

Every December, right after Thanksgiving, the Perlman Center runs a 4-day workshop for new faculty. One of the exercises we regularly do is to ask the participants to generate a list of things they wish they had known (or paid more attention to) at the start of the term. The list is usually pretty stable, and here is a composite of the past three years cast in the form of an FAQ list:

About Day 1

Q. What's the deal with the funny course schedule for the first day of classes?

A. The class schedule is unique – MWF classes start on the half-hour and last 50 minutes each (Normally MWF classes are 70 minutes long on MW and 60 minutes long on F. On September 20 (F), classes will follow a M schedule). Got that? (Consider cutting yourself and new students some slack).

About Life at Carleton:

Q. What's a ten week term (trimester) like?

A. Ten weeks is VERY short; there's no slack time at the start of the term. And the "end of term crunch" will be a big challenge.

Q. Other new faculty members seem to be facing different expectations than I am. Why is that?

A. Carleton is a "strong department" culture and the individual departments have very different cultures. Your mentor is a good source of information about these differences and how to navigate them.

Q. There seems to be a lot going on at Carleton. . . .

A. There are lots of events. Fall and winter terms tend to be (a little) less packed than spring. The on-line events calendar (<http://apps.carleton.edu/calendar/>) and the Noon News Bulletin (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campact/nnb/>) are good sources of information. If you want to see what's going on across town, check out <http://fusion.stolaf.edu/calendar/index.cfm?fuseaction=EventsThisMonth>. For Northfield, a great on-line source is <http://www.northfield.org/> and also <http://northfield.patch.com/>

About Students:

Q. Is it just my imagination, or is the age range of students narrower here than at the last place I was?

A. Almost all Carleton students are 17 to 22 years in age. Most of them live in dormitories and campus-owned houses. About 150 sophomores, juniors, and senior rent apartments in Northfield.

Q. Can I expect students to come to class and do assignments?

A. Carleton students come to class. Carleton students will read and will do the work you assign. In fact, if you encounter a student who regularly misses class and doesn't hand in assignments, there's probably a problem. You should check it out with the Dean of Students office (x4075; ask for Joe Baggot) as soon as possible (don't wait for the DOS midterm request for reports on struggling students). It's a good idea to intervene with students having difficulty early on in the term.

Q. Is there anything Carleton students can't (or won't) do?

A. Many students are uncomfortable with making class presentations (but this isn't a good reason not to have them do it). Many students are reluctant to visit the instructor during office hours; consider requiring an initial visit. Carleton students grasp basic concepts readily – but can't necessarily apply them on their own to new situations. Some Carleton students can be very quiet in class; “they expect to be warmed up.” Also see the next question and answer.

Q. How do academic accommodations work?

A. Carleton's policies and procedures for students with learning disabilities and others in need of accommodations are described at <http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dos/handbook/disability/> (click on “Operating Principles”). Many faculty members put a statement on their syllabi like this: “Please talk with me immediately if you require accommodations for any disability. We will make whatever arrangements are necessary.” Also, you should refer students who ask you about academic accommodations to the Dean of Students office (Severance 110). In about the second week of the term, you'll receive a note from the Dean of Students describing specific accommodation measures for the students they have worked with. Anne Lamppa, x4464, meets with individual students about academic accommodations and is an excellent resource for faculty as well. So are Arjendu Pattanayak (x4300) and Eva Posfay (x4311) in the Dean of the College Office.

Q. I'm amazed at the number of activities students are involved in. . .

A. Carleton students' lives are tightly scheduled and busy. The majority of students are both highly engaged academically and highly engaged in co-curricular activities. It's common for three students working together on a class project to find their only common meeting times at 11 p.m. – or 7 a.m. The SDAs (Student Department Advisors) in your department are good sources of information on the ebb and flow of student life through a typical term.

Q. What about grades?

A. Students have the option of taking courses S/Cr/NC (“scrunch” – the Carleton equivalent of pass-fail). Your SDAs are good sources of information about what this process means to students. Note that you will not know who has “scrunched” your class until after your final grades have been handed in. If you're interested, ask your department chair, mentor, and SDAs for information about departmental, institutional and student culture about grades.

Q. How can I communicate with my students between classes? Should I?

A. Yes, you should. It's important to come up with a plan to communicate with students between classes. Email is the usual mechanism and you can assume – insist – that students read their email. There are many options for communicating with students but the Moodle [news Forum](#) automatically setup in each course will keep a tidy record of what's been said & when. Contact an Academic Technologist for more information on this and other options available to you! (send mail to at@carleton.edu, it will go to all 4 of the ATs and the first available will reply asap.)

About Teaching at Carleton:

Q. What's the length of the term again?

A. It's actually 9 ½ weeks. The trimester is qualitatively (as well as quantitatively) different from other calendars. Most new faculty find the terms very short, especially during their first year.

Q. What are appropriate work loads (reading, writing, etc.) for students and instructors?

A. Your department colleagues, mentor and the LTC are good sources of advice. We often tell students to assume 2-3 hours of work for each hour of class time. (Having said that Carleton students will read what you assign, it is also true that Carleton students will practice triage and if you don't ever refer to what you assign they will take that into consideration as they plan their busy lives.) As you prepare your syllabus, remember that you'll read, comment on and evaluate everything students write for you. You want to set up a survivable (for you and the students) set of course assignments. Check in with your students. Carol Rutz, Director of the Writing Program, x4082, is an excellent resource for suggestions of peer-evaluation and other writing activities that students can assess without (much of) your time.

