

Alexandria School of Theology

Faculty Standards

A school of theology is only as good as its faculty. Long after students forget their college's administration, facilities and library, they will continue to remember their teachers. We as teachers have been given the wonderful privilege of helping shape our students' lives and thinking. At the same time, this privilege is a grave responsibility. For this reason James writes in his Epistle,

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check (Jas. 3: 1-2)

What we say and how we behave in and out of the classroom will have a profound effect on our students and the people and churches they will impact in the future. Our lives *and attitudes* will be carefully watched and often imitated for "everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). This should lead us to deep humility and prayerfulness for ourselves and for one another.

While the Word of God and conscience are our best guides of conduct, it is essential that we agree to some minimal standards that will bind us all. These deal with our relationship to students, to one another, and to others outside AST. They also concern the way we teach.

Our Relationship with Students

AST exists for its students. The goal of the college is to train men and women to serve our Lord more effectively whether as ordained ministers or lay people. We should always remember that the students are not there for us but we are there for them. We are their servants for Jesus' sake. Our role models are not the teachers of our society who often approach their work with arrogance and neglect. Rather, Jesus is our Supreme Example. Let us seek to imitate His attitude toward the disciples while keeping in mind that we, unlike Him, are sinners like our students.

Here are some of the practical implications of our philosophy:

1. Let us respect our students at all times. That means that we should never make light of their questions or mistakes nor allow others to do so. We should never demean them in public or in private.
2. Let us not punish our students academically because of their beliefs. Each student should be evaluated fairly and objectively regardless of what he or she believes and regardless of their relationship to us. In matters of controversy allow each person to hold to their convictions without fearing a loss of marks.
3. When we are confronted with new or differing points of view, let us not be hasty in passing judgment on them. Let us be willing to examine them objectively before expressing an opinion.
4. Should a student express a belief that is contrary to the accepted essentials of our Christian faith, the matter should be lovingly and thoroughly explained to him/her in private.
5. If we discover we have made a mistake, we should acknowledge it quickly and graciously. We should not become defensive. St. Augustine published a book at the end of his life correcting the

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mistakes he discovered in his earlier works. Our students will respect us more, not less, if we are honest and humble.

6. We should not enter into special (e.g. business) arrangements with students that would endanger our relationship to them as well as to rest of the students.
7. Let us encourage unity and love among the students. We should be very careful how we speak to a student(s) about other students. Let us not foster a spirit of competition among students particularly that which is based on academic performance. A student's marks and other teacher comments should be handled confidentially and not become public knowledge.
8. Our non-Egyptian students are our guests and we should model to our Egyptian students the proper treatment of “aliens”.
9. Let us remember to pray regularly for our students and have a pastoral attitude toward them.

Our Relationship to One Another

As fellow faculty members, we are *one team serving one purpose*. Because of this:

1. We should never allow jealousy or a spirit of competition to enter into our relationship. If we hear positive remarks about another faculty member, we should rejoice and not become envious.
2. We should carefully guard each other's reputation as if it were ours. Negative reports about any of us will reflect badly on all of us.
3. If we feel that a fellow faculty member has erred, we should try to resolve the matter in a Christian spirit using the principles of Scripture (Mt. 18:15-35, Gal. 6:1-5). We should not take the matter to higher authorities unless we have exhausted all other legitimate means of resolution and after careful prayer.
4. We should assist one another in all appropriate ways which are within our means. That means we should be generous with our time and resources to ensure each other's—and our college's—success.
5. As we pray for our students, we should pray for one another and the entire AST family as well.

Our Attitude toward Other Groups

1. In general, we should be very careful in speaking of other colleges, denominations, and public figures.

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2. If you disagree with a person or denomination, make sure that the student understands that you are disagreeing with a point of view without personal animosity toward those espousing it.
3. Avoid generalizations about other people and groups ("all members of that church are . . .")
4. Our attitude toward other Christian groups should reflect our Lord's prayer for unity (Jn. 17).
5. In speaking of other religions, we should respect those who adhere to them and realize that they are fellow human beings in need of the Gospel of Christ.

