Guidelines for Undergraduate Online Instruction Courses and Submission of Proposals

The following guidelines obtain for new courses and for existing courses of which the instructor wishes to change the mode of instruction.

Note: First-time online instructors will be limited to a class size of no greater than 25 students. Should the instructor wish, after the initial offering, to increase the class size, this request must be brought back to the curriculum committee for review. (See "Change in class size" below.)

What online courses are:

Online instruction courses are those courses whose sole or primary mode of instruction is via the web; syllabus, "lectures" and other lessons are placed on the web; student-teacher and student-student interaction is conducted via threaded discussion, synchronous chatroom, and other interactive methods.

What online courses are not:

E-mail correspondence may not be the primary means of student-teacher communication. Instructors may not simply post lecture notes on a website and call it online instruction. Further, online courses are not the same as computer-assisted courses. Online courses presume interaction between an instructor and the students. Computer-assisted courses presume interaction between a student and a computer program. The latter might be then offered to large numbers of students. These guidelines do not address computer-assisted learning. Nor do they address "hybrid" courses, in which a course is conducted primarily in person with an online supplementary component.

All courses:

Platform

Courses should use a common platform (either SUNY Learning Network or local Blackboard). Because of the lack of support staff, instructors should not attempt to create their own web courses outside the confines of one of the existing platforms. Further, course materials and methods should be developed so as to be accessible from any type of computer, including Macintoshes and older, slower models. Instructors should keep modem speed in mind in developing course activities and materials.

Credit hour requirement:

Courses must cover the same amount of material as a comparable in-person course. Since credit hours cannot correspond to meeting hours in determining how many credits a course bears, faculty should use the amount of material to be covered as a gauge of credit hours. If the amount of material to be covered is comparable to the amount of material in terms of readings and "lecture materials" in an in-person 3-credit class, this would be a 3-credit course.

Interaction:

All online courses must have an interactive component. Either the course can be conducted seminar-style using online "discussions" or, if it is conducted lecture style, it must include provisions for significant student-student and student-teacher interaction. A TA may not be primary contact for students in the course.

Instructors may wish to consider incorporating one or more of these suggested learning activities:
- Student-mediated discussions
- Debate of controversial topics
- Group research projects
- Threaded discussions
- Peer reviewed projects
- Resource sharing activities
- "Virtual" field trips

Method of evaluation:

1. Exams and quizzes:
   Until the technology offers security options to ensure that the sender is the person who is registered for the course, instructors are encouraged to use additional writing assignments as a means of ensuring that the student who has taken

the exams and quizzes is indeed the student who is taking the class. Testing centers might be an option for larger classes that have exams.

2. Papers, reports and "presentations":
Research and other significant papers should be submitted either in PDF format electronically or via postal mail. Smaller written assignments may be emailed or posted in a designated place in the online course. Posting drafts or written "presentations" in a publicly viewable area would allow others to view and comment upon the submission to enhance the learning experience.

In-Person Meetings and Real-Time Communication:
The curriculum committee strongly encourages instructors to develop "hybrid" courses, which use both in-person meetings and online supplements, using the advantages of each for the benefit of student learning. Even for more strictly online courses, the committee encourages instructors to have mandatory in-person meetings to develop a stronger sense of community among the students in the class. These might include in-person recitations or an in-person get-together at the beginning of the semester to reduce the sense of disconnectedness that students often experience in online courses. In the event there are such requirements, students who are homebound or enrolled in a Study Abroad program should be given reasonable accommodation. In addition to asynchronous sessions, instructors are also encouraged to use synchronous chatroom-type sessions in which students are all logged into the class at the same time. (Note: some forums, such as the SUNY Learning Network, prohibit required in-person meetings or requirements that a student log on at a particular time.)

Student requirements
Students registered for online courses are subject to the same rules and regulations, as set forth in the University's official publications, including the *Undergraduate Bulletin*, *Student Handbook*, and semester Class Schedules as students registered for traditional, in-person courses.

The committee recognizes that online instruction is a new and fast-growing field using rapidly evolving technologies, in the use of which most faculty are inexpert at best. The committee wishes to be as flexible as possible in the university's initial stages of online delivery in allowing faculty to investigate which methods work best for their discipline and type of material. The committee will review these guidelines periodically to incorporate new information or experience.

NEW or REVISED ONLINE COURSE PROPOSAL FORM
(Revised September 2001)

Submitted by Department_____ Date:_____

Chairperson's Approval:_____

Undergraduate

Director's Approval:_____

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INSTRUCTIONS: Please respond fully to the questions below using this form or separate paper and attach a copy of a planned **syllabus** and a **list of assigned readings**. The syllabus should indicate the topics of the course on a week-by-week basis. Submit the proposal with **9 copies** to the Secretary of the Curriculum Committee.

