

Academics Modules

General Information

In these modules, we will discuss Academics in the US. These are some differences that you might see when in a classroom here at South Dakota Mines that will be different from your home country's classroom.

Part 1: Professors

Professors are course instructors, academic advisors, thesis advisors and organization advisors. Professors are here to help you. Their office hours, email address and other forms of communication are all there for you to help you succeed in the academic world here at South Dakota Mines.

Professors may ask you to call them by their given or first names. If you don't feel comfortable, it's OK to address them by their title. Some professors might not tell you how they want to be addressed so it's always safe and respectful to use their title, such as: professor or doctor or you could say Mr. Mrs. or Ms. For example: the president of our University would be Dr. Rankin or President Rankin. Our Dean of Students is Dean Mahon or Dr. Mahon.

There are different types of teaching faculty on our campus, including professors and instructors. Some are full time and some are adjunct or part time. You may have a graduate student for labs. All professors have regular office hours. This means you can go to their office during office hours to ask questions or set up an appointment. Office hours are a great way to introduce yourself to the professor and ask about course material that you are struggling with. Professors may refer you to a tutor or give more resources to help you with your class. You should never visit with a professor about a grade change unless it is a specific error.

When writing emails to professors, write the same way you would for a graded paper. Do not use slang, abbreviations, or emojis. Be professional, respectful and polite and watch for spelling and grammar mistakes.

When going to class or an appointment with your professor always be on time or early. If you are running late or cannot make the meeting or class, email ahead of time, if possible. This shows respect. If you are sick, email your professor as soon as possible to let them know. They may request a doctor's note, depending on the illness. You can obtain this by visiting the health care center on campus. Also inform the Ivanhoe International Center staff. They can help get messages to professors.

Advisors are professors who help guide you through the degree program. They make sure you are taking the proper classes in order to graduate on time. You should meet with your advisor at least once a semester, preferably before registering for classes. Your advisor can be a great source for new classes that have been added, learning more about minors or new research, and other resources on campus to help you succeed. You can find your advisor in your Banner Self-Service.

Part 2: Syllabus

A Syllabus or syllabi (plural) are plans that outline the course for the semester. The syllabus is given on the first day of class. Pay close attention to the instructions the professor gives you. The syllabus

outlines the classroom rules, expectations of your academic performance, grading policies and details about courses including: assignments, important deadlines, due dates for homework, projects, etc. and information about quizzes and exams.

Your performance in class is usually a combination of attendance, homework assignments, projects, quizzes, exams and other forms of class participation. The professor determines what performances will be graded and includes this information in the syllabus. Each professor is different so different evaluations apply.

Class participation is a common way of life in the classroom. Speaking up and answering questions during class can help you earn more points for your final grade. Professors are interested in original thought in individual work in the classroom. For this reason, class participation can be an important part of your final grade.

Grading is also different from professor to professor. The US grading scale is based on a scale of zero to 100 percentage points. These points determine the student's letter grade A through F. To determine how a professor grades and what scale they use can be found in the syllabus.

Read through your syllabi, ask questions, set reminders for deadlines, quizzes and exam, and other important items. This will help you be successful in your classes.

You can view syllabi for most classes on our website at: <https://sdmines.sdsmt.edu/SyllabiSearch>

Part 3: Academic Integrity - <https://www.sdsmt.edu/Campus-Life/Community-Standards/Academic-Integrity/>

Our South Dakota Board of Regents have specific policies about Academic Integrity. What is academic integrity and why is it important? First, it means that the work you do, the papers, homework, and/or code you write, the thoughts you say out loud in class or in a social situation are your own. You are honest and others can trust you.

Second, it means that you avoid cheating or plagiarism. You should never pass off someone else's work as your own. Academic integrity is taken very seriously at U.S. institutions and if you violate these policies, you could face serious consequences. Academic integrity is mentioned in every syllabus.

