

# Academic Partnership Agreement

## I. Introduction

The Academic Partnership Agreement (hereinafter the “Agreement”) aims to reaffirm existing academic policies and establish a collaborative framework between students, faculty, staff, and administration, reinforcing transparency, consistency, and accountability in academic practices.

While the University Senate retains authority over academic policy, the Agreement serves as a guiding document to amplify existing guidelines and address challenges in the educational framework. Associated Students recognizes the importance of an equitable academic experience that fosters clarity and constructive collaboration.

By promoting effective communication and the fair application of academic standards, the Agreement will ensure active contributions from all members of the university community. Emphasizing shared governance and continuous dialogue, the Academic Partnership Agreement supports an environment where integrity and high-quality education remain central to the institution's mission.

This Agreement reflects and upholds San Diego State University’s commitment to academic excellence, student success and the pursuit of knowledge, as outlined in its [Mission Statement](#):

“The mission of San Diego State University shall be to provide well balanced, high quality education for undergraduate and graduate students and to contribute to knowledge and the solution of problems through excellence and distinction in teaching, research, and service. The university shall impart an appreciation and broad understanding of human experience throughout the world and the ages.”

San Diego State University has a longstanding commitment to shared governance<sup>1 2 3 4</sup>, recognizing the vital role of students in shaping university policies and initiatives. This principle ensures that students actively contribute to decisions affecting their academic and campus

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<sup>1</sup> “Encourage[s] an environment where students are more actively involved with important university decisions including but not limited to: enrollment management, budgets and other policy issues that affect the student experience at SDSU” ([Shared Governance Taskforce Recommendation](#))

<sup>2</sup> “Create[s], promote[s] and fund[s] social, recreational, cultural, and educational programs and facilities both on campus and in the community, advocate[s] for student interests, provide[s] leadership opportunities and participate[s] in shared governance” ([About Associated Students](#))

<sup>3</sup> “[Enhances] its long lasting tradition of participating in shared governance in order to strengthen the relationship between every student on campus and the University Administration” ([A Resolution in Support of SDSU's Current Shared Governance Model](#))

<sup>4</sup> “Continue[s] to work with the administration and the Senate to provide input and opinions on issues that affect SDSU characterized by respect, understanding, communication and compromise towards all parties involved in the decision making process” ([A Resolution in Support of SDSU's Current Shared Governance Model](#))

experience, including enrollment management, budgeting, and other key institutional matters. Through Associated Students, SDSU fosters student leadership and advocacy, supporting programs and initiatives that enhance the social, cultural, and educational environment both on campus and in the broader community. Resolutions reaffirming shared governance emphasize the importance of collaboration between students, faculty, and administration, strengthening relationships through open communication, mutual respect, and a commitment to collective decision-making.

## **II. Purpose**

At San Diego State University, students, faculty, staff, and administration share a common goal: maintaining a transparent, consistent, accountable, and collaborative academic environment. The Agreement serves as a formal commitment to uphold these values in academic policies and ensures their clear communication and fair application.

And in recognition of faculty, staff, administration, and students as equal stakeholders in academic success, we, the Associated Students, with this Agreement seek to:

**Enhance transparency**, defined as clear communication of academic policies, grading criteria, and expectations;

**Promote consistency**, through equitable application of grading standards across courses and departments;

**Strengthen accountability**, by establishing a framework for addressing concerns and ensuring continuous improvement; and

**Encourage collaboration**, through ongoing dialogue between students, faculty, staff and administration.

## **III. Academic Practices Cited In The University Senate Policy File and University Policies**

Certain practices and policies are already enumerated in the [The University Senate Policy File](#) and [University Policies](#). This Agreement seeks to reaffirm and reinforce these commitments so that they remain central. Specifically, this Agreement calls upon the faculty to uphold the following:

“Professional responsibilities shall serve as a guide to responsible performance that is consistent with the highest ideals of the academic profession. It is not intended to serve primarily as a reference for disciplinary action. Ordinarily, departures from responsible professional behavior should be corrected by calling the matter to the attention of the person involved and handled within the individual's academic unit. If a breach of professional responsibility is alleged that cannot be, or is not, adequately handled informally within the basic academic unit, the matter should be taken up at the next institutional level.”

As part of this reaffirmation, we urge faculty to uphold the following key academic commitments:

- **Timely Grading<sup>5</sup>:** “Faculty have the right and responsibility to provide evaluation and timely assignment of appropriate grades”
  - Examples of “*timely*”: 2 weeks after the due date, before the final exam with 1 week to review etc.
- **Access to Grading Information<sup>6</sup>:** “Examinations, reports, and course papers shall be returned to the students in accord with each student’s right to confidentiality, which, however, shall not apply to dissertations or comprehensive examinations at the master’s or doctoral level”
- **Syllabi Expectations<sup>7</sup>:** “Instructors shall provide students with access to their course syllabus at or before the first class meeting and shall post their syllabus on the official SDSU learning management system as well as any other course website routinely accessed by the course students. Any major changes to the course syllabus shall be announced in class, communicated to all students electronically, and incorporated into an updated and posted version of the syllabus.”
- **Regular Office Hours<sup>8</sup>:** “Each faculty member shall hold regularly scheduled office hours and shall post a schedule of those hours and their contact information at their office location and within their syllabus.”