Change of class size:

Instructors should initially plan to teach no more than 25 students in an online class. If the experience is successful and the instructor wishes to increase the class size, the instructor must:

> ➤Outline how the instructional methods will support a greater number of students;
> ➤Explain methods of testing that ensure against cheating;
> ➤Explain how student-student and instructor-student contact will be maintained.

Change of instruction method:

If the instructor proposes to teach an existing course, or section of a course, in an online environment, this is considered a change in mode of instruction and must be reviewed by the curriculum committee. The instructor should address all the issues below as though it were a new course.

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1. **Designator**:_____ **Number**:_____ **D.E.C. Category** (see question 16)_____

    Full Title:_____

2. **Course Description** (Enter exactly as it is to appear in the Undergraduate Bulletin. If the course is repeatable or not for credit in addition to any others, this should be noted.):

2. **Purpose Statement**: Please indicate what benefits for the student you hope to obtain by using this mode of instruction for delivering the material of the course.

3. **Learning Outcomes**: Identify the learning outcomes of the course and how these outcomes will be achieved.

4. **Assessment**: How will students be assessed as having met the learning outcomes.

5. *Please read Guidelines for Course Prerequisites at the end of this form.*
   Pre- or Corequisite(s), if any:

   Advisory Prerequisite(s), if any:

6. **Credits**: _____

7. **Initial term** offered: _____. **Initial instructor**:_____

   If designated instructor is unavailable, are there others who can teach the course?

8. **When will the course usually be offered**? (Check as appropriate.)

   Fall _____   Spring _____ Summer I _____   Summer II _____.

9. **Frequency of offering**, e.g. every semester, annually, alternate years, etc.: _____

10. **Estimated enrollment**: _____

11. **Interaction**: Please outline how student-student and student-teacher interaction will be conducted.

12. **Computer Use**: List any applications that students will be required to use in addition to the online system.

13. **Minimal Student Skills**: Indicate how you will ensure that that students registered for the class are informed of the system and user requirements, are appropriately set up, logged on, and prepared for the technical aspects of the course. (Offering the course through SLN resolves this.)

14. **Instructional Experience**: Please indicate your experience with online distance instruction or how you have gone about acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to design a course to be offered online. (Inexperienced instructors should seek the assistance of CELT and instructional design staff, as well as others who have experience with online instruction.)

15. **TA Use**: Note: TAs may be used in the same ways they are used in in-person classes. A TA may not be the primary contact for students in the course.
   Will teaching assistants be used in the course?   Yes____   No____.   If yes, please indicate whether graduate or undergraduate and explain how each will be used:

16. **D.E.C. Credit:** Is the course being submitted for inclusion in the Diversified Education Curriculum? Yes_____ No_____. If yes, which category?_____ Please explain how the course fulfills the objectives of the D.E.C. category. *Note: a course may fulfill only one category.*

17. **Course Level**.
   a. For what level and type of students is this course primarily intended, i.e., freshmen, sophomores, upper-division students, majors, non-majors, or pre-professional students?

   b. If the course is primarily for upper-division students, explain why it is an upper-division course, e.g., its format, difficulty of assignments, and required level of preparation. *(See the Guidelines for Course Levels at the end of this form.)*
18. **Relation to department offerings**: How does the course relate to the department's undergraduate and/or graduate programs? Does it replace any existing course? How does it complement other courses in the department's curriculum or integrate material from them?

19. **Relation to major or minor requirements**: The instructor should consider how the course relates to the department's undergraduate and/or graduate programs. Does the course replace an existing course? How does it complement other courses in the department's curriculum or integrate material from them? The chair of the department and undergraduate director of the major or director of the minor should request that the course be allowed toward the major or minor..

20. **Relation to the institution**: Please consider the new course's relation to undergraduate (or graduate offerings) in other programs throughout the University. Consider, for example, whether the course duplicates or overlaps with existing courses? Would the course appropriately be crosslisted with another department? Might it serve as a prerequisite for courses in other departments? Might it compete for resources now used for other purposes? Does the course affect major or minor requirements in any other department?
   Note: If other departments are affected (e.g., the course will change a prerequisite or a major requirement or considers material typically considered the domain of another department), the committee requires that the department consult with the affected departments about the proposed course and its ramifications and that the affected departments agree to the offering of the course.

   Note: If the proposed course duplicates an existing course, the instructor should offer the online class as another section of the existing course. (This information should be clearly communicated to students in the schedule.) See "Change in instruction method" above.