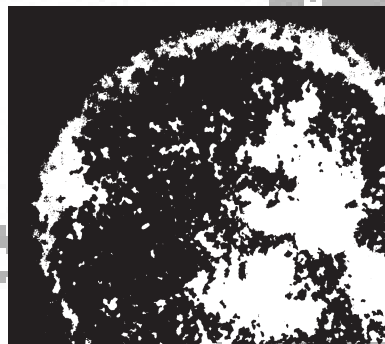




INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT AND
SCHOLAR SERVICES (ISSS)

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



International
Student
Handbook
2009-2010

5. Education in the United States

The following characteristics can help you understand how U.S. cultural values influence behaviors and expectations in the classroom. The value placed on individualism, achievement, importance of time, work ethic and pragmatism are evaluated in the following section.

Characteristics of the U.S. academic environment

The U.S. cultural values listed in the previous section shape the academic environment in the following ways:

1. Active classroom participation is expected.
2. Time pressure is high - often there are many small assignments due each week - and time management is an important skill to develop.
3. Critical thinking must be developed.
4. Independent thinking is highly valued.
5. Presenting ideas concisely in class is expected.
6. Assignments (reading, writing, homework, tests) are numerous.
7. Competition is a common mind-set.
8. Achievement and hard work are highly valued; the finished product is most important.
9. Students must be responsible for themselves.
10. Equality—all students should be treated equally.
11. Informality is normal.
12. Direct and straightforward communication is expected.
13. Friendship is usually based on doing things in common—sports, studying, etc.
14. Combining theory and practice—the practical application of ideas—is emphasized.
15. Problem-solving orientation—“If it’s broken, we ought to be able to fix it!”
16. The scientific method and the use of logical proof are emphasized academically.

Developed by Dr. R. M. Paige and S. L. Smith, University of Minnesota, October 1988; revised by R. Stuck , 1993.

Advisers and instructors: asking for advice

At the University, you will have two main advisers: an international student adviser and an academic adviser. You will also be in contact with professors and or teaching assistants (TAs). Listed below are the types of questions and concerns that each can address.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVISER

- Passport, visa, or Department of Homeland Security (DHS) matters
- Legal matters
- University policies, procedures, and services
- Transfers to other schools
- Work permission
- Government or agency scholarships or sponsorship
- Travel outside the United States
- Health insurance
- Financial problems
- International and intercultural programs
- Academic concerns and problems
- Career planning and job strategies
- Personal concerns: adjustment; day-to-day living; relationships with family, friends, roommates, etc.
- Social and cultural issues

ACADEMIC ADVISER

- How to read and interpret your Class Schedule
- Which classes to take, advice on schedules
- Detailed information on the registration process
- Short- or long-term academic requirements or planning
- Availability of graduate assistantships
- Probation/suspension and help for poor grades
- How to transfer credits
- Majors or minors
- Grading system
- Academic calendar
- Extension classes
- Academic terminology

PROFESSORS & TEACHING ASSISTANTS (TA's)

- Course content
- Course schedule, syllabus, requirements
- Exams, papers, and grading
- Advice, assistance in comprehending course material, finding library resources, and assessing your progress

Clarifying adviser roles

Do these situations differ from your expectations? *In many cases, the answer could be both true and false, depending on the circumstances!*

- An international student adviser will be assigned to me specifically. He or she will be the one person I will always see in the International Student and Scholar Services office.
False. ISSS staff members are trained professionals with specialty areas. The front desk staff will direct you to see the ISSS staff member best suited to your question. If you are seeking counseling, however, you will be able to form a relationship with one adviser and continue to see that person on an ongoing basis.
- My academic adviser will be an expert in my specific field of study and in my special area of interest.
Usually true.
- I can expect that both my international student adviser and my academic adviser will maintain a formal relationship with me on all occasions.
It depends on the adviser and the situation.
- In situations where I disagree with a University rule, the international student adviser will be able to help me get what I need.
False. While an ISSS adviser will serve as an advocate to support your viewpoint, the international student advisers need to follow University policy as well.
- My academic adviser will be able to tell me which professors are the best teachers.
False. Get advice from other students.
- The person with whom I will need to talk about specific policies and requirements for graduation from the University will be my academic adviser.
True.
- It is the responsibility of my academic adviser to tell me which classes I must register for each semester.
Usually you and your adviser work on this together.
- The international student adviser can help me with a dispute I am having with my academic adviser.
Often true. ISSS can work with you and on your behalf to resolve the problem.
- I can go to International Student and Scholar Services during normal business hours and always find an adviser available to answer my questions.
False. Please call 612/626-7100 or check the ISSS website before you come to check adviser availability.

- Both my international student adviser and my academic adviser will be available to complete applications or other forms for me if I ask them.
False. The emphasis on individualism and independence means that students are responsible for completing their own forms.
- If I am having difficulty in a particular course, an international student adviser or my academic adviser will be able to influence the instructor to give me special consideration.
False. Again, while ISSS will serve as a resource to help you understand the U.S. educational system and U.S. Americans' behavior, the staff will not intervene for you. However, ISSS can help you to become more effective in communicating with your professors.
- When I meet my international student adviser on the street, she or he will remember my name and my particular situation.
Probably false. Unfortunately, ISSS staff members cannot always remember students names. Do not interpret this as a sign of disinterest; rather, it is due to the large number of students our staff works with every year.
- My academic adviser will help me by correcting my written work because he or she knows that English is not my native language and I might not always use correct spelling or grammar.
False. Most advisers do not consider this to be their role.
- I will have the opportunity to interact with my academic adviser in social settings.
Probably true.
- I will be able to talk to my academic adviser about my personal, non-academic problems.
Depends on adviser.
- If I find that I can no longer pay for my education, an international student adviser will give me a scholarship.
Depends on situation—see a financial aid adviser in ISSS.
- My academic adviser will tell me what research project or which classes will be best for me, since he or she knows the conditions I will be working under when I return home.
Depends on adviser.
- I can change academic advisers if I don't feel that I am getting the help I need from my current adviser.
Depends—check with your department.
- My academic adviser will not influence my choice of research projects or dissertation topic.
Somewhat False. While your academic adviser may influence your choice of research or dissertation topics, you will ultimately decide these.