#### IV. New Proposed Academic Policies to be Implemented

Building on the reaffirmed academic practices, this section introduces additional policies designed to further enhance transparency, consistency, accountability, and collaboration within academic affairs.

- **Timely Grading:** Expanding on the University Senate Policies, *Section - Assignment of Grades and Grade Appeals*, which states “Faculty have the right and responsibility to provide evaluation and timely assignment of appropriate grades” faculty, including instructors, should address within their syllabi, their expectations or definitions of “timely grading” to create transparency and accountability.
- **Access to Grading Information<sup>6</sup>:** Expanding on the University Senate Policy File, *Section 3.3.3. Records and Retention*, which states “Examinations, reports, and course papers shall be returned to the students in accord with each student’s right to confidentiality...” students should have the right to review their grades and seek clarification as needed. They may request explanations for their scores

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<sup>5</sup> University Policies: Section - Assignment of Grades and Grade Appeals

<sup>6</sup> University Senate Policy File: Records, 3.0 Records and Retention, 3.3 Examinations and Course Papers

<sup>7</sup> University Senate Policy File: Academic Responsibilities, 2.0 Course Syllabi, Subsection 2.2

<sup>8</sup> University Senate Policy File: Academic Responsibilities, 4.0 Faculty Office Hours

and view their exam results, including any incorrect answers, after the exam. This can be done during office hours or through in-class review sessions. Additionally, students are entitled to access their published grades on Canvas, including those for individual assignments and exams, and professors should therefore not “lock” their overall course grades in their Canvas course.

- **Constructive Evaluation:** Students should be given clear rubrics/guidelines for essays, projects, assignments, etc. when assigned, to ensure they understand the grading criteria. Rubrics should be provided for assignments exceeding 20% of a student’s overall course grade, as stated within the syllabi. To maintain consistency, grading rubrics should be standardized across departments. Furthermore, for subjectively graded assignments—such as essays, projects, and presentations—students should receive detailed, constructive feedback to support their growth and improvement.
  - Examples of “*specific feedback*”: Notating “formatting needs to be reviewed” or “lack of depth” on papers to highlight areas for growth; Demonstrating the difference between grade A, B, and C papers or assignments, prior to due date to clarify expectations.
- **Assessing Exam Question Effectiveness:** Students should not be penalized for exam questions that 100% of the class answers incorrectly, as this may indicate issues with the question's clarity or the effectiveness of instruction. Since such instances reflect potential gaps in teaching rather than student performance, class results on individual exam questions should be reviewed. Unfair or misleading questions should be removed from the exam grade to ensure a fair assessment.
- **Meaningful and Accessible Office Hours:** Students should have access to office hours to accommodate their needs in the instance they have a reasonable time conflict with originally scheduled office hours, via appointment. Professors must ensure that office hours do not replace scheduled class time and should use class sessions for instruction. If office hours are counted toward attendance or grades, professors should provide alternative meeting times during “dead” hours—when no classes are scheduled—or at times that better suit students’ availability.
  - *Example: BA 323 scheduled Wednesdays, 4:00-6:40 pm; BA 323 Professor should not hold office hours instead of class on Wednesdays 4:00-6:40 pm and offer other opportunities for consulting with the professor.*
- **Streamlining Teaching Assistant (TA) Grading Practices:** Colleges should ensure that TAs receive proper training through taking a pedagogy course to maintain cohesion in grading standards, assessments, assessment modality, and course material before leading labs or small lectures. Students should be allowed to provide mid-semester feedback for TAs to maintain consistency in grading across different sections and prevent discrepancies in how course material is assessed.

- **Prohibition of Weekend, In Person Exams:** In-person exams should not be scheduled on weekends, as these are designated non-working days for both students and faculty. Many students have jobs, family obligations, or limited campus access, making weekend exams inconvenient and inequitable. Exceptions may only be made if the professor determines it is essential for the coursework and receives approval from the Department Chair of the college. However, for asynchronous courses or online courses without scheduled class times, it is understandable that online weekend/“over-the-weekend” exams may be permitted.
- **Notice of AI (Artificial Intelligence) Use in Grading:** Just as students are required to disclose when they use AI in their assignments, professors should also disclose the use of AI in grading to maintain transparency. Students should also be given the opportunity to dispute grades when AI is utilized as a measure of determining grades on assignments. Additionally, colleges and departments should establish and standardize clear AI grading policies that all professors must follow to maintain consistency and accountability.
- **Fair Attendance Grades:** Attendance policies should be designed to support student learning while considering individual circumstances. Professors must clearly outline attendance expectations in the syllabus, ensuring they align with the course's instructional goals. Professors should offer reasonable flexibility for absences due to illness, emergencies, religious observances, or other legitimate reasons. Students should have the opportunity to make up excused missed participation points or in-class work through alternative assignments or office-hour discussions. Attendance policies should be applied consistently and equitably across all course sections to maintain fairness.

