis and technical writing. Students should have feedback on their assignments within two weeks. This may include short written or oral feedback. As stated earlier, the lecture should have some real-world relevance, especially as it relates to Saudi economy and business.
- II. **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and requires more than physical appearance and signing the attendance sheet (attendance is taken regularly). We encourage a school culture that promotes punctuality, commitment, and responsibility. The professor should specify a clear policy on attendance and class participation. According to the University policy, absence should not exceed 15%. Good attendance is always correlated with high student performance. The attendance policy should be stated in the course syllabi.
- III. **Course GPA for MBA courses:** GPA for all MBA core courses should be between 3.00 and 3.50 out of 4.00; and for elective courses it should be between 3.00 and 3.60 out of 4.00. **A course with a GPA outside these ranges must be discussed by the MBA Program Office and approved by the Dean before submitting/posting the grades to the Registrar. Below are the allowed grades for all AU graduate programs; please note, all grades below C are converted to "F".**

Graduate Grading system: (Approved RGC 48th Mtg 22 Feb 2017; UC 7 March 2017)

Letter Grade	Points (GPA)	Grades in English
A	4.00	Excellent
A-	3.67	Excellent
B+	3.33	Very Good
B	3.00	Very Good
B-	2.67	Very Good
C+	2.33	Good/High Good
C	2.00	Good
F	0.00	Fail
S/U	-	Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory
I	-	Incomplete
W	-	Withdrawn
WP	-	Withdrawn Penalty
AU	-	Audit
CR	-	Credit
CC	-	Continual course
NC	-	No Credit
P/F		Pass/Fail
R	-	Retake

- IV. **Grade Appeal:** Students are not allowed to pressure or bully their professors to extract high, undeserved grades. Students engaged in this behavior can be subject to penalties. A student who is unhappy with his/her grade can approach his/her professor in good faith until the issue is resolved. If not resolved, then the student can file a grade appeal within the allowable time limit, which is one month after the completion of the semester.

Grade Appeal Procedures:

1. **Informal Resolution:** The grade appeal process typically begins with an informal resolution. The student should first approach the faculty who assigned the grade to discuss their concerns and seek clarification. This conversation should take place as soon as possible after the grade is assigned.
 2. **College or Program Director Review:** If the issue remains unresolved after the meeting with the faculty, the student may escalate the appeal to the college and program director. The student should submit a formal written appeal detailing their concerns, providing supporting documentation, and requesting a review of the grade.
 3. **Grade Review Committee:** The College may convene a grade review committee to examine the appeal. The committee typically consists of faculty members who were not directly involved in assigning the initial grade. The committee will review the student's appeal, relevant documentation, and may seek input from the faculty before making a decision. The grade review committee will evaluate the appeal and decide regarding the grade. This decision may involve upholding the original grade, adjusting the grade, or recommending further action to resolve the matter.
 4. **Notification of Decision:** The student will be notified via email of the committee's decision regarding the grade appeal.
- V. **Make-Up Exam Policy:** All courses within the MBA program at Alfaisal University include regular assessments. The specific details regarding these assessments are outlined in the course syllabi provided at the beginning of the semester. It is the responsibility of the MBA student to carefully review and take note of all assessments to ensure they do not miss any.

In exceptional circumstances where a student is unable to participate in an assessment, they may be given an opportunity to sit for a make-up assessment, subject to the following conditions:

1. **Circumstances beyond student control:** The student must have valid and documented reasons for being unable to attend the assessment due to circumstances outside their control. These circumstances are limited to medical emergencies, contagious diseases, and cases of bereavement of an immediate family member.
2. **Notification to course instructor:** The student must promptly inform the course instructor via email, preferably before the assessment if possible, providing a detailed explanation for their absence and confirming their intention to submit an e-form along with supporting evidence.
3. **Submission of e-form with verifiable evidence:** The student must formally request a leave of absence from the exam through the university's e-form portal (eforms.alfaisal.edu)

and attach verifiable evidence supporting their reasons for missing the assessment.

4. **Verifiable evidence:** The evidence submitted by the student must be verifiable. In the case of a medical condition, a valid medical certificate must be provided, containing specific details of the medical condition. If the reason for the absence is work-related, a formal signed and stamped document must be attached to the e-form request stating a specific reason why the student could not be present during the scheduled exam.
5. **Submission deadlines:** The e-form must be submitted within three days following the assessment or before the assessment if possible.
6. **Visit the MBA Office for Approval of the Make-up assessment:** Once the e-form is received, Ms. Turkiah Alotaibi will review the evidence, verify the student's attendance and previous make-up exam history. If approved, then a Permission letter to Attend Make-up Exam is issued and given to the student.
7. **Presentation of Permission to Attend Make-up Exam Letter:** The student must present the permission letter to the professor to be allowed to sit for the make-up exam.
8. **Make-up for a make-up assessment:** A make-up assessment opportunity **is provided only once**. There is no provision for a make-up exam for a previously scheduled make-up exam.

