

WEST VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Title: Online and Distance Education Policy

Section 1. General

- 1.1. Scope: Policy pertaining to the design, development, and teaching of online courses for use in credit or non-credit courses offered by the University.
- 1.2. Purpose: The University recognizes the need to ensure quality and academic integrity in online education settings. The University further acknowledges that this endeavor is best accomplished through a combination of research-based standards for practice and comprehensive support for faculty and students engaging in online education activities.
- 1.3. Application: This policy affects online students, full-time and adjunct faculty, the Center for Online Learning (COL), and all those involved in developing, learning, or teaching through the university's online LMS.
- 1.4. Effective Date: May 1, 2021.
- 1.5. Revises: Online and Distance Education Policy December 2017 revision. Revised March 2021.

Section 2. Definitions

- 2.1. *ADA* refers to the Americans with Disabilities Act and the regulations and standards used to ensure equal access for all individuals.
- 2.2. *Blended Course* refers to any course that combines traditional, F2F instruction with online or distance instruction.
- 2.3. *Content* refers to the categorical elements within a course that contribute to the overall course and instructional design. Content categories are listed below and definitions and examples of each category are provided in the Course Design Guide (CDG).
 - 2.3.a. Module Introduction
 - 2.3.b. Measurable Learning Objectives
 - 2.3.c. Learning Resources
 - 2.3.d. Supplemental Resources
 - 2.3.e. Lesson Activities
- 2.4. *Content Ready* refers to an online course that is completely developed and ready to be taught at least two (2) weeks prior to the start of the class. All content must be present within the course and the course must be approved through the internal quality control process by the COL no later than seven (7) days prior to the start of the course.

- 2.5. *Course Design* refers to the unique combination of content and instructional strategies used to develop a course prior to the course start. Note that separate course sections may implement different design choices.
- 2.6. *Course Design Guide (CDG)* refers to the instrument used to guide instructors through the development process and is the basis for the rubric used by the COL in evaluating all fully online and blended courses for content readiness and quality. The full CDG is attached in Appendix A.
- 2.7. *Course Evaluation* refers to the internal quality control process in which the CDG is used by the COL to review fully online and blended courses to ensure content readiness and quality.
- 2.8. *Course Redesign* refers to a course that has already been designed and approved through internal quality processes but is undergoing major revision (e.g., design modifications that modify 30% or more of the course design).
- 2.9. *Fully Online Course* refers to any distance education course in which 100% of course content and interaction is conducted online.
- 2.10. *LMS* refers to the online Learning Management System adopted by the institution in which all online or blended courses are housed and operated.
- 2.11. *Web Designation* refers to tags attached to online or blended courses to describe the percentage of coursework conducted online and to describe the approximate amount of F2F sessions a student can expect to attend.
- 2.11.a. *Web30* – A course in which all class sessions are F2F and are held in the physical classroom, except for under extreme or extraordinary circumstances, such as the instructor’s illness, inclement weather, or planned absences for the instructor to attend a conference, and the online course is used as a supplement to the class. The syllabus and course content may be posted online and assignments and exams may be submitted online.
- 2.11.b. *Web50* – A course in which coursework is evenly divided between 15 F2F class sessions and the online environment. The breakdown of coursework and assignments between the F2F and online components is determined by the instructor and is outlined in the course syllabus.
- 2.11.c. *Web80* – A course in which the majority of the coursework is conducted in the online environment, with 1–4 F2F class sessions. The breakdown of coursework and assignments between the F2F and online components is determined by the instructor and is outlined in the course syllabus. The primary purpose of a Web80 course is to provide F2F time for the course introduction and the instructor’s live proctoring of high-stake exams.
- 2.11.d. *Web100* – The course is 100% online with no F2F class sessions.

Section 3. Administrative Issues Related to Fully Online Programs

3.1. Fully Online Programs: Creation and Administration

- 3.1.a. New degree programs that are interested in being online must follow HEPC guidelines and procedures for program approval.
- 3.1.b. The initial approval of any new course in an online program (i.e., any course that is not currently in the university catalog) is required to follow the same approval procedures as new courses in traditional settings.
- 3.1.c. Once a course is included in the course catalog, Web50, Web80 or Web100 courses must also successfully complete the quality assurance procedures outlined in section six of this policy.
- 3.1.d. Departments interested in offering a fully online program must include plans for managing advising and supporting retention.
- 3.1.e. Academic calendars and schedules for online programs will follow established university calendars and schedules.

