

Office of Student Affairs

STUDENT HANDBOOK

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SECTION II

Academic Regulations

The regulations published in this handbook are intended to give a synopsis of institutional policies. Changes may be made in the regulations at any time. The changes are designed to promote the best interest of the students and the University. While the University makes every effort to provide academic advisement and counseling for its students, it is the responsibility of the students to know their own standing in reference to policies, regulations, and standards of the University and their department. All students admitted are held accountable for the policies contained in this handbook.

Academic Advisement

All students at Mississippi Valley State University are encouraged to take full advantage of the flexibility of academic planning and to seek the advice of the faculty and staff. Freshmen students are directed to the University College; sophomores, juniors, seniors and graduate students are directed to their major departmental advisors. Students enrolled in the University Honors Program are directed to that program for academic advice prior to each registration period in addition to scheduling periodic conferences during the semester to discuss academic program planning and progress.

Academic Records and Transcripts

The Office of the Registrar

prepares and maintains a permanent scholastic record for each student. These records are treated with due regard to the personal nature of the information they contain. The records are the property of the University. A transcript is sent, issued or released only upon a student's request or with a student's explicit permission. Such permission is not required when University faculty and administrative personnel request transcripts for official purposes. A student may obtain an official copy of his/her transcript at any time for a small fee.

Official transcripts are not issued to students or alumni but are mailed directly to the institution or person considering the application for admission or employment. To be official, a transcript must bear the seal of the University. **A transcript will not be sent, issued, or released if a student owes money to the University.**

Transcript requests should be directed to the Office of Student Records, Mississippi Valley State University, 14000 Highway 82 West #7264, Itta Bena, MS 38941-1400, Telephone: 662-254-3325 or 662-254-3324, Fax: 662-254-3325.

Academic Year

The academic year is divided into two semesters of approximately sixteen (16) weeks each. In addition, the University offers a 10-week summer session divided into two five-week terms. Students must register each semester and summer term.

Academic Class Load

A normal class load is twelve (12) to nineteen (19) credit hours per semester. A student must carry a minimum of twelve (12) credits per semester to be considered a full-time student. A student may carry up to nineteen (19) semester hours with departmental approval. A student may be allowed to take more than nineteen (19) semester hours only by approval of the major department and Vice President for Academic Affairs. A student who is permitted to carry more than nineteen (19) semester hours is charged at the rate of \$113.58 for each credit hour over nineteen (19). The maximum load for a summer session is seven (7) semester hours.

Academic Probation

Students are placed on academic probation under the following conditions: (1) at the end of any term in which the cumulative grade point average falls below 2.0; (2) at the beginning of any term of re-admission following academic suspension. The maximum academic load for a student on probation is twelve (12) semester hours.

A student's probationary status may be removed by achieving a cumulative grade point average of 2.0. If the cumulative grade point average remains under 2.0, probation continues.

During the probationary period, the student's class load will be limited to twelve (12) semester hours. A student is considered to be in good standing when his/her cumulative grade point average meets or exceeds the 2.0 grade point average.

Academic Suspension

A student is placed on one term suspension at the end of any term in which a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 is not achieved. A student having one academic suspension who warrants a second suspension is suspended for two regular semesters. A student who is academically dismissed from the University at the end of the spring semester may earn re-admission status if (a) he/she attends the University's summer session immediately following dismissal; and (b) achieves a grade point average of 2.5 or above in at least six (6) semester hours of course work.

A full-time student whose semester grade point average is 0.00 shall be suspended from the Institution for one semester.

Change or Declaration of Major

To change or declare a major, the student should secure a "Change of Major Form" from his departmental office and subsequently submit the properly approved form to the Office of Student Records.

Change of Program/Class Schedule

Students must follow the class schedule as outlined on their registration form on file in the Office of Student Records. A grade is recorded for only those courses on the student's Registration Form. A student is permitted to change classes by dropping or adding courses during the period designated on the Academic Calendar. To initiate a change of program, the student secures the form from his/her departmental office and subsequently submits the properly approved change of program form to the Office of Student Records.

Class Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance is required in all credit generating classes and activities. Students must comply with class attendance policies set by individual faculty members and complete all work required for each course in which the student is registered. Faculty members are obligated to notify students in writing at the beginning of each semester of the policies and procedures on absences and make-up work. When students must be absent from class, they are required to make arrangements satisfactory to the instructor with regard to work missed. When students know in advance that they will be absent from class, instructors should be notified and arrangements made to secure assignments.