Let's go back to Plagiarism. Plagiarism as defined by dictionary.com is 'the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own'. If you cite the work properly, you can avoid plagiarism. Asking your professors how to do this can be a great start. There are three main styles of writing: MLA, APA and Chicago. Every professor has their favorite so check your syllabus and/ask your professor which is preferred. Being able to cite properly, paraphrasing, taking good notes and having good time management are other ways to avoid this. Visit plagiarism.org for more information on plagiarism.

Professors have various tools they use to find students who violate academic integrity. There are a number of online plagiarism checking sites that professors can use to scan papers to find out if you are cheating. What would happen if you are found guilty of violating academic integrity? It can be as simple as failing the assignment/project to failing the whole class. Best advice: DON'T do it!

A great resource for citing sources can be found at Purdue Online Writing Lab: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html. This is a free service to help people with the different writing styles and citing sources.

For more information on South Dakota Mines and the Board of Regents policies, visit the Policy page on the South Dakota Mines website: <https://www.sdsmt.edu/Campus-Life/Community-Standards/Academic-Integrity/>

Registration

Part 4: Registration for Undergraduate Students

We discussed professors, syllabi and academic integrity. What's left? Registration, Classroom culture and beyond the classroom learning.

If you are a first-time freshman, you will be registered for your first semester here at South Dakota Mines. These classes are determined by your course registration survey on your New Student checklist. After your first semester, you will register by yourself.

If you are a transfer student, you will work with your academic advisor to choose classes for your first semester here.

Anytime you choose classes for the semester, you should always talk to your academic advisor to make sure you are taking the proper classes to graduate on time. Advisors also have information on different classes you can take depending on your interests and emphasis within your degree.

Once you know what classes to take, log into your Banner Self-Service portal, select your classes and register. Occasionally, there is an issue allowing you to register. Banner will tell you who you need to contact. For more information on Registration, you can visit: <https://www.sdsmt.edu/Self-Service-Banner/>. There are how to videos on navigating through Banner.

Classroom culture can be different. Most classes are designed to be interactive. Student participation, homework, and working in groups or teams are expected. It may take some time to get comfortable, but it is a rewarding experience.

You should behave professionally with your classmates until you become friendly or more than acquaintances. If you are not sure, observe how they are treating you over time and respond in kind. Interacting with classmates is an excellent way to improve your conversational skills and American slang. It also helps to build teamwork and collaborative skills. This is important in today's job market.

Involving yourself in clubs and organizations or extracurricular activities is not only fun and a great way to make friends, it is also good for your resume and future job prospects. Here at South Dakota Mines we have over 120 groups from clubs to professional organizations. You can view them on our Mines Link page.

Whatever you decide to do, you have options and exciting times ahead of you here at South Dakota Mines!

Congratulations! You completed the Academics sections.

Module 4: Registration for Graduate Students

We discussed professors, syllabi and academic integrity. What's left? Registration, Classroom culture and beyond the classroom learning.

Graduate students work with their major advisor to write out a Program of Study. This form is very important to make sure you meet the Graduate Education requirements for your degree program. Sometimes changes occur and plans change. If your program of study needs to change for any reason, complete an updated form as soon as possible. It must be signed by you, your major advisor, program coordinator or department head, your graduate advisory committee (if applicable), a Graduate Office representative and the Dean of Graduate Education. You can find the instructions and form, as well as other important forms, on the Graduate Education Forms website:

<https://www.sdsmt.edu/Academics/Graduate-Education/Grad-Ed-Forms/>

Anytime you choose classes for the semester, you should always talk to your academic advisor to make sure you are taking the proper classes to graduate on time. Advisors also have information on different classes you can take depending on your interests and emphasis within your degree. If any class changes from your Program of Study, you will need to update this with the graduate education office as soon as possible.

Once you know what classes to take, log into your Banner Self-Service portal, select your classes and register. Occasionally, there is an issue allowing you to register. Banner will tell you who you need to contact. For more information on Registration, you can visit: <https://www.sdsmt.edu/Self-Service-Banner/>. There are how to videos on navigating through Banner.

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