



American University of Central Asia

International and Comparative Politics Department

Communication Rules

To foster a respectful and effective learning environment, the Department of International and Comparative Politics (ICP) establishes the following communication rules between students and faculty:

1. **Respectful Communication:** All interactions should be characterized by respect, courtesy, and professionalism. Both students and faculty are encouraged to listen actively and engage in constructive dialogue.
2. **Timely Responses:** Faculty members will try to respond to student inquiries within a reasonable timeframe, typically within 48 hours during weekdays. Students are encouraged to be patient and allow time for thoughtful responses.
3. **Appropriate Channels:** Students should use designated communication channels (such as university email or learning management systems) to contact faculty. Personal messaging apps or social media should be avoided for academic communication.
4. **Clarity and Organization:** Students should clearly articulate their questions or concerns when contacting faculty. Providing context and being specific can help facilitate a more effective and focused response.
5. **Office Hours:** Faculty members will hold regular office hours to provide dedicated time for student interactions. Students are encouraged to use this time for academic discussions, clarifications, or support.
6. **Mutual Responsibility:** Both students and faculty share responsibility for maintaining open lines of communication. While faculty will maintain availability, students should also take the initiative to seek assistance when needed.
7. **Constructive Feedback:** Students are encouraged to provide constructive feedback regarding courses and teaching methods. This can be done through formal evaluations, direct communication, or feedback forms, contributing to the department's continuous improvement.
8. **Conflict Resolution:** In the event of a misunderstanding or conflict, students are encouraged to address concerns directly with faculty members. If issues persist, students may seek assistance from the Department Chair.
9. **Confidentiality and Trust:** Faculty members will uphold confidentiality regarding student interactions, fostering a safe environment for open dialogue. Students are also expected to respect the privacy of faculty communications.
10. **Cultural Sensitivity:** All communication should be mindful of cultural differences and promote inclusivity. Faculty and students should strive to understand and accommodate diverse perspectives within the department.

By adhering to these communication rules, the ICP Department aims to cultivate a supportive environment that enhances academic success and mutual understanding within the International and Comparative Politics Department.

Contact about Grades and Coursework

The majority of the student-faculty communication is about grades and coursework. In this communication, faculty are happy to provide feedback that will help improve student performance in their following assessment and provide information about coursework not included in the syllabus.

However, it is **unacceptable** to contact faculty solely to request a 'grade change.'

The quality of students' communication with faculty often depends on how they phrase their questions and/or concerns. For example, if they wish to discuss the grade, it is much better to phrase the request in a manner that implies their wish to improve their skills and future performance. It signals to the professor that they are asking for additional feedback and will be happy to help students improve.

Here are some examples of attempts to negotiate, bargain, intimidate, plead, or just rude and unprofessional ways of talking to faculty about grades:

'You were tough', 'the course was overwhelming', 'you expected too much from us', 'I got higher grades from other professors, who are, by the way, very nice people', 'my future is in your hands', 'nobody needs this class anyway or cares what grade you give, so why not just add something to my grade', 'please, just please please please', 'I will not tell anyone...', 'all you cared about was what we know about [title of the course or subject], you never cared about [course or subject outside the scope of the given course/subject]', 'you never gave me the chance to show you my knowledge in ways I know best', 'You never noticed this, I came prepared every day', 'you are scary', 'You gave me a zero for participation, which is unfair, because I did participate [followed by an unverifiable example of insignificant participation in class]', 'I am unhappy with my grade', 'YOU GAVE me a bad grade', 'You gave a difficult assignment', 'You gave me this grade and now I cannot sleep', 'Your grade is cruel', 'You are cruel', 'You are unfair', 'I worked so hard for this paper, this grade is unfair', 'Your grade made me cry', 'Why did you give me such a bad grade?!', 'My grade is low, please recheck my grade', 'Other professors give better grades', 'I am better than other students, so change my grade', 'You gave a higher grade to my classmate who is worse than me', 'No one has ever required such things from us', 'I have never heard of such thing as citation and references', 'other professors do not care about this', 'I get higher grades in other departments', 'This is not Harvard, why do you require this?', 'Please change my grade and I promise I will do better next time'

Students shall not negotiate, bargain, plead, and/or intimidate faculty for grades.

