**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ON ONLINE LEARNING COURSES AND PROGRAMS**

**I. Rationale**

Because Fresno State is a regional campus of the CSU system, created specifically to provide access to an equitable and high-quality education to all eligible students in our local region, we are committed to providing classes in various modalities while maintaining a focus on the integrity of the campus community as the nexus of our work. Faculty may use digital technologies for instruction, enhancement of student learning, supplementing or replacing face-to-face interaction, and extending access to students. Online learning courses may be synchronous (using real-time broadcast, live or recorded video or web conferencing, or other technology), asynchronous, or a blend. Online learning instruction using a blend incorporates face-to-face instruction in either hybrid (also known as blended) or hyflex models. Hybrid is considered a course where 20% or more of the class meeting hours is delivered via online learning and the alternate sessions are face-to-face in an assigned classroom with an assigned time as delineated in the course catalog. Hyflex is considered a model where students can attend face-to-face in an assigned classroom or synchronously virtual at the assigned time noted in the course schedule. All instances of online learning courses require departmental pre-approval and are limited to the scope as outlined by WASC.

The following principles guide this policy for online learning and distance-education courses:

1. Decisions about class modality should be made collectively by the faculty of the institution, not by administration or by individual faculty members. Departments are charged with making decisions about class modality within constraints established by the Academic Senate.
2. Student learning outcomes of online learning courses are equivalent to those of face-to-face courses.
3. Promoting both *equitable access* for students and *effective student learning* are the most important considerations in determining class modality both for specific courses and for whole programs of study. Faculty preferences are a secondary consideration, but not irrelevant.
4. While students may benefit from flexibility in course modality and effective online coursework is possible in some classes, the education of a student at a comprehensive regional campus must also involve participation and inclusion in a vibrant and diverse campus culture, which requires students to be physically present on campus and in the local community for a meaningful fraction of their coursework.
5. While teaching and committee work can sometimes be achieved remotely, tenured and tenure-track faculty bear primary responsibility for creating and maintaining the intellectual community of the campus, and they can only do that if they are physically present on campus and in the local community for a meaningful proportion of their workload.
6. Learning outcomes of online learning courses are evaluated as part of a student learning outcomes assessment plan.
7. Online learning courses are subject to student rating of instruction, and faculty peer review, consistent with APM 322 Policy on the Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness.
8. As in face-to-face courses, successful online learning courses encourage on going student-faculty and student-student instructional interaction with clear student engagement/participation expectations, grading, and attendance policiess as deliniated in APM 241.
9. Use of technology is consistent with APM 622 Acceptable Use Policy of Information Technology Resources.

**II. Responsibilities**

University policies regarding courses and programs are applicable to online learning courses

and programs. Just as traditional instruction is expected to use best practices for instruction and

assessment, online learning courses and programs shall also meet current established standards for quality and student learning outcomes, as well as best practices for online instruction (such as Quality Matters or QLT). The faculty are responsible to ensure that courses with special approval (e.g., general education, service learning) continue to embody those characteristics.

A. Faculty Responsibilities

1. In accordance with university policies, the faculty member is responsible for determining how information is disseminated to, and engaged by, the students. This includes intellectual property considerations (e.g., fair use, and copyright) and accessibility (e.g., APM 237 and the system-wide Accessible Technology Initiative ATI). The instructor will determine the intended level of access by students to the instructional materials. The use of recorded or on-line materials can be included in the peer review process (APM 322).
2. A faculty member who wishes to conduct online course activity of scheduled class meeting hours beyond 20% of the entire course will complete at minimum 20 hours of online course design training through or recognized by the Center for Faculty Excellence (e.g., the CSU Quality Assurance Program) and as approved by the Online/Blended Education Subcommittee (OBE). Faculty members must renew this every five years.
3. Faculty may only teach in a distance-learning modality if they have been appropriately trained and certified per APM 206. Even then, full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty may teach no more than 50% of their instructional WTUs with a distance-learning modality per semester. For those faculty with an odd number of WTUs of teaching per semester or 4-WTU courses, the ratio can be balanced between semesters within the academic year, with at least one 3- or 4-WTU course face-to-face in each of the two semesters. The 50% limit will not apply to other instructors (e.g., lecturers, FERPers, TAs).
   1. Note: According to WASC, the entire course (and all of its WTUs) is classified as distance-learning if it is Hybrid II or Hyflex. We will count the same way for the sake of consistency.
   2. Exceptions may be considered by the department chair and college dean, in consultation with Faculty Affairs and the Provost, for reasons related to legally protected disabilities and family medical leave or for classes that the department faculty have approved for potential distance education, and by faculty who have been appropriately trained according to the requirements of APM 206. Even under these circumstances, such a request may not necessarily be granted. It is also noted that not all ADA or FML accommodations require a distance education teaching modality.