Responsibilities:

- **Students:** It is the MBA student's responsibility to inform the professor and submit a formal request through the e-form, providing verifiable evidence.
- **MBA Office:** The MBA Office is responsible for verifying the evidence submitted by the student, reviewing the student's make-up exam history, and issuing the Permission to Attend Make-up Exam Letter after due diligence.
- **Instructors:** The course instructor is responsible for informing students about the date and venue of the make-up assessment. Instructors must not allow any student to participate in make-up assessments unless the student presents the Permission to Attend Make-up Exam Letter issued by the MBA Office. Instructors should collect the permission letter(s) and return them to the MBA Office for record-keeping purposes.
- **Appeals:** If a student's request is rejected, and they wish to appeal against the decision, they may submit an appeal to the Dean of the College of Business (COB).

VI. **English Proficiency Requirement for Admission into AU-MBA:** If an English Proficiency Test is required for the applicant, then it has to be one of the following with the specified scores:

- **IELTS Academic:** Overall band score of 6.0 or higher (with a minimum score of 5.5 in reading and writing components).
- **TOEFL iBT:** Overall score of 60 or higher; or its equivalent for TOEFL ITP or PBT.
- **CEFR:** Level C1 and on to C2.
- ***Qiyas STEP:** Overall score of 90 or higher.

** It should be noted that the Qiyas STEP test assesses only the reading and listening components. However, it is the official Saudi version of the English test and is widely accepted by most Saudi universities.*

To avoid any confusion the OOPT Test is not accepted as a valid English proficiency test for admission to the MBA program. The rationale behind this decision is that the OOPT only assesses students in the listening and reading components, while neglecting the speaking and writing components. It is crucial to emphasize that writing skills are of utmost importance when evaluating postgraduate students.

VII. **Double Track – MBA:** Accepting an MBA student to enroll in a second track is an award for the MBA students with excellent academic record.

1. **Eligibility:**

- a) An MBA student who has completed the six core MBA courses of the first two semesters (MBA 510, MBA 511, MBA 512, MBA 513, MBA 514 and MBA 516) is eligible to apply for the second MBA track provided his/her CGPA in the six courses is 3.5 or higher.

2. **Application Submission:**

- a) Once the student meets the eligibility requirements, s/he can apply by filling out the form (attached) and emailing it to the MBA Office.
- b) The application should be submitted by a specified deadline (*2 months before the Fall semester of the second year*).
- c) The MBA Office will notify students by email if their applications are approved or not.

3. **Course Selection:**

- a) Upon approval of the application, the student must contact the MBA Office to select appropriate courses for the second track.
- b) The student must complete five additional courses specific to the second track, in addition to the 14 courses required for the first track. (It is important to note that no course can be double counted).
- c) The additional five courses will cover all core courses and electives related to the second track.

4. **Additional Considerations:**

- a) The student must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher throughout their enrollment in both tracks.
- b) Any failure to maintain the required GPA will result in the removal of the second track, and they will only be allowed to complete the original track.
- c) Any changes or modifications to the approved course plan must be discussed and approved by the MBA Office and the Vice Dean of Research and Graduate Programs.
- d) The College reserves the right to make changes to the policy and requirements with proper notice to the students.

VIII. **PMBA 502 and PMBA 505 – Prerequisites:** The college has observed that some MBA students are not taking the PMBA courses (505 and 502) seriously. First, as these are considered pass/fail and do not contribute to their GPA. Second, students who obtain the grade of (F-Not Passing), continue to join the MBA core courses. These two factors resulted in students not learning the required material which is required for MBA core courses such as MBA 510, 511 and 516. This situation contradicts the purpose of offering these two PMBA courses (which are MOE requirements). Consequently, the college has decided to implement

a policy that ensures the PMBA courses are taken seriously, and students understand their importance.

1. PMBA 502: Introduction to Quantitative Methods:

Students who are enrolled in PMBA 502 must pass the course to enroll in MBA 511: Quantitative Analysis.

2. PMBA 505: Introduction to Accounting & Finance:

Students who are enrolled in PMBA 505 must pass the course to enroll in MBA 510: Financial Accounting, and MBA 516: Managerial Finance. **Failing either PMBA course will result in a delay of at least one year in graduation.**

IX. **Maximum Course Load for First-Year MBA Students:** The College established a policy for a maximum limit of three courses for the first MBA semester (equivalent to 9 credit hours). This policy aims to address the observed academic challenges faced by students during their first semester and prevent a decline in their GPAs, which can lead to probation and potential dismissal.