

**Re: Mahir Haque (Integral Calculus - MATH-1552-A) just sent you a message in Canvas.**

Schmidt, Maxie D <mschmidt34@gatech.edu>

Sat 7/3/2021 3:31 PM

To: Grodzinsky, Klara J <klara.grodzinsky@math.gatech.edu>

Klara,

I have been summonsed to meet with Xingxing Yu (SOM graduate coordinator) over an unspecified allegation that "*[my] quiz problems for MATH 1552 are "extremely difficult" for students*" this holiday Monday afternoon at 1PM. Given that you do not check email over the weekend, and the only thing that has changed since last night after I got over my food poisoning is that I sent the student the Canvas response (verbatim as you worded it), I wonder if the student contacted the SOM administration about their issue with the message? Is this really necessary? It feels very much like the inquisition, and a highly unreasonable one for that matter, not that the conquistadors were polite human beings to begin with.

I also just want to say that this leaves a very bad and frustrating taste in my mouth about this topic. And I will not lie, it "ticks" me off on a level that rarely gets pushed. I am not hot tempered in the general case, but this makes me want to scream at someone.

Maxie

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**From:** Grodzinsky, Klara J <klara.grodzinsky@math.gatech.edu>

**Sent:** Friday, July 2, 2021 6:06 PM

**To:** Schmidt, Maxie D <mschmidt34@gatech.edu>

**Subject:** Re: Mahir Haque (Integral Calculus - MATH-1552-A) just sent you a message in Canvas.

Maxie,

I hope you are feeling better. Just please be sure to copy me on that email once you send it off.

At least there is a long weekend, so I hope you'll be feeling much better next week!

Best,  
Klara

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Klara Grodzinsky  
Senior Academic Professional  
Director of Teaching Assistants  
School of Mathematics  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Atlanta, GA 30332-0160  
*she/her*

**From:** Schmidt, Maxie D <mschmidt34@gatech.edu>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 2, 2021 10:51 AM  
**To:** Grodzinsky, Klara J <klara.grodzinsky@math.gatech.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: Mahir Haque (Integral Calculus - MATH-1552-A) just sent you a message in Canvas.

Klara,

I fell asleep last night shortly after sending the email. I am still feeling down with the stomach virus, but am prepared to teach this morning. Thanks for the suggestion though.

Maxie  
Get [Outlook for Android](#)

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**From:** Grodzinsky, Klara J <klara.grodzinsky@math.gatech.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 1, 2021 7:46:38 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Maxie D <mschmidt34@gatech.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: Mahir Haque (Integral Calculus - MATH-1552-A) just sent you a message in Canvas.

Hi Maxie,

There are many reasons why students don't perform as well as they should, and they are usually not academic. As the instructors, our role is to try to help them to succeed... though it's tough, you need to keep your emotions outside the classroom.

I hope you will feel better soon. If you are too sick to teach tomorrow, perhaps you can ask Hamed if your students can join his lecture.

And thanks for cc:ing me on that response; that's a good idea.

Best wishes,  
Klara

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Klara Grodzinsky  
Senior Academic Professional  
Director of Teaching Assistants  
School of Mathematics  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Atlanta, GA 30332-0160  
*she/her*

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**From:** Schmidt, Maxie D <mschmidt34@gatech.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 1, 2021 5:36 PM  
**To:** Grodzinsky, Klara J <klara.grodzinsky@math.gatech.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: Mahir Haque (Integral Calculus - MATH-1552-A) just sent you a message in Canvas.

Klara,

I will use your form letter in my response and try to CC you on it since you received the

Canvas message as well. I have been feeling poorly for days with nausea and flu-like symptoms myself. I understand your points. I still object to the idea that we should be catering to students that fail the midterm with the lowest score because they are entitled to pass with whatever letter grade they have in mind. It happens that the weakest student in the class screams the loudest when they inevitably fail. This is my level of frustration on the matter.

Maxie

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**From:** Grodzinsky, Klara J <klara.grodzinsky@math.gatech.edu>

**Sent:** Thursday, July 1, 2021 5:19 PM

**To:** Schmidt, Maxie D <mschmidt34@gatech.edu>

**Subject:** Re: Mahir Haque (Integral Calculus - MATH-1552-A) just sent you a message in Canvas.

Maxie,

The tone of this message is quite inappropriate. You should always respond in a professional, respectful manner to your students, even if you do not agree with the complaint. This is just basic "customer service." Messages such as these will only inflame the situation.

I think it's best to be short, to the point, and courteous with the response, giving out as little information as necessary. Something more like:

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Dear Mahir,

Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention. I am aware that multiple choice exams are not ideal for this course, but under the pandemic circumstances, we have been forced to adjust course assessments in this manner. As such, I have already provided a large curve to the first midterm, and further adjustments to student grades may be provided at the end of the term, if appropriate.

In the meantime, I would invite you to please stop by my office hours so that I can help you succeed on the remaining assessments (list your office hours here....). Additional tutoring opportunities are available through your TA's office hours, the math lab, and Tutoring and Academic Support; their website is here: <https://tutoring.gatech.edu/>. I would be happy to send them a referral if you would like for them to contact you about one-to-one tutoring or academic coaching.

