

ARC's Tips on Handling Course Concerns

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Hi everyone!

Here are the ARC's tips on how to deal with course concerns.

Oftentimes professors are simply not aware of issues students have with their classes, like class regularly ending too late or graded work not being returned in a timely manner. A majority of concerns can be resolved by talking to the professor. Professors tend to be very receptive to students' concerns, so it's just up to us to make sure we're communicating our thoughts :)

We suggest trying the following steps to successfully resolve your concern and the ARC is always here to help if you need it!

1. Talk to the **ombuds** for your class if there is one!
 - a. Ombuds are in regular communication with the professors and TAs for the course and are a great way to relay both positive and negative feedback about a class. This feedback can range from material covered to grading to class policies to set due dates.
2. **Email your TA and/or the head TA** with your concern to see if they can bring it up with the prof. You can also **email the prof and cc a TA, or talk to them after lecture or recitation.**
 - a. When emailing people about an issue, try to **provide a helpful solution / alternative.** For example, if you're not getting graded homework back in a timely manner because the TAs are giving the homework to the course secretary to put in boxes, perhaps suggest that the TA's bring homework to recitation or put the homework in the return boxes themselves.
 - b. Explaining **why and if many students find something to be an issue** is also helpful.
 - c. Most professors are happy to hear from students in their classes, rather than members of the ARC -- after all, **you** are the one directly impacted by their teaching!
3. **Submit a course concern** on donut.caltech.edu or **talk to an ARC member.**
 - a. Course concerns go to members on the ARC, and we'll work to ensure your concern is addressed with help from the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Outreach (CTLO).
 - b. It is really helpful if you provide details of your concern as well as information about whether you have tried contacting the prof and their response.
 - c. You'll receive a link to see what the ARC is doing to handle your concern and both you and the ARC can post further updates there.
 - d. We will do our best to respond to concerns within 1-2 days, but if you don't hear back from us within a week, please repost your concern. We receive many concerns, and it is possible for your concern to get lost.

We hope this was helpful and feel free to email arc@caltech.edu if you have any questions. This document will be posted on Donut and also the ARC website at arc.caltech.edu.