Q. Do classes have wait lists? What should I do about them?

A. Courses that are over-subscribed have wait lists as do "sophomore-priority" courses – which may not be over-subscribed but which may have wait lists of juniors and seniors. It is up to you (perhaps in consultation with your department chair and George Shuffelton) to decide what to do about letting students from the wait list into your over-subscribed classes. In most cases, you would admit the juniors and seniors from a wait list for a sophomore-priority course unless the course is over-filled.

Q. Will my classroom have computer projection equipment (or other classroom technology)?

A. Check <http://www.carleton.edu/campus/ITS/resource/classroom/> which has a full list of college classrooms and technology. Jim Pierret (x7006) and your Academic Computing Coordinator can also help.

Q. What's the writing portfolio? Which courses "count" for the writing requirement? Which written work can be submitted for the writing portfolio?

A. Every spring-term sophomore submits a writing portfolio with three to five papers drawn from course work in the first two years. The faculty member who assigned the paper signs an authentication form for the student. (Incidentally, faculty members collectively score writing portfolios in June of each year. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet colleagues from all departments and learn about what happens in a variety of Carleton courses. Plus you get good food and a stipend). You can find more information about the portfolio requirements at: http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/writingprogram/portfolio/portfolio_requirements/ In addition, each student must take a "writing-intensive" course. These courses are scattered through the curriculum; go to the Registrar's schedule of classes site to see the courses offered this year. Also see <http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/writingprogram/> for more information about the writing program at Carleton.

Q. Does Carleton have a standard policy about midterm examinations or finals?

A. No for midterms, yes for finals. Midterms (if appropriate) do not have to be scheduled during particular weeks. If you plan to give students a take-home final exam or if you plan to have a self-scheduled final exam, these need to be announced in the syllabus at the beginning of the course. (See Academic Regulations and Procedures: http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dos/handbook/academic_regs/ for more details). Finals, final class presentations, and other end-of-term assessments (if appropriate) do need to be scheduled during the appropriate exam period (see <http://www.carleton.edu/campus/registrar/exam05.html>). If you plan to give a final exam, you should not require any other major project due during the exam period.

Q. What about course evaluations?

A. There is no standard college-wide course evaluation form. You're free to design your own; the LTC (<http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/ltc/resources/evals/>) has samples of end-of-course and mid-course evaluations that

you can modify. Many faculty (and students!) find it especially helpful to ask students for comments at about the mid-point of the course. You'll want to report back to the students on the comments you received.

Q. What should the students call me?

A. Please tell the students your preference ("Dr. X"; "Ms X"; "Professor X"; "X". . .); for some reason this is a source of anxiety for our students. Carleton is a fairly informal place, but it's perfectly OK if you want to be called something more formal than your first name.

Q. Any guidelines about group work for students?

A. Many Carleton faculty have loads of successful experience having students work in groups, so ask your department colleagues, mentor or the LTC. Three general principles for a start: Make sure the assignment can best be done in a group; Assign the groups yourself (to make sure all students are included); Be clear about how assessment of group work will apply to individual student grades. Students in your classes may not know each. You can help facilitate group work by giving students some time during class periods to get organized and begin working together.

Q. How do first-year seminars work?

A. It may be helpful to read the information the students receive before registering at: <http://apps.carleton.edu/newstudents/registration/>. Some departments have specific guidelines for all their Argument and Inquiry seminars; in other cases, the goals are more general. As an instructor, you have a lot of latitude. As with other courses, activities you've tried successfully at other places may work well here. Call George Shuffelton (x4300) with questions.

Q. What's a seventy minute class period like? And – what's a 105 minute class period like?

A. These are the standard class period lengths on the MWF and TuTh schedule, respectively. From a new faculty member: "For some purposes, seventy minutes is short. For others, seventy minutes is long". They are conducive to a variety of activities. For instance, you can give students a short introduction to a subject, give them a problem or short text to work on in groups, get reports from some of the groups and summarize, all in a single seventy minute period. Or you can have a short lecture and a discussion, based on prior reading. Or many other combinations. Students will appreciate a break in the middle of the 105 minute periods; they will not expect a break in shorter class periods.

Q. What other mysterious academic regulations and procedures does Carleton have (e.g. you can give a student an A+ on an assignment, but not as a course grade)?

A. A good source is the booklet and web site on Academic Regulations and Procedures: http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dos/handbook/academic_regs/. You can also ask your department chair, department assistant, mentor or the Registrar's office.

Q. What is Carleton's policy on plagiarism? What should I do if I suspect that a student or group of students is cheating?

A. We call it "academic honesty" here. See http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/dos/handbook/academic_regs/?policy_id=21359 (academic honesty regulation) and <http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/honesty/> (academic honesty web site). Carleton faculty have made it policy that matters involving academic dishonesty have to involve a dean. If you suspect plagiarism or another academic honesty violation, call George Shuffelton x4300. Please do not try to handle it directly with the students involved without consulting George.