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Best wishes,  
Klara

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Klara Grodzinsky  
Senior Academic Professional

Director of Teaching Assistants  
School of Mathematics  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Atlanta, GA 30332-0160  
*she/her*

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**From:** Schmidt, Maxie D <mschmidt34@gatech.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 1, 2021 4:30 PM  
**To:** Grodzinsky, Klara J <klara.grodzinsky@math.gatech.edu>  
**Subject:** Re: Mahir Haque (Integral Calculus - MATH-1552-A) just sent you a message in Canvas.

Klara,

I thought about how I want to respond. I do want to say (to you) that it should not be my responsibility to cater to students upset with the fact that they are not doing well in the course because they cannot handle the core material. This student has not been to office hours and is angry and frustrated that she is doing poorly in the class after the curve of 21% on the midterm (they answered two out of eleven questions correctly on the exam). That being said, I am tempering my response and plan to write the following back. Please let me know what you think:

Dear Mahir,

It seems you have a few distinct concerns about your performance in the course. I want to respond to each of them.

First, the decision to give graded assessments in the form of Canvas quizzes instead of in the traditional written response format with partial credit for incorrect solutions was made before the course started, and is a policy stated in the syllabus. We have had problems with cheating at the level of at least 50% of student responses being academically dishonest since we were forced to offer this class online due to the pandemic. You are taking a core calculus course online, and this is not optimal, but the format of the quizzes and exams is appropriate for a virtual class.

Your assertion that questions on assessments require components of more than a single course topic to answer a single problem is accurate in many cases. The fact of the matter is that course topics build on previous material. For example, integration by substitution is a core technique that has been emphasized from the first week of the class. Moreover, I have repeatedly emphasized in the lectures that problems will often involve a substitution followed by another integration technique we have learned. The examples given in lecture and at the review session before the midterm reinforce that idea. Your complaint about needing partial credit to make your task as a student of having to synthesize topics more "bearable" reflects an attitude to me that you are not willing to take the topics seriously. You were only able to answer two of approximately 10-11 questions on the midterm correctly. The midterm performance on your part is one of the lowest in the course, even after a very generous curve on the exam. We are not grading to "fit a curve" as you suggest. Rather, as the student performance on the midterm was lower than anticipated, a "curve", or adjustment to inflate scores, was made to correct for a difficult, but not impossibly difficult exam.

If you are still struggling with arithmetic mistakes in your work to answer problems, have you considered reaching out for help at office hours or going to tutoring sessions at the university Center for Academic Success? I have yet to see you at one of my three weekly office hours this semester, nor have you asked to make an appointment to meet at an alternate time. I have repeatedly suggested in the Canvas announcements that tutoring is available for students that are struggling with the course material. I am honestly not convinced that you are doing everything you can to be successful in the course.

I am happy to meet with you by appointment to discuss your concerns with Math 1552 and to help you find individual study strategies that will enable you to be more successful on the remaining two quizzes and on the final exam.

Sincerely,

Maxie Dion Schmidt

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**From:** Grodzinsky, Klara J <klara.grodzinsky@math.gatech.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 1, 2021 2:32 PM  
**To:** Schmidt, Maxie D <mschmidt34@gatech.edu>  
**Subject:** Fw: Mahir Haque (Integral Calculus - MATH-1552-A) just sent you a message in Canvas.

Hi Maxie,

I think we were both copied on this email. How are you planning to respond?

Best,  
Klara

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Klara Grodzinsky  
Senior Academic Professional  
Director of Teaching Assistants  
School of Mathematics  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Atlanta, GA 30332-0160  
*she/her*

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**From:** Mahir Haque <notifications@instructure.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 1, 2021 12:50 PM  
**To:** Grodzinsky, Klara J <klara.grodzinsky@math.gatech.edu>  
**Subject:** Mahir Haque (Integral Calculus - MATH-1552-A) just sent you a message in Canvas.

Hello,

I wanted to write this to discuss the grading criteria for our quizzes. I find that grading an entire question (for full points) on a quiz makes it extremely difficult to do well even if you understand fundamental concepts of the course which is what is explicitly stated on the syllabus as the course objective. In past semesters partial credit was considered making the complex questions much more bearable when it came to receiving grades and the solution was to upload our work.

Firstly, I do not understand why on all of our quizzes and midterm every single question/problem has to utilize a multitude of concepts that we have learned from previous chapters rather than fundamental concepts discussed. Compared to quizzes that I have seen of this class in previous semesters it seems as if the primary objective of each question is to learn obscure techniques and how to complete special problems with special attributes when it comes to testing our abilities. I made my mistake in not attending studio classes the first half of this semester resulting in a failing grade currently, but I have been keeping up with sections 10.1-10.4 and felt comfortable doing every HW problem and studio problem, yet I still get a 4/12 on the quiz most likely due to algebraic errors or not having enough practice from HW or studio problems with a specific technique. I also understand that this is a very structured course in that you want to have a grade distribution that "fits the criteria" statistically, but to an extent it seems that you are trying to weed out students. I apologize for my obvious frustration, but I simply do not know what to do anymore.

Sincerely,  
Mahir Haque



**Mahir Haque**

You can reply to this message in Canvas by replying directly to this email. If you need to include an attachment, please log in to Canvas and reply through the Inbox.



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