

Frequently Asked Questions

These questions were gathered from students' inquiries to student council members and executive. The responses were written by the Human Rights Officer. For further information, contact the Human Rights Office, your academic department, student services or the Student Advocate.

What do I do if...

I don't agree with the mark my professor assigned?

You could say "I have a question about my mark. Can we talk about it?"

Ask to meet with the instructor, and get more information about why you received the mark. Find out why your work didn't meet the standard or expectation. ("Seek first to understand."*) Then, if you still don't agree, see the Student Advocate (UNBF) or the Director of Student Services (UNBSJ) and find out about grade review processes. For more information, visit the calendar regulations online: "Review of Grades" and "Review of the Official Final Course Grade"
<http://www.unb.ca/academics/calendar/undergraduate/2013/regulations/universitwideacademicregulations/index.html>

I found my professor's comment offensive or inappropriate?

You could say "I felt offended when you said..."

Ask the instructor what was meant by the comment. Let the instructor know that you were uncomfortable/offended by the comment, using "I statements", naming the behaviour and stating why you think the comment was inappropriate.

My professor is constantly handing back material late?

You could say "I would appreciate getting your feedback sooner."

Remember that the instructor may have something interfering with work, too. You could say something like, "If the return date changes, could you let us know?" ("Think win-win."*)

My professor is always late to class?

You could say "I learn more in class when we start on time."

Let the instructor know you appreciate getting started on time, so you get all the material, and there is more opportunity for questions. If an instructor is habitually late, and asking for timely starts doesn't help, go to the Chair of the department with your concern. You can find the contact information on your department's website.

My professor keeps changing assignment dates?

You could say "I need consistent dates to organize my workload."

Ask for consistency once dates are set, so you can plan your workload accordingly. ("Be proactive, begin with the end in mind and think win-win."*) Ask the department Chair for assistance if the problem does not resolve.

I've been accused of plagiarism?

You could say "Help me understand why this is plagiarism."

This is a critical academic situation. If it is not resolved, see the Student Advocate (UNBF) or Director of Student Services (UNBSJ) as soon as possible.

I missed a scheduled test?

You could say "Is there any chance I could have a make-up test or extra assignment?"

Email or meet with the instructor to request a make-up test. Be prepared to provide supporting evidence or documentation of why you missed the test. Some departments simply add the percentage to your final exam. Be cautious about this, and seek individual advice from an academic advisor, Student Accessibility Centre advisor, or counselor.

I can't understand what my professor is saying?

You could say "Excuse me, I didn't catch that. Could you please say it again?"

If your instructor speaks English with an accent you are not familiar with, ask a question to clarify what was said. Be respectful, and clear. Focus on what you missed, and ask to have it repeated, or rephrased. Someone else may be having the same problem and appreciate you seeking clarification. Or, try speaking with the instructor in private. Let them know you're having problems understanding, and discuss what might help, e.g. slowing down, using the board more to spell new terms, providing slides in advance to introduce terminology. Ask the instructor for resources in print to supplement spoken lecture material. "Seek first to understand."*

I feel I have been assigned an excessive amount of work?

You could say, "I am having trouble managing this workload. What do you recommend?"

"Put first things first."* What are the priorities? Make an appointment to see your instructor and ask for help setting priorities so you do the most important elements first. Talk about balancing workload demands across all your courses, adjusting deadlines to enable you to complete all your work, and for any suggestions the instructor may have to help you do the coursework more efficiently.

My professor keeps assuming we understand new concepts right away?

You could say, "I don't understand ____, can you please explain it further?"

"Be proactive."* Ask the instructor if there was a prerequisite for the course – should you have taken something else first to prepare for this course? Ask the questions you are thinking right away, so the instructor can back up or introduce a more basic idea first. If you cannot ask these questions in class, meet

with the instructor or send an email expressing your concern, so the instructor knows you are having trouble with the level of material.

My professor and I do not get along?

You could say, “I feel ___ when you ___”

“Seek first to understand.”* What do you not get along about? You don’t have to like, or agree with, an instructor; you have to learn from them. If you are not comfortable with something specific, say so. If you don’t understand something, ask. If you disagree, explore your differences in a respectful conversation using “I” statements. Learning about different points of view is the point, not whether you like each other or not.

I find my professor’s behaviour inappropriate.

You could say, for example, ““I feel uncomfortable when you stand so close to me; please keep your distance.”

What is the behaviour? Be sure you can name the behaviour you find inappropriate. If the behaviour makes you uncomfortable, makes you feel pressure to do something unethical, is offensive or rude, you can let the instructor know using “I statements”. If a simple statement does not change the behaviour, send a respectful, calm email to the same effect, or seek assistance from the department Chair, Student Advocate, student services, or Human Rights Office.

I’m experiencing personal or medical issues that might affect my ability to succeed in the class?

You could say, “I’m having a health problem that takes a lot of time for appointments and I might have to miss class”

“Be proactive.”* Let your instructor know, in person or in writing, that you need some consideration for your situation. You don’t have to go into much detail to merit some consideration, but enough information to enable the instructor to be helpful is useful. If you can’t do this yourself, ask for support from your health care provider, counselor, academic advisor or other supportive person. If many classes are affected, you may want to meet with an associate dean for help and advice.

I’m involved in extra-curricular activities that impact or affect my attendance in class?

You could say, “I’m on a sports team that occasionally travels. How can I make sure this does not affect my grades?”

“Be pro-active, begin with the end in mind, and put first things first.”* This is an issue of setting priorities. Get clear on what is important to you, so you can talk to your instructor from a position of clarity and strength. Explain the situation, and have a solution or approach in mind. Be aware that many extra-curricular activities are a choice, and class or lab attendance is often a very legitimate requirement, so be prepared to sort out a solution that meets both your needs and those of the curriculum/instructor.

* Covey, S. (1989) The seven habits of highly effective people. NY: Free Press.