3.2. Tuition and Fees for Online Programs

- 3.2.a. [The tuition rate for online out-of-state students is equal to the in-state rate.](#)

Section 4. Creating and Designing [Fully Online/Blended \(Hybrid\) Courses \(Web50, Web80, Web100\)](#)

- 4.1. The design of a new Web50, Web80 or Web100 course (or an alternative design to an already existing Web50, Web80 or Web100 course) must be approved by the appropriate department chair and dean.
- 4.2. Web50, Web80, and Web100 courses will be created and maintained in master course shells. The master course must be content ready [at least two \(2\) weeks](#) before the start of the course and will be copied into the live term course shell seven [\(7\) days](#) before the start of the course.
- 4.3. For any Web50, Web80, or Web100 course not previously taught online that is not content ready on the first day of classes, the instructor will have a grace period [to finish the development of the course in the live term course shell: three \(3\) weeks for 8-week courses and six \(6\) weeks for 16-week courses](#). If the course does not pass the [CDG](#) core standards by the end of the grace period, then the instructor will not be permitted to teach that course online in the next semester and will be removed from the draft schedule for the upcoming semester for that course in the online modality. The department chair will then either convert that course to an in-seat class or will find another instructor to teach the course in the online modality. The master course must be content ready before the

course may be put on the schedule again.

Section 5. Creating and Designing Blended (Hybrid, Web50) Courses: Additional Requirements

Web 50 courses incorporate elements of good hybrid course design and good online course design. **The following items define a Good Hybrid Course Design:**

- 5.1. A hybrid/blended course should be designed as one cohesive whole, incorporating both face-to-face and online experiences in complementary ways.*
- 5.2. The course design creates a strong faculty presence during online days/weeks.
- 5.3. The course designer makes a conscious decision about which learning objectives and activities are best performed in the face-to-face environment and which are best used in the online environment.
- 5.4. The course design meets seat-time equivalency requirements, **which** ensures that the time spent online is equivalent to the time spent in class. This includes learning activities such as watching videos, listening to recorded PowerPoint lectures or audio podcasts, participating in discussions, and taking quizzes or tests. This does not include work that an instructor would expect 100% in-seat students to do at home, such as papers, reading assignments, and practice exercises.
- 5.5. The course design contains challenging and engaging out-of-class learning activities that complement the face-to-face activities. Out-of-class activities may serve as reinforcement, practice, evidence, application, the introduction of new content, etc.
- 5.6. The course design clearly indicates (beyond the syllabus) when the class meets face-to-face and when online activities are required.

*Taken from the Online Learning Consortium Quality Score Card for Blended Courses

Section 6. Quality Standards and Procedures for Fully Online/Blended (Hybrid) Courses (Web50, Web80, and Web100)

- 6.1. *Course Infrastructure:* Courses must be organized into Weeks or Modules and be adaptable to a 4-, 8-, or 16-week course offering. Labels and headings must be consistent throughout course. Courses must follow the course template as established by the COL.
- 6.2. *Standard Web Formatting:* All course documents should be in a PDF or RTF format with screen reader compliance for accessibility.
- 6.3. *ADA Compliance:* The course design and content meet ADA compliance standards.

- 6.4. *Course Design Guide:* All Web 50, Web80, and Web100 courses must pass 100% of the core standards in the CDG (see Appendix A). In addition, the Optional Standards in the CDG will be used to identify areas in courses for quality improvements.
- 6.5. *Required Course Content:* The course includes all required course content as defined and specified in the CDG.
- 6.6. The course design promotes both faculty and student engagement. *
- 6.7. The course design includes a variety of learning activities, such as discussions, papers, tests, group work, recorded lectures, online resources, textbook readings, audio, video, and graphics.
- 6.8. The course contains assessments that measure the stated learning outcomes.
- 6.9. Enrollment caps for online courses will be the same as their traditional counterparts.

*Taken from the Online Learning Consortium Quality Score Card for Blended Courses.

Section 7. Copyright Compliance in Online Courses

- 7.1. Faculty teaching in online courses will be expected to adhere to Title 17, United States Code, Section 101, which requires that users of intellectual property and published materials adhere to copyright law protecting the original rights of the creators of works used for educational purposes.
- 7.2. All faculty teaching online and blended courses must adhere to fair use guidelines in compliance with federal copyright law.
- 7.3. The University will exhibit due diligence in offering training opportunities to faculty on copyright compliance in online courses.

Section 8. Intellectual Property and Online Courses

- 8.1. The West Virginia State University BOG Policy #59 Intellectual Property Rights Management addresses the ownership, licensing, and income distribution rights of instructor-created course materials and is available at <https://wvstateu.edu/wvsu/media/About/p59.pdf>
- 8.2. Faculty may enter into design agreements with the University in which intellectual property is shared between faculty member and the University.

Section 9. Faculty Training and Development for Online Courses

- 9.1. All faculty (including adjunct faculty) must complete [all online technological and/or pedagogical training](#) prior to teaching a [fully](#) online or blended course. Additional training may be required of faculty if policy, procedures, and/or requirements change.
- 9.2. Faculty who continue to teach online are required to take per year a minimum of one training or professional development course addressing best practices in online teaching. Such courses will be offered periodically by the COL or one of the University's approved vendors.
- 9.3. The COL will provide technical support for online courses as well as training opportunities for faculty as it relates to online teaching and learning.