## V. Reaffirmation of Resolving Grading Disputes

To ensure fairness and uphold academic integrity, it is essential to have clear procedures in place for students to address grading concerns effectively.

While faculty maintain the authority to assess student performance and approve candidates for graduation, this agreement affirms the importance of a structured, transparent, and accessible grade appeal process to protect students from grading inconsistencies, bias, or procedural errors.

- [Office of the Ombudsman Procedures for Handling Student Concerns Regarding Members of the Faculty](#)
  - Step 1: Talk to the Professor or Instructor of Record
  - Step 2: Talk to the Department Chair
  - Step 3: Talk to the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
  - Step 4: Meet with the Student Ombudsman
- [University Policy Streamlined Appeals Process:](#)

- “If you believe that an appropriate grade has not been assigned you should first seek to resolve the matter with the instructor of record. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, you may present the case to the appropriate campus entity, have it reviewed and, where justified, receive a grade correction. Requests to improve an earned grade assigned at the end of a semester by completing additional coursework are not considered. It is your responsibility to attempt to resolve grade disputes in a timely manner, typically during the semester following the semester the questioned grade was received. If 12 or more months have elapsed since the grade was issued, or you have graduated, no grade change will be considered.”

## **VI. Student-Faculty-Administration Collaboration**

Effective collaboration between students, faculty, and administration is essential to fostering an academic environment that prioritizes fairness, transparency, and shared governance. This Agreement requests the following:

- **Faculty Training & Development:** Workshops through the Center for Teaching and Learning on fair grading practices and student engagement, with involvement from the A.S. Vice President of University Affairs and two Board of Directors, Student-at-Larges.
- **Student Representation on Academic Planning and Policy Committee:** Reaffirming the student representatives’ voices, sitting on A.S.’s University Council, in curriculum and grading policy discussions.

## **VII. Implementation & Review**

To ensure that the collaborative efforts outlined in this Agreement translate into tangible improvements, we recommend a structured approach to implementation and continuous review, for example:

- **Charge the University Senate’s Academic Planning and Policy Committee:** Ensure the integration of reaffirmed and newly proposed academic standards into official policies, including course syllabi, University Senate Policy, University Policy, and San Diego State University’s website.
- **Charge the Individual Colleges through the College Deans:** Integrate the Academic Partnership Agreement into Canvas Homerooms in each college/department, requesting that a Canvas pop-up notification will be sent to all students so they are made aware of this Agreement.
- **Charge the Individual Colleges and Department Chairs:** Ensure each college and department policy file is updated to address the points in this agreement.
- **Semesterly Student Feedback Review:** Analyze student feedback surveys to assess faculty adherence to key responsibilities, including transparency, consistency, accountability, and collaboration.

- **Internal Review of Student Feedback Survey Responses:** Evaluate student feedback to ensure faculty members uphold academic policies and responsibilities, addressing any discrepancies between stated expectations and actual classroom practices.
- **Student Input on Future Policy Revisions:** Students, through Associated Students and other representative bodies, reserve the right to provide input on any proposed revisions to University Senate or University Policies that affect the clauses within this Agreement, ensuring continued student voice in shaping academic standards.

## VII. Student Commitment to Academic Integrity and Partnership

In recognition of the collaborative nature of the academic experience at San Diego State University, students also seek to affirm their responsibility in upholding the principles of this Agreement. As equal stakeholders in academic excellence and shared governance, students commit to the following:

- **Engagement and Respect:** Such as, attending classes, participating in discussions, maintaining respectful communication with faculty, staff, and peers, etc.
- **Academic Integrity:** Upholding honesty in all academic work, including proper citation practices, refraining from unauthorized use of AI tools, and following university policies regarding cheating and plagiarism.
- **Responsiveness and Accountability:** Reviewing syllabi, meeting deadlines, and addressing concerns through appropriate channels, including faculty office hours and formal grievance procedures when necessary.
- **Constructive Feedback:** Participating in course evaluations and feedback opportunities in good faith, offering insights that promote mutual growth and teaching effectiveness.
- **Collaboration and Shared Governance:** Such as, supporting and engaging in academic committees, forums, or advisory boards where student input is invited and valued.

This shared understanding acknowledges that student success is a collective responsibility and that mutual respect and accountability are foundational to the academic community.

## IX. Conclusion

Students, faculty, and administration unite to foster transparency, consistency, accountability and collaboration, enhancing the educational experience while valuing all stakeholders in SDSU's mission. This Agreement supports existing policies while integrating new standards to address academic challenges, ensuring that all academic policies are effectively communicated and fairly applied. Regular evaluation of student feedback helps maintain academic integrity and encourages continuous improvement through open communication. By strengthening mutual respect and understanding, this partnership promotes a supportive learning environment for academic and personal growth. More than just a policy, it represents a commitment to fairness,

integrity, and student success, defining the future of SDSU through shared responsibility and collective progress.