Students may obtain from the Vice President for Student Affairs' Office an official excuse from class due to an emergency (illness, accidents, jury duty, or

death in the immediate family) or for attendance at officially-authorized functions and authorized field trips sponsored by the University.** Official absences presented to the instructor within seven days from the date of the absence entitles the student to make up any work missed.

*****Students are not allowed to drive personal vehicles***

for University business nor are they allowed to drive University vehicles.

Whenever students have three or more unexcused absences, faculty members are required to report the absences to the Office of Student Affairs.

Classification of Students

Students are classified according to the total number of semester hours earned:

Freshman 26 or fewer semester hours

Sophomore 27 to 53 semester hours

Junior 54 to 86 semester hours

Senior 87 or more semester hours

Grades and Quality Points

Each instructor assigns a grade to students based on standards established as appropriate for each class. Written papers, participation in class discussions, mid-term and final examinations, and class attendance may be used by an instructor to determine grades.

It is the student's responsibility to comply with the criteria used in grading by instructors. Students should consult with instructors during office hours for assistance.

The class work of the student will be indicated according to the following pattern of values.

Grade Value Quality Pts

Per Hour

A Excellent 4

B Good 3

C Average 2

D Poor 1

F Failure 0

I Incomplete -

W Withdraw from class -

WP Withdraw from school -

P Passing -

A grade of "I" (Incomplete) may be submitted in lieu of a final grade and only when the student, because of illness, death in his/her immediate family or similar circumstances beyond his/her control, is unable to complete course requirements or to take final examinations. The grade of "I" must be removed by the student within twelve (12) months; otherwise, the "I" will revert to an "F".

The "P" grade is awarded in certain designated courses, internships, and practicums. The "P" grade is also assigned for credit by examination. The "P" grade is not used in computing grade point averages and may be used only in authorized courses. A report of final grades is mailed to students after the close of each enrollment period.

Graduation Procedures

Within your Department of Study

- Meet with your academic advisor in your department of study.
- Have your advisor review your transcript and complete a transcript evaluation form.
- Submit the transcript evaluation form to your department chairperson.
- Obtain clearance to graduate from your department by having your transcript evaluation form validated by the department chairperson

Office of the Registrar

- Obtain a copy of an application to graduate.
- Complete the application by obtaining all required signatures.

*Be sure to print or type the information clearly on the application.

*If you plan to participate in the commencement exercise, you must list information for cap and gown sizes on the application.

Career Development and Placement Center

- Complete Senior Credentials Pack:

Resume/Personal Data Sheet/Performance Evaluation Forms/Consent to Release/Transcript Form/ Application/Student Data Card

- Obtain a Clearance Form

Office of Financial Aid

- Complete the Exit Loan Counseling Session on the Internet:
 - Log on to www.mvsu.edu
 - Click on Admissions
 - Click on Financial Aid Information
 - Click on See the Online Center
 - Click on Exit Counseling
- Schedule an appointment with a financial aid counselor.
- Obtain a Clearance Form.

Office of Fiscal Affairs

- Present Clearance Forms from Career Development and Placement and Financial Aid to the Fiscal Officer.
- Receive Clearance from the University.

Caps / Gowns / Graduation Invitations

Inquiries concerning caps, gowns, and invitations for graduation should be directed to members of the Commencement Committee.

Student Academic Grievance Procedures

It is the policy of the University that a student may have prompt and informal resolution of his or her student grievances and that this be accomplished under orderly procedures.

Dispute Grades

A student's grades should represent the instructor's good faith judgment of the student's performance in the course based on the informed use of appropriate measurement and evaluation instruments. If a student disagrees with a grade he/she has received, the following procedure should be followed until the problem is resolved. These steps must be followed in order and appropriate documentation of each step (including notation of the date, time, location, length, content, and final outcome of the discussion) must be provided in order to proceed to the next step.

1. The student should discuss the disputed grade with the instructor of the course no later than the end of the third full week of classes of the semester following the receipt of the final course grade. This should normally be done during the instructor's posted office hours.

2. If the dispute is not resolved in step one, the student should request a meeting with the chairperson of the department offering the course. The instructor of the course will also attend the meeting.

3. If the dispute is not resolved in step two, the student should request a meeting with the dean of the school offering the course. The instructor of the course and the instructor's chairperson will also be present.