Section 10. Teaching Online Courses

- 10.1. [Fully](#) online and blended course [instruction](#) must be delivered through the University's LMS and use the standard class template developed by the [COL](#). Requests for exceptions to this rule must be submitted in writing to the Online Learning Advisory Committee. Upon approval of the committee, the appropriate chair and dean must give final approval and notify the [COL](#).
- 10.2. [Full-time faculty will be permitted to edit their own fully online or blended courses, but must adhere to the policies, procedures, and standards outlined within both this document and the CDG. Adjunct faculty will not be permitted to edit their own courses, and will work with the COL to complete all necessary revisions and updates to their online courses.](#)
- 10.3. Prior to the start of a course, the instructor should email a welcome to the students instructing them how to enter the course. The instructor should also set up an [Introduction forum](#) and post his or her own introduction as the first post. The instructor should then respond to every student in the [Introduction](#) forum with a welcoming and engaging response.
- 10.4. Instructors must actively engage with students each week in the weekly discussion forum by [posting responses as appropriate to keep the conversation moving and engaging.](#)
- 10.5. Faculty teaching Web80 and Web100 courses are required to check online courses at least five days a week (Monday through Sunday) and are required to respond to email correspondence from students within a 24-hour period during the work week (i.e., Monday-Thursday, excluding holidays) and within 48 hours during the weekend (Friday-Sunday). Faculty must maintain an instructor profile and post announcements and updates in the classroom as necessary. Instructors should engage with students both publicly in class (forums) and privately via individual student feedback for submitted work. Multiple modes of contact should be stated in the syllabus, and preferred methods of communication should also be listed in the syllabus.

- 10.6. Instructors should post student grades and feedback within 7 days from assignment due date. Where possible, the instructor should provide individualized feedback on assignments that encourages and provides constructive feedback, provides explanation of point deductions, and offers suggestions for improvement when appropriate. Following the course end, instructors should post final grades within 48 hours of the course end or as otherwise instructed by the Registrar's office.
- 10.7. Faculty teaching online courses will utilize web 2.0 technologies (e.g., [Skype](#), [Google Meet](#), or [Zoom](#)) to provide synchronous office hours of at least 1 hour per week. This can be done simultaneously during regular, physical office hours (e.g., having the preferred conferencing software active during regular office hour periods).
- 10.8. Faculty will exhibit due diligence in monitoring student progress and make efforts to contact and engage students who are exhibiting difficulties in the course.
- 10.9. Faculty evaluations for those teaching online courses will follow the schedule and procedures outlined by the University in the most current Faculty Handbook.
- 10.10. Minimum technical requirements students must meet should be outlined in the syllabus.
- 10.11. For courses that include online tests or quizzes, the instructor must leave those tests open for a minimum of seven days, usually from Monday morning until Sunday evening. This policy will thus accommodate all types of online students who may have weekday or weekend conflicts.

Section 11. Student Authentication, Proctoring, and Test Security

- 11.1. The University will exhibit due diligence in the authentication of students in online courses including password protected entry into the system and supporting the use of proctoring to ensure student identity in online testing situations.
- 11.2. Faculty members are required to integrate test security measures for major course assessments in their online courses (e.g., proctoring) if they currently proctor such exams in the face-to-face version of their course. Proctoring methods should be decided by the instructor and outlined in the course syllabus.
- 11.3. Students who are unable to come to campus to take proctored exams may be allowed to arrange for an unbiased, off-campus proctor or opt to utilize a university-approved online proctoring service.
- 11.4. Students opting to utilize an off-campus proctor must have the proctor complete a Proctor Approval Form and send it to the instructor three weeks prior to the first proctored assessment. Any outside proctor must be approved by the professor and must agree to administer the test following the professor's instructions.
- 11.5. If off-campus or online proctoring is utilized, testing materials will be sent directly to the proctor by the instructor.

- 11.6. Students enrolled in Web80 and Web100 online courses must be introduced to proctoring options in the online orientation.
- 11.7. Faculty and students engaging in proctoring situations can get further information and access required forms in the COL Proctoring Policy.

Section 12. International Students in Online Courses

- 12.1. West Virginia State University policies on online course limits for F-1 students living in the U.S. will adhere to federal regulations from the Department of Homeland Security: 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(f)(6)(i)(G).
- 12.2. Per this regulation, only three online course credits per semester can be counted toward the full-time enrollment of an F-1 student.
- 12.3. A student enrolled in more than the minimum required for full-time enrollment (e.g., 15 credit hours instead of 12) may take those additional credit hours online.

Section 13. Student Support and Expectations

- 13.1. The COL will provide technical support for online courses as well as training opportunities for students as it relates to online learning. [Online orientation is available to all students who enroll in fully online or blended courses prior to taking their first online class.](#)
- 13.2. The University must provide adequate online alternatives to key support functions including tutoring and library databases and materials.
- 13.3. Students with grade appeals must follow rules outlined in the University Catalog.
- 13.4. Rules guiding student behavior in online courses mirror those outlined in the University Catalog, and students should refer to this as a guide for their behavior.

Policy History: Effective June 1, 2014; revised April 2016; revised December 2017; [revised March 2021.](#)

*Cabinet Position and Department: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.
Responsibility of Center for Online Learning.*