



Department of English Texas Tech University

Ethics in English: A Guide for Faculty

The English faculty at Texas Tech University strives to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards. As members of an academic community, and representatives of the university as a whole, we are committed to values of fairness and transparency in our interactions with students, colleagues, and others.

This document illustrates how these values shape ethical behavior. These illustrations cannot cover every contingency; members of the department will need to take responsibility for applying these values, which are not meant to be the last word on the subject but are intended to initiate an ongoing, thoughtful discussion of ethical behavior in whatever situations may arise.

Clarity—no disparity between surface and subtext in departmental documents and in interactions with each other

- provide clear syllabi and policy statements
- adhere to committee charges
- define clearly duties entailed in specific committee assignments and their value towards tenure and promotion
- provide explicit tenure standard and expectations for progress toward tenure
- make accessible documentation of governance procedures in the department
- clarify the department's role within the university

Honesty—accurately representing facts and situations to each other

- supply candid statements of opportunities, workloads, and professional obligations in various appointments within the department (GPTIs, lecturers, new and established faculty)
- provide opportunities for the faculty to discuss openly matters that bear upon their common well-being (load reductions for new and established faculty, etc.)
- demonstrate an understanding of and respect for intellectual property, particularly as it pertains to plagiarism and source documentation
- fulfill basic obligations of teaching appointment (meeting classes, keeping office hours, returning graded work in a timely fashion)
- operate out of the highest academic and professional motives

Tolerance—the ability to listen and consider ideas different from one's own

- understand the developmental needs of students at different levels (what does a first-year undergraduate comprehend as opposed to an advanced undergraduate, etc.)
- be sensitive to all forms of diversity (sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, gender, age, etc.)
- understand unique individual circumstances that may affect a student's academic performance (familial problems, medical problems)
- create an atmosphere in classrooms, faculty and committee meetings in which individuals are comfortable stating ideas and opinions
- be receptive to the opinions of both senior faculty and junior faculty
- respect and seriously consider constructive criticism and alternative perspectives (administrators and supervisors)

Respect—a regard for the equality, dignity, and uniqueness of other people

- recognize devotion to good teaching as a major part of our professional roles
- assume that colleagues operate out of the highest professional motives--disagreement with colleagues should not be couched as a questioning of their motives
- avoid anonymous accusations or charges concerning colleagues' motives and actions
- voice any concern about a colleague, student, or situation through the appropriate channels
- value the different talents, methods of research, and teaching styles of individual faculty members
- practice zero tolerance in matters of sexual harassment, or any other kind of harassment and discrimination, and scrupulously adhere to principles of due process in investigating accusations
- treat office staff and student workers with dignity and courtesy

Objectivity—careful compilation and consideration of all pertinent information and evidence

- make judgments based on the merits of the situation, not peripheral, subjective, emotional or biased feelings
- recognize that the interests of individuals, groups, and programs in the department should be tempered by the common good
- discern when one is at fault and when not
- understand when a less than desirable situation is and is not of the department's own doing (formula funding, funding for faculty lines)

Fairness—reaching a just decision based on objectively compiled information

- apply a consistent, rigorous grading standard consistent with university grading policies
- distribute equitably salaries and workload among all ranks
- provide comparable opportunities for course releases (some faculty not having chances to claim reductions for directing dissertations to completion, or teaching two grad courses in a year)
- share various levels and combinations of courses among faculty members (megasections, writing-intensive, upper-division undergraduate, graduate)
- protect junior faculty from burdensome and/or contentious committee service
- be aware of one's biases and do one's best to recognize their effects on one's actions

Engagement—active participation in all communities of which we are a part

- keep informed on proposed changes to departmental procedures
- vote on all matters that require a faculty vote
- consider thoughtfully annual reviews of junior faculty, 3rd-year review cases, tenure and/or promotion cases, reviews of graduate faculty status
- recognize the importance of peer teaching observations, service on 3rd-year and tenure review committees, and willingly serve
- fulfill committee duties conscientiously
- seek appropriate involvement on college and university committees
- avail oneself of opportunities to represent the department to the broader community

Responsibility—holding oneself and others to a high standard

- understand that the academic community must be self-regulating in order to maintain professional autonomy
- recuse oneself where there is a real or apparent conflict of interest
- exercise discretion (e.g., not all information ought to be shared with students)
- be willing to call, judiciously and tactfully, oneself and one's colleagues on inappropriate behavior
- receive the unconditional support of the departmental administration in pursuing appropriate sanctions against all forms of academic dishonesty (guarantee of safety for the whistleblower)
- serve responsibly and collegially on thesis and dissertation committees, keeping the academic interest of the students foremost