

Applies to: Faculty, Staff, Administrators and Students

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Short Description: Initiation, standards, development, approval, work assignment, evaluation and oversight of practices related to online and hybrid courses and programs (definitions below).

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the consistent academic quality and accessibility of all Humboldt State University online and hybrid courses and programs (see definitions below). Online and hybrid instruction will assist the University in achieving its mission while addressing three challenges: geographic accessibility given the large University service area; scheduling needs of a diverse student population with work, family and travel constraints; and enrollment growth given the physical campus space limitations. This policy is written with the intent and spirit that the 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.

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Definitions

Accessible Design – A built environment process and standard that attends to the needs of people with disabilities and stems legally from the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

Academic Content and its Oversight – The original academic materials prepared by the instructor, not 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 for “online observation, and/or review of online content” (CBA 15.14 2015).

Asynchronous communication – Term used to refer to types of computer mediated communication 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. For example, a learner may send an e-mail message to an instructor one day and the instructor may read and respond to the email two days later. Similarly, discussion forums are a form of asynchronous communication that by design retain the full communication thread that grows over time. In eLearning environments, architectural forums that support asynchronous communication create flexibility in participation for the learner and the instructor.

DFWU – Acronym and variable label used in calculating rates of unsuccessful course outcomes and the related targets for course and/or curricular intervention. “D” and “F” represent letters grades of the same. “WU” is the University code that faculty members record for “unauthorized withdrawal”: Faculty are instructed to assign “WU” instead of an “F” if course failure is due to discontinuation of class attendance without formal withdrawal. The WU carries the same impact on the GPA as an “F.”

Face-to-Face (F2F) Course - A course in which an instructor delivers all course content in real time with students usually present in the same location or connected via video/audio conference.

Hybrid (Blended) Course – “Hybrid” or “Blended” are names commonly used to describe courses in which some scheduled course meeting time is regularly replaced by online learning activities. 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).

Online Course – A course where all of the content is delivered asynchronously online. There are no F2F meetings and limited synchronized online meetings.

Real-time or Synchronous Communication – Terms used to refer to types of computer-mediated communication that support an interactional mode without time lags. For example, video conferencing and online chat sessions are two types of computer mediated synchronous communication. 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.

Technological Architecture and its Oversight – The skeletal structure within a learning management system that may include the creation and organization of spaces for holding academic content, hosting discussions, or collecting student work, as well as other features. The oversight of technological architecture is conducted through collegial review, evaluation and support provided by CEEE instructional designers with particular focus on ensuring accessible design and student engagement. The California Faculty Association Collective Bargaining Agreement requires at least five (5) days notice for “online observation, and/or review of online content” (CBA 15.14 2015).

Web-Facilitated Course – A F2F course where the instructor uses web-based technology to supplement/support class time and assignments.

I. Basic Principles

- A. **Online and hybrid course** and program offerings shall contribute to the University goals of providing a distinctive educational experience, while eliminating the achievement gap and meeting retention and graduation goals.
- B. The University values academic freedom and encourages instructional innovation.
- C. The faculty has the responsibility for academic oversight, as well as making decisions related to all courses, programs and degrees across modes of delivery.
- D. 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.
- E. Nothing in this policy shall imply that online and hybrid instruction is the preferred mode of instruction.
- F. The development and utilization of online and hybrid instruction shall not be used to reduce or eliminate tenure-track faculty positions.
- G. 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.

II. Online Course Initiation and Development

- A. Faculty shall receive timely notice of the modes of delivery and technological requirements for each course offered by the University
- B. Faculty members shall consult with their department when interested in developing a hybrid or online course. The department chair will consult with the college Dean who has the authority to approve the offering of a course online. The dean will consult with the Associate Vice President of CEEE, who formalizes the course development process through the completion of an eLearning Course Development Contract (Appendix A) and related standardized rate schedule.
- C. The Dean has the responsibility, in consultation with the department Chair, to determine the maximum amount of online instruction assigned to each faculty member each semester, taking into account the best interests of the department (CBA Article 20 2015).
- D. Because online and hybrid instruction involves the use of technologies and teaching methods that require specialized training, instructors wishing to offer online and hybrid courses shall successfully complete training or demonstrate proficiency in teaching online or hybrid courses.
- E. The CEEE shall offer appropriate training and support services to faculty members who choose to teach online and hybrid courses (see Section on Faculty Support).
- F. Faculty members shall be given sufficient time to design, assess, and modify course materials and methodology for online and hybrid courses.
- G. The use of instructional design support does not constitute extraordinary support.
- H. As with **F2F** classes, online pedagogy choices shall be consistent with supporting learning outcomes for a given course.
- I. All hybrid and online courses must provide for appropriate and personal interactions between faculty and students and student-student interaction.

- J. Departments offering online and hybrid courses and programs will follow the same policies for curricular review and approval (Integrated Curriculum Committee) as applies to F2F courses and programs.

