

Teaching Tip Series

Communicate the close of the semester

As the semester concludes, it is a recommended practice to send a message to your class within a few days of the final class session. There is no single format for the structure of this communication, but we encourage that you include the following components in your message to students:

1. **Thank your class:** In the frenzy that inevitably accompanies the submission and grading of final exams, projects, and papers it can be easy to lose sight of the fact that our classes are made possible in large part by students choosing to enroll in them. Be sure to appropriately thank your students for their participation in the learning process throughout the semester.
2. **Revisit course grading policies:** Although your syllabus should include information on how grades are calculated, it may be helpful to provide reminders to students about how their final exams, projects, or papers are graded, as well as how their final grades are determined. Providing this information again offers an additional level of clarity around an issue that may be at the forefront of students' minds.
3. **Set expectations about the timing of grades:** Since students will likely be thinking about their course grades after completing all of their coursework, it is courteous to let them know when they can expect grades for their final exams, projects, and papers as well as overall course grades.
4. **Communicate how you will handle challenges to grades:** According to SPS policy, students can only officially appeal final course grades, not grades for individual exams, projects, papers, course participation, etc. As you make determinations about final grades, academic policy requires that any adjustments or opportunities afforded to one student (e.g., rounding up a grade, offering extra credit assignments upon request, etc.), must be applied evenly across the entire class. Therefore, it is strongly encouraged that you make decisions about any affordances you will offer to students prior to sending your closing message, and communicating that in the message to them. More information on the SPS grading policy can be found on page 29 in the following link: <http://assets.sps.columbia.edu/pdf/slar/SPS-Student-Handbook-18-19.pdf>
5. **Provide a method for students to stay connected:** You may very well remember educators who played a large role in your educational and professional development, and you might inhabit such a role for your students. As a core component of the SPS mission is to prepare students to succeed in the workforce, your relationships with your students may continue long after the semester concludes. In light of this, consider providing students with a permanent email address (in addition to your Columbia address) should they wish to reach out at a later point in time, if you are comfortable with connecting after the semester.
6. **Provide resources for future learning:** As a practitioner in your field, you may have particular insights into resources for future learning, such as associations, listservs, and journals. Compiling a list of this nature in a word or google document or simply adding it in within the email may continue to pay dividends for your students.