Florence Anne Funk, 1990.

Revised by Alisa Eland and Teresa Harrell, 1991.

Revised by Barbara Kappler, 2000.

University of Minnesota Grading Policies

The University of Minnesota is on the 4.00 Grade Point System. Points are awarded as follows:

- A = 4.000 Grade Points
- A- = 3.667 Grade Points
- B+ = 3.333 Grade Points
- B = 3.000 Grade Points
- B- = 2.667 Grade Points
- C+ = 2.333 Grade Points
- C = 2.000 Grade Points
- C- = 1.667 Grade Points
- D+ = 1.333 Grade Points
- D = 1.000 Grade Points
- F = 0.000 Grade Points

Graduate School grading policy

Graduate School students are expected to earn a grade of “B” or higher in order to pass classes. This means that a graduate student must maintain at least a 3.00 grade point average. A grade of “C” or lower is considered failing.

Undergraduate grading policy

Undergraduate students are expected to earn at least a 2.00 grade point average each term. An undergraduate whose GPA drops below 2.00 for a semester will be put on academic probation, and should contact his/her adviser to discuss this status.

Professional School grading policy

Students enrolled in professional schools (e.g. Law, Veterinary Medicine) are advised to consult with an academic adviser to discuss GPA requirements and acceptable passing grades.

S/N grading option

The University also has Satisfactory/No Credit (S/N) grading option as an alternative to taking classes for an A-F letter grade. Some classes must be taken A-F. Some degree programs have a limit on the number of S/N credits you can take. Grades of S or N are not calculated into your grade point average.

Standards of academic conduct

Academic standards and practices are influenced by culture. What is considered appropriate academic behavior in your home country might be different from what is appropriate in the United States. Therefore, it is important that you understand U.S. standards and practices. Not meeting these standards can result in charges of academic dishonesty and possible expulsion from the University.

The U.S. definition of academic dishonesty is based on the cultural values of individualism, fairness, the idea that individuals must think and work independently, and a strong value of original thinking, creativity, and invention.

At the University of Minnesota, academic dishonesty is defined as any act violating the rights of another student in academic work, or involving misrepresentation of your own work. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, cheating on assignments and examinations; plagiarizing or representing as your own work any part of work done by another; submitting the same work, or substantially similar works, to meet the requirements of more than one course without the approval and consent of all instructors concerned; depriving another student of necessary course materials; or interfering with another student's work.

EXAMS AND CHEATING

It is common in many countries for students to study and work together to prepare for exams. This is customary in the United States as well. However, once in the classroom, students are on their own for exams. Students cannot copy or discuss answers with each other during an exam. It is essential in the U.S. education system that each student be evaluated individually on his or her own work. “Cheating” is defined as copying someone else's work or taking prohibited information or tools to an exam.

PLAGIARISM

“**Plagiarism**” is defined as copying the work of someone else and not naming your source. In the United States, this will be considered an attempt by you to pass off the ideas or words of another person as your own. **Plagiarism is one of the most serious violations of the standards of academic conduct in the United States.** It can ruin your academic career.

Of course, when you are writing a paper, you research many sources and present or summarize other people's ideas. But you must name your sources and identify when you are using their words and ideas by these methods:

- name your sources in the text
- put quotation marks around words and sentences that you copy from someone else's work
- provide footnotes and endnotes (even when you are paraphrasing someone's words)

- include a list of references or a bibliography

This also applies to the work of other students. Discussing ideas for a paper with friends is okay, but it is not acceptable to hand in papers that are the same as your friends' or to let someone else write your paper for you, even though the ideas are yours.

HELPFUL RESOURCES ON RESEARCH AND WRITING

- Consult a publication manual from your discipline, such as the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, for specific guidelines on citing the written and spoken work of others.
- Ask in your department if a particular style or publication manual is used in your field.
- Look on the web for software tools for publishing and managing bibliographies
- Contact the Center for Writing at 612-626-7579 or on-line at www.writing.umn.edu/
- Consult the University of Minnesota Style Manual, available in University Bookstores or online at www.umn.edu/urlete/style

Dean at Boston U. faces allegations of plagiarism

BOSTON—A dean at Boston University is facing allegations of plagiarism after he reportedly gave a commencement speech in which he used large portions of an article without attributing the ideas to the author.

The dean, H. Joachim Maitre of the university's college of communication, was traveling in Malaysia last week and was unavailable for comment.

In his speech, which was videotaped, Mr. Maitre is said to have used ideas and sentences contained in an article written by Mi-

chael Medved, a film critic for the Public Broadcasting Service. Mr. Medved's article, "Popular Culture and the War Against Standards," appeared in *Imprimis*, a journal put out by Hillsdale College.

John Silber, president of the university, said in a statement: "Charges of plagiarism are among the most serious that can be brought in academic life." He said it would be inappropriate to "prejudge" the situation until Mr. Maitre is given a chance to respond to the allegations. ■

—*The Chronicle of Higher Education*,
July 10, 1991