

Hawai'i Community College

Definitions and Guidelines for Online and Hybrid Courses

This document outlines guidelines for developing high quality online and hybrid courses that promote student learning and success. These definitions and principles reflect Hawai'i Community College policies, requirements established by federal law, as well as best practices within the field of online education and distance learning.

Basic Definitions and Requirements

1. **Online courses:** Courses in which instruction is conducted solely through the use of computer software in an online learning environment. For a course to be considered an online class, 100% of the content must be delivered online, although faculty may require on-site exams, faculty conferences, field trips or other proctored activities.
2. **Hybrid courses:** Courses that replace approximately 50% of face-to-face "seat time" with online instruction. (Exceptions to this percentage may be made at the discretion of the Dean.) Face-to-face instruction is reduced, but not eliminated. In compliance with the US Department of Education credit hour definition and the UH System Credit Hour policy (Policy #5.228, May 2012), the combined face-to-face and online instructional time remains equivalent to a traditional face-to-face course.

The syllabus must indicate both in-class and online requirements including:

- a. The number of hours that are face-to-face vs. online, meeting dates/times
- b. The activities that will be held face-to-face vs. online
- c. Student attendance/participation for the face-to-face hours is mandatory

Recommendation: At least one in-person in-class assessment should be assigned each semester.

Related Definitions and Requirements

1. **Web-enhanced courses:** Courses that utilize web/computer-based components while maintaining all face-to-face "seat time." These courses can be enhanced through learning materials (handouts, assignments, quizzes, etc.) posted in College's learning management system.(e.g., Lulima) and/or other web-based technologies.
2. **Flipped classrooms:** A pedagogical model in which all face-to-face "seat time" is maintained, but the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed. Some or most of direct instruction is delivered outside the classroom using video or other modes of delivery, usually employing technology. Class time is utilized for active learning, discussions, collaborative projects, and for instructors to provide face-to-face instruction.
3. **Contact Hour:** A contact hour is equal to one hour of scheduled instruction provided to students. [UHCC policy on credit hour](#) (UHCCP 5.228) defines a credit hour reasonably approximates but is not less than fifty minutes to one hour of class or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work each week for

approximately 15 weeks for one semester or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time..

4. **Distance Education:** To maintain the College's eligibility for Title IV (federal financial aid) funds, online classes (and online components of hybrid classes) must meet the definition of distance education (as opposed to correspondence) courses. Central to being considered a distance education, courses must require "regular and substantive interaction between these students and the instructor" (as stipulated by [§ 600.2 of the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations](#)). This means interaction that is not wholly optional, interaction that is initiated by the instructor, interaction that regular throughout the course, and interaction that is scheduled (not self-paced). Instructors should be engaging with students through discussions and fostering instructor-student and student-student interaction. Limiting interaction to answering student questions or providing feedback on assignments or tests is not considered by the federal government as "regular and substantive" interaction.
5. **Accessibility:** Federal law requires that online and hybrid courses must be accessible to students with disabilities.

General Institutional Principles and Commitments

1. **Mission:** Online and hybrid courses should be designed to serve the academic needs and interests of the various student population, and delivered in a way that allows for the best possibility of learning and student success.
2. **Suitability:** Discipline faculty must confirm that the course content and learning outcomes are suitable to online/hybrid delivery.
3. **Professional Development:** The College will support the development of online and hybrid courses by providing support and professional development opportunities for faculty and academic departments.
4. **Academic Standards:** Online and hybrid courses must reflect the same standards of academic integrity and rigor as classroom-based courses at the College. Online and hybrid courses must be developed on the basis of clear and consistent standards that apply college-wide.
5. **Course Approval Process:** Newly created online and hybrid courses are subject to the same course approval process which the College utilizes for traditional face-to-face courses. An existing traditional course which is being transformed into either an online or hybrid course must be approved at the departmental level by a department or division chair.
6. **Student Notification:** Class schedules and registration materials for students should clearly indicate which method of instruction will be utilized in a course (i.e. online, hybrid, web-enhanced) and what technological requirements, if any, are required for the course.
7. **Assessment:** Online and hybrid courses are subject to the same student course evaluation and institutional assessment procedures which the College utilizes for traditional courses.
8. **Course Evaluation:**

The first time an instructor teaches through a distance delivery mode (which includes hybrid courses), the course will be evaluated by a Department Chair or designee.

Online Course Equivalency Provision

It is the responsibility of the instructor that their hybrid/online course provides comparable learning opportunities to students as a face-to-face course would offer. To meet the equivalency provision, online and hybrid courses should provide roughly the same number of total hours of classroom instruction as a traditional course. (See Basic Definition #3 on Contact Hour on previous page.) Below are some guidelines:

- All course activities should:
 - be mandatory, measurable and graded
 - offer the same learning opportunities as the comparable face-to-face class

- Work that a student would typically do outside of the classroom in a face-to-face class would not be considered part of class-time equivalency requirements, including:
 - homework assignments
 - required readings – unless this would normally be directly tied to an in-class activity.

Discipline faculty is responsible for determining what constitutes equivalency, and for documenting such decisions and justification for them. Faculty developing online and hybrid courses should consult with colleagues, department/division chairs, for establishing equivalences between online learning activities and the class time requirement.

Faculty should utilize best practices when developing and teaching online and hybrid courses. Therefore, consultation with the Instructional Technology Support Office (ITSO) is highly recommended.

- **Drafted** by the ad-hoc Distance Education Committee, 4/4/14
- **Approved** by the Academic Senate on 4/25/2014; to be sent to the VCAA for further review/action.
- **Revised** 11/20/18 by the Distance Education Committee.
- **Modification Approved** by Academic Senate, 11/30/18.