4. If the dispute is not resolved in step three, the

student should request a meeting with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The instructor of the course; the instructor's chairperson; and the dean of the school offering the course will also be present. The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs is final and no further appeal is possible.

Other Academic Grievances

A student may have a grievance against an instructor which goes beyond a dispute over the grades received in a course. Such grievances might involve allegations that the instructor is harassing students, practicing extortion, not meeting his/her classes or is generally incompetent. For such non-grade oriented grievances, the following procedure should be followed until the problem is resolved. These steps must be followed in order and appropriate documentation of each step (including notation of the date, time, location, length, content, and final outcome of the discussion) must be provided in order to proceed to the next step.

1. The student should make the grievance known to his/her instructor.

2. If the grievance is not resolved in step one, the student should request a meeting with the chairperson of the department offering the course. The instructor will not be present at this meeting, but a follow-up meeting will be scheduled with the instructor and the

chairperson.

3. If the grievance is not resolved in step two, the student should request a meeting with the dean of the school offering the course. The instructor of the course and the instructor's chairperson will also be present at this meeting.

4. If the grievance is not resolved in step three, the student should request a meeting with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The dean of the school offering the course will also be present at this meeting. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will schedule a follow-up meeting with the instructor; the instructor's chairperson; and the dean of the school offering the course.

5. If the grievance is not resolved in step four, the student should request a meeting with the President. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will also attend this meeting. The President will schedule a follow-up meeting with the instructor, the instructor's chairperson, the instructor's dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The President also has the option of empowering a panel of professors to review the allegations made by the student, render a judgement and recommend an action for the President to implement. The decision of the President is final.

The Student's Academic Rights in the Classroom Setting

1. Without fear of penalty, the student shall be free to take reasonable exception to data and views offered in the classroom.

2. The student's course grade should represent the instructor's good-faith judgement and his/her best use of measurement and evaluation skills in assessing the student's performance in the course.

3. The student has a right to expect reasonable efforts to protect against improper disclosure of information concerning his or her grades, views, beliefs, political associations, health or character acquired by the instructor during his professional relationship with the student.

4. The student has the right to expect accurate and clearly stated information which will enable him to determine the following:

a. The general requirements for establishing and maintaining an acceptable academic standing.

b. His own academic relationship with the University and any special conditions which apply.

c. The requirements for the course as well as

for graduation.

5. The student has the right to be governed by educational justifiable regulations.

6. The student has the right to a classroom environment free from distractions and annoyances.

Classroom Freedom and Responsibility

Academic institutions exist for the transmission of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, the development of students, and the general well-being of society. As members of the academic community, students should develop the capacity for critical judgement and engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Free inquiry and free expression are indispensable to the attainment of these goals. Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The freedom to learn depends upon appropriate opportunities and conditions in the classroom, on the campus, and in the larger community. Students should exercise their freedom with responsibility.

Student evaluation in class should be based primarily on academic performance. Academic grievances are resolved in accordance with the University Code of Academic Integrity. Should a student and a faculty member be unable to resolve a problem relating to academic performance, the student should see the department head.

Students are free to take reasonable exception to the data or view offered in any course of study and to reserve judgement about matters of opinion. Students are, however, responsible for learning the course content required for successfully completing the course.

Cases of dishonesty in academic work are considered to be serious violations; therefore, students risk incurring the penalty of failure in the course.

The academic program of the University is the basis for all activities; therefore, each student is expected to attend all classes. Since class attendance is a requirement for successful completion of the course, this requirement becomes the responsibility of the student.

Policy on Disruptive Behavior

Academic excellence demands that appropriate behavior and decorum be maintained by students at all times in the classroom. Mississippi Valley State University will not tolerate disruptive behavior by students.

When the student is judged to have engaged in disruptive behavior the instructor shall initiate the following procedures:

1. Instructor will request the student to discontinue the disruptive action.

2. If the behavior continues, the instructor will instruct the student to leave the classroom. University Police will be called to remove the student if he or she does not leave.

3. An incident report will then be completed by the instructor and filed with the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and a copy sent to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President for Student Affairs.

4. Upon receipt of the incident report, including the student's comments, the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs shall investigate the matter and take appropriate disciplinary action.

5. The accused student must secure written permission from the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs in order to return to class. The instructor will be informed of the disciplinary sanction imposed on the student and the student will be held responsible for all absences incurred between the time of suspension from class and his or her return.