B. Departmental/Progromatic Responsibilities

1. Each department and program may offer no more than 33% of its undergraduate instructional WTUs (excluding supervision classes, independent study, and classes offered as part of an approved distance-education program) in a distance-learning modality per semester.
   1. Note: According to WASC, the entire course (and all of its WTUs) is classified as distance-learning if it is Hybrid II or Hyflex. We will count the same way for the sake of consistency.
   2. Temporary one-semester exemptions can be granted by the college dean when there are extenuating circumstances. Requests for exemption must come from the department chair, not from individual faculty members.

C. University Responsibilities

1. The university shall provide necessary instructional support and student services for online student engagement such as academic advising, financial aid, career services, library services, and tutoring.
2. The university shall provide support to faculty for:
   1. Training on online learning design, instruction, intellectual property, accessibility, and assessment.
   2. Assistance and guidance on the creation of online learning course material
   3. IT infrastructure.

D. Shared Responsibilities

Usually, a online learning course is offered by the faculty who design and develop the online course. Future instructional use by other faculty of materials in a online learning course or program is subject to the mutual agreement of the university and the faculty member, consistent with university policies on intellectual property (APM 522 Intellectual Policy) and agreements made between the provost, the faculty, the program, and the department.

Future reuse for credit or noncredit shall be considered and approved through the usual curriculum approval process. No reuse shall be made without the instructor’s prior knowledge and consent, and any reuse shall include provision for appropriate compensation to the instructor-creator. A review to determine whether online materials should be revised or withdrawn because of obsolescence may be initiated by the original instructor-creator, or as with a traditional class, by an appropriate faculty body.

Intellectual property developed for online use, like other scholarly work, shall bear the name of the author, the institutional affiliation, the date when it was created, intellectual property notice (such as Creative Commons [www.creativecommons](http://www.creativecommons).org), and appropriate acknowledgments.

**III. Courses**

A. Definitions

1. Face-to-face Course – Course activity is organized around scheduled class in-person meetings. Online course activity may complement class sessions without reducing the number of required class (in person) meetings or supplants a small amount (20 percent or less) of the traditional face-to-face class meeting hours. Note that the percentage of class meeting hours refers to use of scheduled class time, not the instructional delivery, meaning that a “flipped” class that has asynchronous instruction, and face-to-face class meeting activities during all of the scheduled class time will be considered face-to-face.
2. Hybrid I (also called Blended) Face-to-Face Course – Online learning (synchronous or asyncronous) activity replaces a significant percentage (greater than 20 percent but less than 50 percent) of, but not all required face-to-face class meeting hours.
3. Hybrid II (also called Blended) Online Course – Most course activity is online learning (asynchronous or synchronous from greater than or equal to 50 percent to less than 100 percent), but there are some required face-to-face classroom meetings with instructional activities which complete the rest of the class meeting hours percentage.
4. Online Course – All course activity is online learning; there are no required face-to-face sessions within the course and no requirements for on-campus activity; however, this format may be synchronous with set meeting times (a.d.a. Digital Synchronous) or asynchronous (a.k.a. Digital Campus) depending on the catalog designated modality. An online course may not require any in-person activities or exams.
5. Hyflex Course – Offers face-to-face and synchronous virtual delivery of instructional activities so that students can choose which delivery mode(s) is best suited for learning and other contextual purposes. A hyflex course must have a virtual delivery option for all class meeting hours (including exams), and a face-to-face delivery option for no less than 80% of the class meeting hours.
6. Distance Education – A course in which 50% or more of the instruction and interaction (class meeting hours) occurs using one or more remote communication technology. This includes Hybrid II, Online, and Hyflex courses.[[1]](#footnote-1)
7. Class meeting hours – The time a course is required to meet for educational activity per week as defined by the course’s CSU course classification.[[2]](#footnote-2)

B. Course Modality Management

Each department must produce a departmental policy on course modality.

* + 1. Department policies must include:
       1. A list of courses to be offered via a distance modality because they are part of an approved distance-modality degree program.
       2. A list of departmental course offerings that may be offered via a distance-learning modality. This list should be reviewed and updated regularly.
       3. Additional constraints on course modality based on external accreditation.
       4. Any additional constraints that the department wishes to impose on course modality, so long as they are compatible with those outlined in sections II.A.3 and II.B.1 above.
       5. How testing will be handled in classes using a distance-learning modality. If testing will be employed, what safeguards will be in place to prevent cheating?
    2. Department policies must be approved by the college curriculum committee, and kept on record by the College Dean’s Office.

There are two circumstances under which a department must formally request approval from the campus, despite WASC status as a “distance-education program”, for more extensive distance education offerings:

1. When a department wants to routinely offer more than 1⁄3 of their undergraduate classes in a distance-education modality – this may involve a department that offers a large number of general education classes or other university requirements, and there is a reason for those classes to be offered online more often than is otherwise recommended.
2. When a department wants to offer a program (undergraduate or graduate level) in which more than 50% of program courses are available in a distance-education modality. This is what WASC used to call a “distance education program”, prior to COVID, before they started including general education classes in their calculations. To calculate this on the Fresno State campus, we will use only the program requirements, not general education and other campus requirements. If a student could possibly meet more than 50% of the program requirements with distance-education classes, then the program must seek campus approval.

To be approved for more extensive distance-education at Fresno State, the department/program must get the approval of the department chair, the college curriculum committee, the university curriculum committee, the Academic Senate, and the Provost. The proposal must describe:

1. A list of classes with a plan for which ones will be offered in a distance-modality, and whether or not they will also be offered face-to-face.
2. In what way the content of the curriculum is suited for online delivery, and reason for believing that the content will not be diminished at all by being taught online.
3. In what way the online offering will serve a population of students that cannot be served by face-to-face instruction.

C. Instructor Online Learning Certification Status

In order for an instructor to teach a course approved with online learning delivery exceeding 20 percent (i.e., definitions 2, 3, 4, & 5 from Section III.A), they must have completed an OBE approved online learning instructional training.  The instructor’s online learning certification is valid for 5 years, after which, another OBE approved online learning instructional training must be successfully completed for renewed instructor certification.

D. Course Offerings

The instructional modality of individual course offerings will be determined by the appropriate administrator after consultation with the department chair or designee and/or the individual faculty member.[[3]](#footnote-3) The department/program instructional modalities shall be consistent with the departmental/programmatic list of approved teaching modalities, instructor’s online learning certification status, department/program requirements, and student needs.

E. Online learning Course Syllabi

Syllabi for online learning courses must comply with APM 241 Policy on Course Syllabi and Grading. This includes explaining the role that technology plays in achieving student learning outcomes. Syllabi of courses in which online instruction replaces part or all of face-to-face in-class time shall describe how learning activities will be scheduled, including a distinction between synchronous and asynchronous learning activities and expectations. As also done with traditional face-to-face courses, the syllabus and any amendments shall be on record with the department or program; thus, delivery mode must follow what is noted in the course catalog and the syllabus.

F. Courses originating off campus

Credit-bearing courses originating off campus shall be reviewed through usual curricular processes. The university shall not contract with any private or public entity to deliver credit-bearing courses or programs to off-campus entities or to California State University, Fresno students without prior approval through normal curricular processes.

**Recommended by the Academic Senate**

March 19, 2018

December 1, 2022

**Approved by the President**

April 2, 2018

1. WASC Senior College and University Commission - Manual for Programs, Instructional Locations, and Substantive Change, 2023 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. APM 337 regarding Faculty Workload: Policies and Procedures, Appendix A [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The California State University Collective Bargaining Agreement: Unit 3 Section 20.2, 2022-2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)