Any conversation about the grade or feedback is not an opportunity for students to convince their professor that they deserve a different grade. It is an opportunity for students to understand better how to improve their skills, knowledge, and understanding so they are better prepared for their following assignments and achieve better grades.

If students plan on referring to their lack of skills and knowledge as reasons to change their grade, ask themselves the following question: would you write these reasons in your university admissions essay and expect to be admitted? If your answer is 'no,' avoid discussing them because your professor should reconsider your grade. Instead, talk to your professor about ways you can improve those skills.

Students are reminded that university-level education is about setting challenging standards and showing students how to reach them. We all lose if our academic standards and rigor do not challenge and push students to develop. If the standards are lowered for one, they must be lowered for all. Therefore, students are encouraged to reflect on the nature of their contact with faculty and its long-term consequences. The main point of their contact should not be about lowering the standards. The main point should be getting advice on reaching those standards.

If students threaten AUCA faculty, the faculty will report the incident to relevant bodies at AUCA, which may result in student expulsion. Threatening to harm faculty's career, livelihood, or reputation, harming one's health, livelihood, or wellness, or making intimidating remarks if faculty do not comply with student's demands shall be reported immediately to the relevant AUCA institutions. There are no circumstances that justify such forms of intimidation and threats. If they wish to be persuasive and heard, use reason, evidence, and the logic of a good argument. When they fail, suggest that a third independent party attend their dispute.

Furthermore, it is not appropriate to threaten to disclose any faults of the faculty unless they comply with your demands. If there is a fault, act in good faith and inform the ICP Manager and Chair about it in due time instead of using it in your interests as leverage against faculty. Students are subject to disciplinary procedures if they try to leverage information to make faculty or staff comply with your demands. The students must at all times act in good faith.

In all circumstances, avoid escalation by maintaining a formal and professional attitude and demeanor. In short, students must keep in mind that their correspondence and statements in written and spoken form will be taken seriously by AUCA faculty and staff, which means that students may be required to justify their statements.

Interpreting Feedback

ICP professors will provide feedback on students' assessments in written form and/or communicate it to them during your meeting. Feedback typically highlights the main strengths and weaknesses of the work and the main points for improvement. They are not exhaustive. Sometimes, due to time constraints, ICP professors may only highlight the points students need to improve. It is the student's responsibility to make the best use of the feedback provided to them.

Feedback is never given to justify a grade, so it is not an appropriate source for students to make accurate judgments about grades. The primary purpose of feedback is to help students improve their skills. When students receive the grade and feedback, make sure they carefully read the feedback and identify the points the feedback suggests to improve. Go back to the submitted work, review the areas the feedback highlights, and think about how you would do them differently.

Since students will receive multiple feedback from different professors, try to identify patterns in them. What are the common points mentioned in all the feedback? Which points are not familiar? Common points require their attention most urgently as they typically indicate a necessity for improving key skills.

Do not take feedback personally. Even though pronouns may be present in the feedback, the object of feedback is always the work submitted and the skills involved, not the person.

Reporting Problems, Issues, and Concerns Related to Courses and Faculty

Problems and concerns related to courses and faculty should be communicated to the Head of the ICP Department. Depending on the issue's sensitivity, however, students are advised first to exhaust the possibility of addressing the problem directly with the respective faculty.

When reporting any issues, problems, or concerns, students must make their best effort to identify the problem as clearly as possible and act in good faith.

Students are also obligated to provide all the evidence that supports their claims. The Department may ignore any reports without evidence or anonymous reports.

Students should take the Teaching Evaluations distributed at the end of each term for every course as an opportunity to make suggestions for improvement and inform the department about their concerns.

Requesting Recommendation Letters

Students are welcome to request recommendations or reference letters from the ICP faculty. However, students must understand that they are not entitled to a recommendation letter and that professors can refuse to write students any recommendations or references. Students must ensure that they give faculty as much advance notice as possible. It is courteous to request recommendations at least two weeks before your deadline.

If students are required only to submit the contact information of their referee, they must only do so with the permission and consent of their referee. It is unethical to ask faculty to write you a 'good' recommendation or to fabricate or misrepresent any information.

If the faculty agrees to write a recommendation letter, ensure that the student sends the CV and highlights any achievements the professor would like them to consider. Also, remind faculty about any of their classes you have attended and the final grade you received. In short, do your best to provide all the key information they need to consider when writing your recommendation letter—request recommendations from faculty that know you well.