

H&SS Guidelines on Online Instruction

Approved by H&SS Chairs 8/18/2011

Approval Process

Requests to offer an entire course online, or one or more sections online, requires the submission to the H&SS Curriculum Committee of one original, signed Course Change Form and a 16-week syllabus, after reviewing carefully §B.6 of UPS 411.104. All 11 criteria outlined in the UPS must be addressed. Typically, these proposals must be completed one year in advance of offering the course.

Existing University Policy Statements

All applicable University Policy Statements (UPSs) are to be implemented, including, but not limited to UPS 300.004, Policy on Course Outlines; UPS 300.005, Final Examinations; UPS 300.021, Academic Dishonesty; UPS 320.005, Retention of Student Work; UPS 411.100, Curriculum Guidelines and Procedures: Courses; UPS 411.104 Policy on Online Instruction; UPS 411.201, General Education: Goals for Student Learning. Syllabi must also follow all applicable university policies.

Faculty Ownership

In accordance with UPS 411.104: "Faculty shall have the same control and ownership of the substantive and intellectual content of their online instruction course-related materials that faculty have with respect to classes offered in classroom format, at the time of production, at any time during their use, and thereafter."

Technology Training & Assistance

In order to safeguard quality of instruction and delivery of content, faculty and students must have access to expert technical support, and faculty must be given adequate lead time to prepare an online course. Faculty are encouraged to attain a high level of pedagogical training and to obtain the requisite skills, and to those ends to utilize faculty development resources such as the FDC and OASIS.

We encourage the relevant campus entities to improve the Help Desk's ability to assist faculty with Learning Management System (LMS) issues. We strongly recommend creation of a dedicated telephone line for faculty with LMS questions, and of a separate dedicated telephone line for students with LMS questions, with a goal of 24/365 support.

Delivery

Faculty are encouraged to employ a variety of pedagogical approaches to online learning in each course, such as multimedia, discussion boards, videos, audio-visual presentations (Camtasia, Captivate, etc.), and web projects.

Faculty should strive to implement the principles of the Accessible Technology Initiative (ATI) in all courses. The policy and resources are available at: <http://www.fullerton.edu/ati/index.html>, and <http://www.fullerton.edu/it/ati/>, and <http://www.fullerton.edu/ittraining/other/ATI/>.

Class Size

All rules, regulations, and policies regarding workloads and class sizes apply equally to online and face to face courses.

There are multiple (sometimes competing) concerns to consider when determining class size. First and foremost are the students' needs for effective pedagogy and the availability of classes. Second, faculty need to offer quality courses and should not be burdened with over-enrollment. Research demonstrates that smaller online class sizes of 20-25 provide more flexibility in pedagogical strategies, allowing more time for interaction with each student. Consideration should be given to a faculty member's individual class sizes, and his or her total enrollment in all courses during a semester. Third, departments, colleges, and the university must ensure the quality and quantity of course offerings. Departments that normally offer in-person courses with 30-45 students will not be able to offer small online sections without compromising the overall availability of courses, and jeopardizing their ability to meet FTES targets. Additionally, faculty workloads must be in compliance with contractual agreements.

In light of these concerns, given that there is a relationship between class size and pedagogical effectiveness at all levels of instruction (100, 200, 300, 400, 500), it is unreasonable to expect that faculty are assigned an online course in which the number of students exceeds the class size of an in-person course of the same level of instruction within the college. The following online class size goals are strongly recommended: 100 & 200 at 40-50; 300 at 30-40; 400 at 25-30; 500 at 15-20.

Faculty Presence

Teaching online does not relieve faculty members from traditional obligations to the campus community, such as on-campus department, college, and university committee meetings and events.

Faculty members teaching online courses must be available to meet with students in multiple ways, e.g., e-mail, LMS announcements, in-person, telephone, Skype, live webinars, discussion boards. Communication is facilitated by regular announcements and reminders for upcoming due dates or new content, as well as a clear e-mail policy.

Student Academic Honesty

University policies on academic honesty apply equally to face-to-face and online courses.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the ultimate academic honesty tool is to design assessments that make it difficult to cheat. We encourage multiple methods of assessment; for example, a major project that includes research, such as a paper, video, news story, or magazine article. Asking for evidence of ongoing progress in such assignments, such as multiple drafts before the final product can help as well. If quizzes or exams are used, limit questions that are easily answered by looking through the textbook, web or other learning materials. When possible, write questions that require understanding of concepts learned rather than knowledge level questions.

We also affirm the use of various technologies to promote academic honesty, e.g., papers submitted via Turn-It-In, randomizing questions, randomizing the order of answers, limiting time for exam completion, forcing completion, and not allowing a student to return to a previous question. In person techniques include requiring ID for on-campus exams, and the use of trusted third parties to proctor exams.

Faculty should be made aware of, and have access to, resources and technologies to promote academic honesty.

RTP Considerations

In accordance with UPS 411.104: “In online courses, the department chair is responsible for ensuring that the student evaluation of instruction forms are administered. Because of the online nature of the course, the procedures for evaluating the faculty may be different from those used by the institution for the evaluation of faculty teaching classroom-based courses, but the overall standards shall be equivalent. [Refer to UPS 210.000, Faculty Personnel Policy and Procedures].”

Student Opinion Questionnaires (SOQs) should not be weighted differently, in relationship to other indicators of teaching effectiveness, for on-campus vs. on-line courses. A department may wish to create a second set of SOQs to be used for on-line courses.

In order to conduct a “classroom visit” of an online course, it would be reasonable for a faculty member to add the department chair or Department Personnel Committee (DPC) member to the online course for a period of time (e.g., a week), to review the course. A Department’s Personnel Policy may wish to consider how to address these issues most appropriately.