Note: Any electronic devices (beepers, telephones, radios, etc.) may cause disruption and therefore should be turned off in the classroom. In such case where the device causes disruption, the individual in possession of the device will be held accountable.

Student Grievance Procedures for Non-Academic Employees

In the normal course of University activities, students may encounter problems with University employees (staff and/or administrators). In these circumstances, students should first attempt to resolve the problem by talking directly with the employee

involved. However, the University recognizes that it is not always possible for students to resolve a problem by direct discussions with the University employee. In these cases, the options available to students include making an informal complaint to the employee's immediate supervisor and/or filing a formal written complaint in accordance with existing University policies.

Informal Complaints: In many cases, it is possible to resolve a complaint by an informal verbal discussion with the employee's immediate supervisor. Students who make informal complaints need to realize that the supervisor will handle the complaint however he or she sees fit and that the student making the complaint may never know what action is taken regarding the complaint. Despite this fact, informal complaints often result in conversations between the supervisor and the affected employee to determine possible corrective actions.

Formal Complaints: Students who wish to go beyond the informal complaint stage must be willing to make complaints or file grievances in writing. These formal written complaints and grievances start a "due process" procedure which ensures that the formal complaint or grievance is taken seriously, investigated thoroughly by appropriate parties and resolved after the investigation. All parties involved in the formal complaint/grievance process are notified of various actions in writing. Exactly what type of process is involved depends on the nature of the written complaint made.

Procedures for complaints/grievances are available in the Office of Student Affairs. If a student has questions about procedures for filing complaints/grievances, he or she should go to the Office of Student Affairs for a thorough explanation of the procedures.

Mississippi Valley State University is committed to providing a work and study environment that encourages intellectual and academic excellence and the emotional well being of its students, faculty, and staff. Circumstances, facts, and conduct that violate this policy contradict the University's educational philosophy and standard.

Mississippi Valley State University expressly prohibits sexual harassment of its students, faculty, and staff or of applicants, who seek to join the university community in any capacity.

Definition

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, such behavior as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature directed towards a student, member of the faculty or staff, or an applicant seeking to join the university community, particularly when any of the following circumstances is present:

1. Tolerance of sexual harassment is made an explicit or implicit term or condition of:

status in a course, program, activity, academic evaluation, employment, hiring, or admission;

2. Submission to or rejection of sexual harassment is used as a basis for academic evaluation, or an employment decision affecting such individuals; or

3. The behavior described has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for work or learning, or interfering with an individual's work performance. For purposes of this policy, "interference" is defined as improper, unreasonable or unjustifiable behavior going beyond what is appropriated or warranted.

Examples

- •Physical Assault
- •Unwelcome sexual flirtation
- •Direct propositions of a sexual nature
- •Direct statements regarding submission with promise of reward or threats of reprisal (i.e., "Meet me tonight for a drink and I bet we can take care of your grade.")
- •Subtle pressure for sexual activity (i.e., "How would you like to go to a conference in Detroit with me?")
- •Pattern of conduct (not legitimately related to office business or the subject matter of course) which causes humiliation or discomfort, such as sexually explicit or sexist comments, questions, anecdotes or jokes
- •Pattern of conduct that would cause humiliation or discomfort in a person at whom the behavior was directed (i.e., unnecessary touching, patting, hugging, brushing against a person's body, remarks of a sexual nature about a person's body or clothing, remarks or speculation about a person's sexual activity or sexual experience)
- •Display of sexually demeaning objects and pictures
- •Actions indicating that benefits will be gained or lost based on response to sexual advances

Victim/Harasser

The victim of sexual harassment as well as the harasser may be a woman or a man. The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex. The harasser can be the victim's supervisor or teacher, a supervisor or teacher in another area, a co-worker or student, or a person who is neither an employee or a student of the University. The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.

Complaint and Grievance Procedures

Faculty, staff, or students who feel they are being sexually harassed are encouraged to seek relief through appropriate procedures.

Note: A person who believes him/herself to be a victim of sexual harassment has the responsibility to establish that the alleged harasser's conduct is unwelcome.

The University has two levels of review, informal and formal. The informal level of review may be used as a prelude to filing a formal complaint or as an alternative. It is not necessary that this option be used. Anyone who believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment may immediately file a formal complaint as described in the University's Policy on Sexual Harassment, a copy of which may be obtained in the Office of Human Resources.