

# 8.

## Policies Relating to Students

### *Absence Reports*

Although class attendance records are not required, faculty members are requested to report to the Dean of Students any continued absence on the part of students in their classes.

### *Auditing Courses*

Persons not regularly enrolled in the Institute may audit courses if they obtain the consent of the instructor in charge of the course, and the Dean of Undergraduate Students or Dean of Graduate Students, as appropriate, and pay the required fee in the amount specified in the current issue of the *Caltech Catalog*. Registered students are not charged for auditing. No grades for auditors are turned in to the Registrar's Office, and no official record is kept of the result of the work done.

### *Course Changes*

The phrase "course changes" is to be construed as including the introduction of new and the dropping of old subjects of instruction, and changes in the curriculum or requirements of any option of study.

1. All course changes are to be submitted first to the appropriate Division Chair, then, if approved, to the Chair of the Curriculum Committee and/or the Graduate Study Committee. Whenever new courses are involved, the Division Chair should see that each is provided with a course number, a total number of units (with the unit distribution as to class, laboratory, and preparation), the specific term or terms in which the course will be offered, a brief description to appear in the catalog, the prerequisites (if any), and, if possible, the name of the instructor.
2. On receipt of the recommendations of the faculty committees, the Faculty Board takes action, subject to possible reviews by the faculty as a whole as provided in the faculty bylaws.

It is obviously desirable that course changes appear in the *Caltech Catalog* for the academic year in which they go into effect. To this end, they should be initiated as early as possible. The courses cannot appear in the catalog for the next academic year unless they are approved at or before the last Faculty Board meeting of the academic year, which is normally in mid-May. Appropriate time should be allowed for consideration by the faculty committees in advance of the Faculty Board meeting.

### *Examinations*

Special examinations for individual students are to be avoided except when required by schedule conflicts, illness, or other special circumstances. The time and place for special examinations are to be arranged by the instructor.

The last day for the removal of conditions and incompletes is scheduled about three weeks after the beginning of each term. The exact date appears in the calendar in the catalog. If an examination is necessary, it should take place before that date. These are not considered special examinations and are subject to the same rules as are other scheduled tests.

### ***Faculty Responsibilities for Students***

Faculty members are expected to act as advisors to the undergraduates. All freshmen are assigned to faculty advisors who interest themselves in the freshman's progress and advise on questions or problems. All members of the three upper classes are assigned to option advisors who interest themselves in the students' selection of courses, their progress toward their degrees, and, eventually, in their placement in industry or graduate school.

Serving as thesis advisor to a graduate student is often among the most important responsibilities of a faculty member. In addition, in the graduate options, graduate students may be academically associated with an informal group of the faculty governing the option. Faculty members from each area of graduate study are also available for consultation on problems concerning academic programs, degree requirements, financial aid, etc. Faculty members serve on thesis examining committees and oral examinations for graduate degrees.

### ***Faculty/Student Relations***

Coordination and cooperation between students and faculty with regard to campus affairs are secured through the presence of students on faculty committees through the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, and by means of other less formal mechanisms.

### ***Guidelines for the Graduate Student-Faculty Advisor Relationship***

This section is repeated in the Caltech Catalog under Graduate Policies and Procedures. Please see the catalog version for up-to-date page references.

The relationship between a faculty advisor and graduate student should be founded on mutual respect and open communication. Advisors and students should discuss the nature of their working relationship early and continue this discussion throughout their period of collaboration to ensure mutually understood and compatible expectations. These discussions should be frequent and open, and should include not only work, research goals, and performance reviews, but also change of status, time for personal and family responsibilities, time off (see catalog), and concerns about academic or work situations. Both the student and advisor have the obligation to initiate meetings as necessary to ensure the success of the relationship.

After achieving candidacy, each Ph.D. student should be assigned a thesis advising committee of three or more faculty members. This committee should meet informally at least once a year beginning in the fourth year of graduate study.

The graduate student-faculty advisor relationship should be guided by norms of fairness and professionalism. Both faculty and graduate students should avoid relationships that conflict with their respective roles and duties at Caltech. Both are bound by the prevailing policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment (see catalog). Concerns relating to academic or work situations should be raised promptly between the persons directly involved and handled informally if possible. Both students and advisors have the responsibility to raise and address concerns and conflicts promptly, honestly, and in a manner that conforms with academic integrity and professionalism. Caltech policy requires that students' concerns be addressed fairly and promptly and prohibits the retaliation or discrimination against students for appropriately voicing or raising a concern.

If a problem remains unresolved or if direct discussion is not possible, a student can seek assistance from Division officers (e.g., Option Representatives) or the graduate deans. At any time a student may request that discussions remain confidential. For more details about sources of assistance, consult the graduate option regulations (see catalog) and the Student Problem Resolution Process (see catalog).

### ***Field Trips***

Instructors in charge of field trips should notify the Registrar's Office at least five days in advance of the date of such trips. The Registrar's Office will, in turn, notify the instructors whose classes will be affected by the absence of students. In the case of small groups, students should notify their instructors.

### ***The Honor System***

The honor system at the Institute also covers course work including examinations, tests, laboratory reports, and homework. It applies to both undergraduate and graduate students. Instructors should always keep in mind that

an honor system cannot work unless it has been made perfectly clear to the students how much collaboration, if any, is permitted on laboratory reports and homework. This should be done at the first meeting of each term.

Most examinations are of the take-home variety, although a room for the examination may be reserved at the instructor's discretion. Even if a room is reserved, the instructor should not be present during the examination, and students should be free to come and go as they please. Instructors should specify clearly the ground rules for all examinations. It is the responsibility of the students to follow the announced ground rules.

Administration of the honor system is in the hands of the undergraduate student Board of Control and the graduate student Graduate Review Board, and any violation of the honor system that comes to the attention of an instructor should be reported to the Chairs of the respective boards or to one of the Deans—undergraduate or graduate as the case may be.

### ***Length of Classes***

Classes start on the hour and last fifty-five minutes. Classes should be dismissed promptly so that students will not be late to the next class. The hours from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Monday evenings are usually free from classes. This tradition is an important one that allows our students, both undergraduates and graduates, to participate in athletics and in performance and activity courses, to attend research seminars, and to eat dinner in the student houses.

### ***Overloading of Students***

The faculty has gone on record as definitely opposing overloading of students through the requirement of more time in class, laboratory, or outside preparation than is allowed by the number of units allotted to a course. Instructors should use great care in determining whether a significant proportion (perhaps 20 percent) of their students find it necessary to put in extra time in laboratories, on laboratory reports, or on homework.

### ***Scholastic Grading***

The system of scholastic grading is explained in detail in the *Caltech Catalog*. In general, the faculty has gone on record as being opposed to the so-called "curve system" in which grades in a section or a course are determined by any method which results in a certain number of A's, B's, C's, etc., being automatically awarded. The instructor should have in mind a standard of excellence for each level and should award each grade on the basis of this standard. Thus, it might be possible for every member of a section in a given course to receive A's. As long as the selection of students—and perhaps the faculty's teaching abilities—cannot be perfect, this situation is not likely to occur, but if the Institute's objectives are being realized even fairly well, it is unreasonable to assume that in every section or course some students must necessarily receive low grades. For freshmen, term-end grades are limited to Pass/Fail for the first and second terms. All others are allowed to register for one course per term on a Pass/Fail basis.

### ***Senior Ditch Day***

The faculty has officially recognized Senior Ditch Day. This holiday, the date of which is determined and announced by the senior class, is a prerogative of the seniors. Other impromptu interruptions of the academic calendar, whether by class or by section, should not be permitted.

### ***Summer Research***

Undergraduate and graduate students in residence may be permitted, with the recommendation of their Division, to register for and to carry on research during the summer vacation period without additional tuition payment. Work for which stipends are paid is not eligible for academic credit. (See the Academic Calendar in the *Caltech Catalog* for the exact registration date for summer research).