



320 STEPHENS HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Calmessage sent on November 23, 2022

TO: UC Berkeley Academic Senate Members, Council of Deans, Department Chairs, Academic non-student appointees, Graduate Student Instructors, and Instructors

Subject: Grading & exams during UAW strike

Dear Colleagues,

We are aware that the continuing UAW strike is a source of stress for all of us in the Berkeley community, and with exams and end-of-semester grading approaching that is likely to increase. The Academic Senate has developed some procedures to help instructors navigate the end of the semester should the strike continue and Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs) not be available to help administer and grade exams and other final assessments.

The current situation highlights the contributions of GSIs and their essential role in fulfilling Berkeley's academic mission. While we have attempted in what follows to outline some approaches that should enable an easier end-of-semester for faculty, we recognize that there are no truly satisfactory solutions to the withholding of GSI labor. The procedures outlined in this message would go into effect **if the strike is not resolved by the end of the day on Monday, November 28.**

These procedures are designed to respond to the workload faced by faculty teaching large classes in which student work would otherwise have been graded by GSIs, to support students who need grades assigned in a timely manner for a variety of reasons, and to address concerns of Senate faculty who are opposed to taking over struck labor. While the contract for Unit 18 lecturers prohibits sympathy strikes, Senate faculty who are not supervisors or managers enjoy a protected right to strike in sympathy under the Higher Education Employee Relations Act (HEERA). Faculty need to be aware that there is debate about when Senate faculty are considered to be managers. [Guidance from UCOP](#) suggests that faculty who supervise two or more employees are generally considered to be managers. Conversely, [a group of UC law professors argue](#) that faculty who supervise GSIs or GSRs do not count as managers because they do not formulate or administer University policies. Each of us will have to make decisions about how to conduct our work during the strike, and we know that faculty will act and communicate with the respect and awareness of the experience of others that define the Berkeley community. We all contribute to Berkeley's educational mission, and the ability to work well together now and in the future will depend on acceptance of a range of principled actions in response to the strike.

1. New grade submission deadline: December 31, 2022. The registrar has agreed to extend the deadline for the submission of grades through Cal Central from December 21 to December 31. We are

aware that an additional ten days is not nearly enough to mitigate the very substantial workload that faculty teaching large classes may confront. The revised deadline aims to offer faculty some relief while accommodating students who need grades to determine academic standing; eligibility for graduation, financial aid, or veterans benefits; and/or applications to certain majors and to higher degree programs.

2. No switch to default P/NP grading. Berkeley will not be moving to a default P/NP grading system for the semester, as we did during the spring of 2020. While we recognize the loss of educational support undergraduates are experiencing during the strike, the strain on students does not reach the level imposed during the first months of the pandemic. Many students need timely letter grades for the reasons outlined in point #1; moreover, a move to P/NP would not address the increased grading demands on faculty because Cal Central requires a letter grade to be entered in the system at the time that each P or NP grade is assigned.

3. Submit as many grades as you can by the deadline. Faculty who cannot calculate and enter grades by the new deadline **should leave the grade blank rather than assigning an I (Incomplete)** or any other option. We ask that you calculate and submit letter grades by December 31 for as many students as possible, and for **all students** who have notified you that they require a letter grade for one of the reasons listed above.

Faculty teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses (except for courses in Berkeley Law) will be able to submit the grades you have while leaving the others blank until student work can be graded. This change to the system will take effect in early December. Once it is implemented and announced, grades entered and saved on the roster will post to the students' records overnight, allowing for continual grade entry until all grades have been entered. After the grades have been posted a grade change will need to be submitted to make any corrections.

Please do everything possible to meet the requests of students who inform you that they need letter grades by December 31. In the absence of a letter grade, staff and advisors will need to contact faculty individually to establish grades for all students who need degree checks for graduation and/or who need grades for financial aid. The total number of course grades for students in these circumstances would likely exceed 20,000, which is an impossible job for staff who are already stretched thin.

4. Assessment and grading in courses that do not rely on GSIs should be carried out as usual. For classes that do not rely on GSIs for grading, we encourage faculty to maintain the forms and modes of assessment announced in the syllabus and to submit grades by December 31.

5. Designing final assessments. If you are teaching a large class without GSI help, try to find ways to reduce the time required for assessing student work. Some possibilities include shifting (fully or partially) to exam formats that can be automatically graded, reducing the length and scope of final assessments, or grading in a more schematic way (see advice on adapting and reducing the scope of assessments from the Center for Teaching and Learning [here](#)). **Canceling the exam altogether is not an option.** Academic Senate regulations require final examinations in all courses unless determined otherwise by the Committee on Courses of Instruction. Furthermore, canceling an exam would be unfair to students who are relying on it to improve their grades. If you plan to change the format of your final exam, you must obtain approval from your department chair. If your alternate exam format no longer requires the use of a classroom, please notify the Office of the Registrar (scheduling@berkeley.edu), so the classroom can be reassigned to other groups such as students with DSP accommodations.

6. Exams for students with accommodations from the Disabled Students Program (DSP). In many courses, GSIs play an important role in arranging and proctoring exams for students who have DSP accommodations (e.g., for 150% time or a low-distraction environment). Some proctoring and logistical support for these exams has been picked up by DSP, but its proctoring facilities are at capacity. **Faculty should therefore consider replacing timed in-person exams with timed take-home exams that give students a total amount of time adequate to incorporate all extended time accommodations (typically more than 24 hours).** For example, if an instructor provides 24 hours for students to complete a 2-hour exam, the DSP student with a 150% time accommodation would be allowed to take 3 hours within that 24-hour window to complete the exam, but the instructor does not have to provide a window of 36 hours. Gradescope and bCourses can both handle timed exams with accommodations; guidance on designing remote examinations can be found [here](#).

7. Include students in decisions about assessments and grading. Consider inviting students to collaborate with you in decisions about alternative formats for final assessments, the re-weighting of assignments, and other revisions to the syllabus. Students could be given the choice between taking the final exam (if they want a chance to improve their grade) or being graded on work already completed (if they are happy with their grades so far). Including students in your decisions will give them agency in this challenging situation, make them feel connected to the university, and emphasize that learning is a collaborative process.

8. Communication. Clear and prompt communication will make things easier for you and others. Please communicate any changes to your final assessments and/or grading scheme to students as soon as possible, and let students know that you will be able to provide letter grades by December 31 for those who are applying to graduate school or need the grades to attest to their academic standing or eligibility for financial aid.

9. Resources and support for faculty. The Senate is working with the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#) (CTL) to support faculty in making changes to their assessments and grading procedures. Additional advice from CTL can be found [here](#) and [here](#), or [contact CTL to request](#) a one-on-one consultation. Once the strike is resolved the Senate also hopes to work with the administration to make funds available to hire readers to help with grading, although this may not be possible. I also invite you to contact me by email (masmart@berkeley.edu) if you have questions or concerns.

We hope that these recommendations will be helpful in negotiating what may prove to be a challenging conclusion to the semester. We are acutely aware of the energy and ingenuity with which Berkeley faculty have confronted the exceptional challenges of the past few years, and we marvel at your brilliance and your commitment. We wish you success and a measure of serenity in confronting these challenges, and also some moments of joy and repose over the holiday break.

Sincerely,
Mary Ann Smart
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

Maximilian Auffhammer
Vice Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate