HSU eLearning Policy

Month/Year Posted:

Policy Number:

eLearning Policy

Office of Academic Affairs

Applies to: Faculty, Staff, Administrators and Students
Issued:
Revised: April 2019
Edited: April, 2019
Reviewed:

I.   PREAMBLE

HSU's value statements were considered when developing this policy. Learning in and out of the classroom is part of the HSU experience. We believe that "our primary responsibility is to provide the best possible education for today's world" and "that teaching excellence is of paramount importance as is learning excellence." The purpose of this policy is to further actualize HSU's values by establishing consistent academic quality and accessibility of all Humboldt State University online and hybrid courses and programs. Online and hybrid instruction will assist the University in achieving its mission while addressing three challenges: geographic accessibility; scheduling needs of a diverse student population with work, family and travel constraints; and enrollment growth. This policy is written with the intent and spirit that Humboldt State University faculty retains the responsibility for academic quality and integrity of all courses, programs and degrees, as well as excellence in academic instruction, across all modes of instruction. Moreover, it aligns with the Online White Paper from the Academic Senate of the CSU. This policy acknowledges the place of online instruction among the full range of evidence-informed practices and approaches for teaching and learning and is created to guide and promote high-quality, online and digital educational experiences for faculty and students consistent with the HSU experience.

II. DEFINITIONS

Accessible Design – The design of learning materials and experiences distributed to students within a course of study or other learning environment that attends to the needs of people with disabilities and complies with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Online Asynchronous Instruction – Term used to refer to types of computer mediated instruction that involve a time lag in participant contributions. While a cohesive dialogue may be accomplished, the participants see and contribute to that conversation in disrupted segments meaning that student interaction is not held at the same time of day.

Face-to-Face (F2F) Course - Instruction is conducted in real time, with student(s) and faculty present in the same location. Scheduled in-person face-to-face class sessions are not normally replaced with online activities. May use a course management system to post the syllabus and assignments and link to additional web-based material. A course in which less than twenty-five percent (25%) may be taught in an online fashion.

Hybrid Course – Courses where instructional time is approximately 50% or more of the scheduled course meeting time and learning activities are online. The purpose of a hybrid course is to take advantage of F2F and online learning (e.g. a class meets physically on Monday and Wednesday and the Friday meeting time is replaced by required online activities).
> Hybrid Asynchronous: Course meets regularly in person with portions of the course conducted online in lieu of in person meeting.
> Hybrid Synchronous: Course meets regularly in person with portions of the course conducted online at specific times.

Online Course – A course where 100% of the content is delivered online. There are no F2F meetings.

Online Synchronous Instruction – Terms used to refer to types of computer-mediated instruction that support an interactional mode without time lags. Some or entire course meets at specific designated times online. For example, video conferencing and online chat sessions are two types of computer mediated synchronous instruction. Some eLearning courses require learners and

teachers to convene at least once in real time. These meetings may take place in physical classrooms, in online chat spaces, through video conferencing or via other real time forums.

Self-Support – Instruction offered through self-support mode does not receive state general fund appropriations and instead collects non-state student fees that are adequate to meet the cost of maintaining operation in the long run. Such fees shall be required pursuant to rules and regulations prescribed by the trustees, including but not limited to fee policies such as Executive Order 1054 and Education Code section 89708.

State-Support – State-support mode is the type of funding structure in which the university receives state appropriations for instruction offered.

Technologically Enhanced – Course where the instructor uses web-based technology to supplement/support class time and assignments.

III.   BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTION

The University values academic freedom and encourages instructional innovation to further learning excellence and student success. **Online** and **hybrid** course and program offerings shall contribute to the University goals of providing a distinctive educational experience, while working to eliminate opportunity gaps and meet retention and graduation goals. Faculty have the responsibility for academic oversight, as well as making decisions related to all courses, programs and degrees across modes of delivery.

Online and hybrid instruction represent one mode of instruction that may be considered by an individual faculty member, a faculty group, and/or an academic department. Nothing in this policy shall imply that online and hybrid instruction is the preferred mode of instruction.

The development and utilization of online and hybrid instruction shall not be used to reduce or eliminate tenure-track faculty positions. Class size and instructor workload shall be determined by the Department in consultation with the college Dean. Class size and the related assigned workload (WTU) shall be a factor of expected instructor time commitment: Instructor time in online and hybrid environments is a function of course learning outcomes and the related time an instructor must commit to appropriately

monitor, evaluate and participate in online interactions, as well as evaluate individual assignments.

A. Modes of Instruction (MOIs)

1. Mode of Instruction (MOI) refers to the delivery method employed in an instructional setting. As such it represents one important component of pedagogical practice. MOI can vary from face-to-face to fully online instruction, with many variants in between. It is in the collective interest of the academic community: faculty, students, staff and administration to know what MOI is in use in specific classes in order to provide appropriate support, make efficient use of resources and have clarity regarding the extent and importance of academic technologies employed in any given class or learning environment.

2. The class schedule will clearly note the course Mode of Instruction so students know when registering for a course if the course is traditional, hybrid or fully online. Students have a right to know the modes of delivery and technological requirements of each course, program, and degree offered by the University. Students shall have access to this information before enrolling in a course or program.

B. Student Support, Rights, and Information

1. Students have the right to know the modes of delivery (including any on-campus meeting requirements, and technological requirements) of each course section, program, and degree offered by the University. Students will have access to this information before enrolling in a course section or program.

2. The Class Schedule shall notify students of any software and hardware requirements for participation in online courses and activities.

3. Support consistent with that available to all other HSU students (such as technical support, instructional support, student services/advisers, library resources, and support services for students with disabilities) shall be made available to students in online courses sections and programs.

4. Students have the right to timely responses from their instructors. Instructors shall respond to reasonable student inquiries within 48 hours of receipt.

C. Faculty Support, Rights, and Responsibilities

1. **Curricular Control**

    a) In accordance with the provisions of the CSU/CFA Collective Bargaining Agreement, faculty shall have the same control and ownership of the substantive and intellectual content of their online course-related materials that faculty have with respect to their face-to-face courses.

    b) The most appropriate mode of instruction for degrees, programs, courses and their parts is determined by the department faculty or academic unit faculty and not solely individual faculty members. This faculty control must be exercised, whether courses are offered via state-supported venues or through self-support venues. Only with prior approval of the department/program may more than half of the course content be delivered online. (see section IV:B)

    c) Faculty have the right to know, and the department chairs and program directors have the responsibility to inform faculty of the modes of delivery, including any on-campus meeting requirements and technological requirements of relevant course sections, programs, or degrees offered by the department or the program. Faculty shall have access to this information before being assigned any course.

    d) All courses, regardless of mode of instruction, are subject to the curricular approval and review policies and procedures as established at HSU and through the CSU Quality Assurance program standards. Special attention should be paid at the department and programmatic levels to WASC Substantive Change requirements to ensure compliance. See document section IV:B and Appendix A for links to the referenced document or policy.

2. **Intellectual Property**

    a) Faculty have the same control and ownership of the substantive and intellectual content of their online course materials that they have with respect to those offered in a traditional classroom format, at the time of production, at any time during their use, and thereafter. No one may access or use a faculty member's online course and content without

written permission from that faculty member. In the event that the instructor of record is unable to provide permission, then access may be granted by the appropriate administrator.

b) Faculty shall follow the guidelines and rules for Intellectual Property as outlined by current HSU and CSU policies.

c) See Appendix A for links to the referenced document or policy.

3. **Confidentiality of Student Records and Work**

Student records and work shall be subject to the same protection and expectations of confidentiality that are in effect for traditional modes of instruction. These requirements also apply when content is delivered by an outside contractor.

4. **Class Size and Workload**

Class size and instructor workload shall be determined by the Department in consultation with the college Dean. Class size and the related assigned workload (WTU) shall be a factor of expected instructor time commitment: Instructor time in online and hybrid environments is a function of course learning outcomes and the related time an instructor must commit to appropriately monitor, evaluate and participate in online interactions, as well as evaluate individual assignments.

5. **Criteria for Student Success**

Criteria for student success in online instruction courses and programs shall be as rigorous and comprehensive as those used in classroom-based courses and these criteria shall be clearly communicated to students.

6. **Faculty Development, Training, and Instructional Design Support**

a) Because online instruction involves the use of technologies and teaching methods that benefit from specialized training, the University shall offer training and support to faculty.

b) When a faculty member elects to teach a course online for the first time, the faculty member is encouraged but not required to complete a course development and training program offered by the HSU's faculty development unit (e.g. Center for Teaching and Learning). The course development and training program will include instruction on accessible design. If the faculty member elects to complete this

program, it is recommended that it is completed at least one month prior to the first day of the semester in which the online course will be taught.

c) Faculty members who have previously taught a course online shall also have the opportunity to receive training in online instruction from the University's faculty development unit (e.g. Center for Teaching and Learning), and are encouraged also to take advantage of other university-sponsored resources and training.

d) All faculty members teaching online courses are strongly urged to have each of their courses reviewed according to the Quality Teaching and Learning (QLT) procedure administered by the University's faculty development unit (e.g. Center for Teaching and Learning).

e) The University recognizes that not all faculty and students are prepared for the challenges and opportunities that teaching and learning in an online environment can present. To assist faculty in creating high quality learning environments online, various resources are available throughout the University. HSU's faculty development unit (e.g. Center for Teaching and Learning) provides education, training, technology support, and instructional design services. This includes participation in the CSU Quality Assurance Program, which focuses on academic quality and integrity in online/blended courses. The HSU Accessible Resource Center (ARC) team helps faculty and staff ensure that digital documents are compliant with the requirements of the Accessible Technology Initiative (ATI). Faculty should access these resources before moving wholly or in part into teaching online. Faculty members using University supported resources (e.g. software and student support programs) are responsible for requesting and securing that support.

f) See Appendix B for lists of support mechanisms.

7. **Accessibility**

a) Just as in face-to-face learning environments, the university and its faculty are committed to creating and making available accessible instructional materials. In accordance with the CSU Accessible Technology Initiative, accessible

design must be incorporated into the creation of all new course sections with online components. Online programs and courses will conform to University policies regarding accessibility and accommodations.

b) The instructor is responsible for the accessibility of online and hybrid courses and its materials in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. In doing so, any new materials added during the instructional period must meet accessibility requirements; this includes outside materials (as those found online and from publishers).

c) The university provides, and faculty should seek, information, assistance, guidance, and training in ensuring accessible learning environments. See [Appendix A](#) for links to the referenced document or policy.

8. **Evaluation and Assessment**

    a) Course and Program Assessment

        (1) Courses and programs should be held to the same standard regardless of the mode of instruction. Assessment of online and blended courses should be a regular part of the department's assessment plan and should focus on student outcomes not on the delivery technology. Academic content is relevant to the original academic materials prepared by the instructor including the related technological architecture. The oversight of academic content is conducted through peer review and evaluation and is related to the integrity and appropriateness of course and program curricular content, as well as assessment of teaching effectiveness. The California Faculty Association Collective Bargaining Agreement requires at least five (5) day notice before "online observation, and/or review of online content" (CBA 15.14 2015).

    b) Faculty Assessment

        (1) Department guidelines establish faculty observation and evaluation. The faculty of a given academic program assume responsibility and exercise oversight of courses and their curriculum ensuring the quality, rigor, and integrity of instruction. Instruction online

whether fully online or hybrid should match the quality, rigor and integrity of face-to-face courses. Campus and department RTP performance evaluation processes should recognize online and face-to-face instructional activities as equally meritorious and important. Access to online course content is governed by the same procedures and restrictions that determine evaluator access to face to face courses. This includes the responsibility to notify the faculty member of plans to visit their course. The faculty member shall maintain reasonable control over the extent of this access to their course materials and content.

c) Student Evaluations of Faculty

(1) The university currently provides online student evaluations of teaching. These will be used in online courses. Administration will follow university guidelines outlined in the Standardized Student Evaluation Question Policy. See Appendix A for links to the referenced document or policy.

9. **Faculty Office Hours and Availability**

a) Instructors of online courses will schedule office hours accessible to their online students, or as determined by department policy. The level of student interaction should be comparable to face to face office hours the methods and frequency of which will be clearly communicated to students as determined by University policy and procedures.

10. **Academic Honesty**

Online programs and courses present new challenges to ensure academic integrity that should be addressed in their design. Online programs and courses will conform to University policies on academic honesty. See Appendix A for links to the referenced document or policy.

11. **Hosting of Class Material**

The online components of all degree-credit courses listed in the Class Schedule shall normally be hosted on California State University servers or other servers approved by the Chief Information Officer.

12. **Syllabi**

a) All courses regardless of instructional medium and mode shall abide by HSU's existing syllabus policy. See [Appendix A](#) for links to the referenced document or policy.

13. **State and Self-Support Hosted Courses**

    Deciding whether to offer an online program through state and/or self support shall be accomplished according to state laws and campus and system-wide policies. See definitions section for "state support" and self support." See [Appendix A](#) or links to the referenced document or policy.

14. **Use of Outside Contractors to Provide Course Materials**

    a) Since civic engagement, local community collaboration and stewardship of place are central to the mission of HSU, the use of outside contractors for the purposes of delivering course content shall only be done with approval of individual departments or programs and the appropriate administrator.

    b) No individual, program, or department shall agree in a contract with any private or public entity to deliver distance education courses or programs on behalf of the University without prior university approval.

    c) The University shall not enter into a contract with any private or public entity to deliver distance education courses or programs without the prior approval of the relevant department or program. Approvals shall follow established university procedures and policy.

    d) Students' records and work shall be subject to the same protection and expectations of confidentiality that are in effect for traditional modes of instruction even when delivered by an outside contractor even when delivered by an outside contractor.

    e) See [Appendix A](#) for links to the referenced document or policy.

IV. APPROVAL OF ONLINE AND TECHNOLOGICALLY-ENHANCED COURSES AND DEGREE PROGRAMS

A. Course Credit Hours

When existing courses are converted to online, normally the units carried are expected to be the same. The "credit hour" is defined as "the amount

of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement." A credit hour is assumed to be a 50-minute (not 60-minute) period. In courses, such as those offered online, in which "seat time" does not apply, a credit hour may be measured by an equivalent amount of work, as demonstrated by student achievement. Also refer to the CSU Policy on credit units for guidance on student workload. See Appendix A for links to the referenced document or policy.

B. **WASC Substantive Change Requirement**

1. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission requires programs that offer distance and technology mediated courses to obtain Substantive Change authorization when the level of such coursework reaches fifty percent (50%) of the program requirements. Any department or program that proposes an undergraduate major or a graduate program in which it is possible for students to fulfill 50% or more of the requirements with online/hybrid units shall be required to meet WASC substantive change requirements. Note that for undergraduate programs, the 50% rule applies only to units in the major and not units for graduation. A campus WASC accreditation liaison shall work with such departments or programs on the Substantive Change proposal.

2. Departments and/or programs are responsible for tracking the credit hours for both new courses and conversions of existing courses to ensure that no more than 50% of program requirements will be offered through online and/or hybrid modalities unless the department is intentional about wanting to transition to an online degree program. Departments and/or programs need to consult with the WASC liaison to ensure that the university is in compliance with WASC reporting requirements.

C. **Curriculum Approvals**

Changing a face to face course to a hybrid and changing a course to a fully online mode will be approved by the department curriculum committee after consultation with the college Dean who has the authority to approve the offering of a course online. If a course is converted to a fully online mode and meets the criteria for a major course change, it must follow the guidelines of a major course change as stated in policies and procedures of the relevant administrative body (e.g. Integrated Curriculum Committee - ICC).

D. Department/Program Approval for Conversion of Existing Courses or Sections to and Online/Hybrid Format

In the case of existing courses, approval for the use of online instruction is within the purview of the department and/or program, subject to the principles set forth in this Policy. Consultation with the department and/or program is expected to ensure programmatic learning outcomes are maintained. Departments will be encouraged to develop internal guidelines regarding the process for determining which courses or sections will be offered in various modalities.

APPENDIX A: Policy Index

Humboldt State University, California State University, and California Faculty Association policy index.

APPENDIX B: Faculty and Student Support Resources

Definitions of faculty and student support. Includes a list of faculty and student support resources available throughout the University.