Our Approach to Teaching

Our desire is that AST will excel in its teaching methodologies. A significant part of our purpose is to help our students **think** deeply and properly about God, His Word and His world. We should not rely on rote memorization of facts nor on traditional examinations. Rather, we need to be creative in our teaching and thus help our students to become more creative in their lives and ministries. Our classroom time should not be devoted only to lecturing. We must plan on including guided discussions, student presentations, workshops, etc. The use of multi-media and the internet should be encouraged.

When a view is expressed, teach your students **how** to analyze it carefully and biblically. Remember that most of our students have not been trained to think analytically and creatively so it will take time for them to learn our approach. We and they need to be convinced that *discovering a fact for ourselves* is much more useful and enduring than simply receiving it from the teacher.

Let us also create an atmosphere in which people feel safe to make honest mistakes for in doing so great discoveries will be made. If we put confidence in our students, they will have a healthy self-image and be able to make great and perhaps unexpected progress in learning and ministry. Let us pray that many of our students will exceed us in learning, godliness and usefulness. God will not forget to reward those who were stepping stones in the lives of others!

Instead of the use of traditional examinations, students should be evaluated academically on the following:

1. Their classroom participation. Is the student asking questions and participating constructively in discussions? If he/she is not, do everything in your power to draw them into the discussions without, however, embarrassing them.
2. Their attention in class. One excellent idea is to have a form that the student *fills out and hands in at the end of each lecture*. In it you may ask: What new insights did you gain from this lecture? Did you find a truth that will help you in your personal life? In your ministry? Are there other related topics we should explore in future lectures? If a student makes negative remarks about the lecture but shows that he/she followed and understood it, listen to what he/she has to say without punishing them in any way.

The student will most likely become an active listener and participant since he/she knows a form is to be filled out at the end. At the same time you as teacher will gain valuable information

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about the progress of the course and how students are responding to it. Note: Do NOT allow students to hand in the form later. They will be tempted to copy ideas from other students. They may wish to submit *more* comments later, but they should turn in the initial form before they leave the classroom.

3. Essays, projects and research papers. However, you should not assign topics that can easily be copied from books, websites or other students! Think of creative ways of assigning topics. Here are some examples:
 - a. Instead of asking for an essay on the life of Peter, ask the students to write about how they *personally* benefited from a study of the Apostle's life.
 - b. Instead of asking "What aspects of the church needed reformation in the 16th century?" we should ask, "What are the similarities, if any, between the church today and the church of the 16th century in (name of country)".
 - c. Instead of asking the students to study a portion of the Bible and simply summarize it, ask them to apply to a specific contemporary situation. For example, how can we live the story of the Good Samaritan in Egypt today? In Sudan?
 - d. For some topics, students may be encouraged to develop a questionnaire to administer to a group of people. Field research is fascinating and keeps us in touch with people and society. For example, students can ask a sample of the public questions like, "How do Christians view female circumcision?" Or, what percent of Christians (or non-Christians) have an assurance of eternal life?
 - e. In the study of the biblical languages, ask your students to apply the linguistic facts they are acquiring to a specific passage of Scripture. Ask them how this has clarified the passage for them or how they would present this insight to others. If you assign each student a unique passage, you will not worry about one student copying from another!
 - f. In discussing evangelism, you might assign students the development of a new Gospel tract or evangelistic strategy suitable to a particular group of people. Perhaps students might study a locality that has no Christian witness and recommend a specific type of ministry for it (a neighborhood, village, etc.).

Remember that our ultimate goal is not for students to receive good marks but that they would become more mature and equipped servants of Christ. Let us relate all learning to life and ministry.

Finally, teach your subject with balance and avoid extremist views that are designed to attract attention. While you are free to express your personal convictions, be fair in presenting other Christian views on the issue(s) at hand. However, please do not *present* personal beliefs in or out of the classroom that are *clearly contrary* to AST's Statement of Faith. If you feel that you must, please consult the Principal beforehand.