III. Student Assurances for Online Course Taking

- A. Before they register for classes, students shall be notified via the University “class schedule” of course modes of delivery and technological requirements.
- B. The CEEE will provide information on student technical support resources.
- C. Instructors will respond to most student questions within two working days.
- D. If an instructor response requires more than two days, the instructor will notify the student as to the time period in which they may expect a more detailed response.
- E. Instructors of online courses will schedule office hours accessible to their online students. The level of student interaction should be comparable to F2F office hours.
- F. Academic and administrative policies that apply to F2F classes also apply to online courses (e.g. add/drop processes and deadlines and student judicial).

IV. Faculty Support and Support Limitations

- A. Faculty members will be paired with an instructional designer designated by the CEEE.
- B. The instructional designer will support the faculty members with the technological and pedagogical design of the course. This process will be complete when the Director of Academic Technology approves the course. The Director will maintain records indicating the approval status of a course related to the QOLT instrument (Appendix B). The faculty member and instructional designer will meet regularly throughout the course design process (Appendix C).
- C. The instructor is responsible for the accessibility of online and hybrid courses in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- D. The instructional designer shall provide appropriate information, instructor training and design monitoring to support online course accessibility.

- E. Faculty members using University supported resources (e.g. software and student support programs) are responsible for requesting and securing that support.
- F. Faculty members using non-university-supported resources (e.g. third-party servers, non- university-supported software) must state in their syllabus that the University will not provide technical support for those resources and will direct students on how to receive technical support in using those resources.

V. Evaluation and Assessment

- A. The faculty of a given academic program/department will assume responsibility for academic oversight of its online and hybrid courses in accordance with the faculty collective bargaining agreement and Appendix J of the Faculty Handbook. The Chair of a Department/Program Personnel Committee will solicit and include architectural oversight observations in the deliberations and evaluation of instructors.
- B. Instructional designers assigned by the CEEE will provide to academic departments/programs and the Director of Academic Technology architectural oversight in the form of written reports of the architectural design of online and hybrid courses and evaluative recommendations. The review process will assure that the online and hybrid courses conform to quality standards (QOLT) in the field of online and hybrid instruction.
- C. While the CEEE may collect and maintain data on drop/add statistics for each online and hybrid course, this data shall not be used in the evaluation of an instructor. While sometimes referred to by the CEEE as “persistence” data, the operationalization of the CEEE drop/add data is quite different than “persistence” as measured by the University Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness.
- D. At least two weeks prior to the first day of courses, the AVP of CEEE or their designee will verify that all new online courses are ready and meet online course standards.
- E. The CEEE will inform the appropriate college Dean of new scheduled courses that do not meet QOLT instrument standards and are in danger of not meeting deadlines. The CEEE will provide the Dean, department chair and the instructor with specific changes required to meet the standards for the online courses. The Department/Program chair, in consultation with the Dean, will make final decisions on the offering or canceling of an online course.

- F. Online and hybrid programs will be assessed by Departments/Programs through the University Program Review process.
- G. Program Reviews will include comparison of online to F2F course outcomes with particular attention to differences in DFWU rates by race/ethnicity and gender within and across mode of instruction.

VI. Faculty Member Assignment of Work

- A. The Departments/Programs assign faculty members to all classes, including online and hybrid classes, in compliance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement and their own internal personnel policies.
- B. When an online or hybrid course is refused or later assigned to a new instructor, the faculty member who developed that course may choose to withhold the academic content. The technological architecture of the course may be passed to the new instructor.

VII. CEEE and the Advisory Council

- A. The University Senate will create a CEEE Advisory Council to oversee the policies and processes contained in this document.

Membership:

- One faculty member, appointed by University Senate (Chair)
 - AVP, College of eLearning and Extended Education (ex-officio, non-voting)
 - One faculty member elected from each of the academic colleges
 - CFA Chapter President or faculty designee
 - One Dean appointed by Provost
 - One Associated Students representative
 - One Instructional Designer
- B. The Associate Vice President for eLearning and Extended Education, or their designees, will provide the Advisory Council with regular reports on CEEE responsibilities noted below.
 - C. The CEEE Advisory Council will make recommendations for policy change and other actions to the University Senate through the Integrated Curriculum Committee.
 - D. The CEEE is responsible for the following:

1. **Faculty Support:** Faculty training and on-going technical support in online instruction.
2. **Student Academic Services:** Information and resources provided to students for successful online and hybrid course participation (e.g. orientation, tutorials, library resources, and real time technical support).
3. **Sustainability and Growth:** Evaluate and recommend instructional technology and LMS choices; systematic approaches for integrating student, academic, and faculty services; strategic considerations of human, technical, and funding resources related to growth; eLearning out-reach and business plans, prioritization of programs and courses for eLearning; and the mix of online, hybrid and F2F courses available in each major/program and across the University.
4. **Technological Architecture Oversight:** Maintain an appropriate eLearning architectural oversight process that includes an assessment instrument (e.g. QOLT) and contributes to instructor evaluations as noted in an earlier section.
5. **E-Learning Program Assessment:** Support overall student success in online courses and strong online program retention rates through review of online course/program outcome data as compared to those in F2F courses/programs.
6. **Regulatory Compliance:** Assure compliance with relevant regulatory dimensions of eLearning (e.g. ADA, HLC, and OBOR requirements).