Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and Graduate Council (GC)
Policy on UC Santa Cruz Undergraduate and Graduate Online and Hybrid Courses

Introduction

Online instruction is increasingly being integrated into the national educational experience. Many instructors at UC Santa Cruz have already developed innovative ways of using technologies in online courses that provide high-quality learning experiences. As with any new approach to teaching at UC Santa Cruz, it is important to monitor the quality of the educational experience being offered. This oversight is the remit of the Committee on Courses of Instruction (CCI) for individual courses, Committees on Educational Policy (CEP), and Graduate Council (GC) for overall policy.

Departments and other course sponsoring agencies (CSA's) should consider where and how they think online courses are best used in their curricula. Departments and programs that have already had such conversations and developed policies around them will be well-placed to help individual instructors develop successful proposals for online courses with minimal additional steps. CEP and GC will work with departments that have not already developed such policies in doing so.

At UC Santa Cruz, faculty have developed online courses in asynchronous and synchronous formats[1]. Faculty have also begun to develop hybrid courses. For the purposes of this policy, these course formats are defined as follows:

> **Asynchronous Online**: Instruction that is characterized by its reliance on lectures, engagement activities, assessments, or other course materials that are pre-recorded and carefully pre-planned for students who will have minimal (or no) face-to-face[2], real-time interactions. Asynchronous courses do not have set meeting times that are advertised to students when they enroll; instead, students typically access the materials at a time of their choosing within the timeframe specified by the instructor (e.g., all of week three materials might be available on the first day of week three).

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[1] "Remote" instruction, as characterized by the primary modality of instruction used during the COVID-19 pandemic, is a modality that CEP and GC have reserved for use during emergencies when it is unfeasible for departments to request CCI approval for online or hybrid versions of courses.

[2] A face-to-face contact hour is defined as a lecture or discussion session taught by the primary instructor that a student can attend in a setting where the instructor is physically present, even if the session is simultaneously presented online. The determination of pedagogically significant face-to-face contact hours does not include office hours, time spent in exams proctored in person, or contact hours with secondary instructors, such as Teaching Assistants.

Synchronous Online: Instruction that is characterized by its use of videoconferencing software to facilitate face-to-face, real-time interaction with students. Similar to courses taught in person, synchronous online courses are also characterized by their use of set meeting times that are advertised to students when they enroll.

Hybrid: Instruction that includes multiple modalities in one course. These modalities are most commonly asynchronous and in-person, but may also be synchronous and in-person, or asynchronous and synchronous.

Asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid courses represent distinct approaches to teaching and learning given their reliance on educational technologies. All UC Santa Cruz courses are expected to meet the same high standards, and common characteristics of high-quality courses (regardless of modality) includes active engagement of a qualified instructor who has significant expertise in the subject of the course; regular and pedagogically significant interactions between instructor and students; and a means for students to regularly assess their progress towards achievement of course learning outcomes. All courses are expected to provide appropriate accommodations for students with accommodations approved by the Disability Resource Center (drc@ucsc.edu). Designing new hybrid or online courses presents a unique opportunity to develop courses that are highly accessible.

A successful online course presents educational experiences that differ from those associated with in-person courses, but provides students with an equivalent educational outcome to that of an in-person class. This equivalency should therefore apply to other aspects of educational policy. This guiding principle is relevant to the credit that students receive for taking the class and means that the approval pathway for an online class should (after the initial monitoring period) be the same as an in-person class.

CEP, GC, and CCI wish to encourage, not discourage, the creative use of technologies in online courses with the aim of improving student learning. If you are new to teaching in an online format, or looking for additional guidance, you are encouraged to reach out to Online Education (online@ucsc.edu). Supplemental information from instructors of online courses is requested in order to study the crucial aspects of a successful online offering; given the different online offering formats (asynchronous and synchronous), the supplemental sheets differ slightly to focus on the most pertinent information. For hybrid courses, in most cases only a brief supplemental checklist will be required. In some cases, such as when remote exams are being used in a hybrid course, CCI requires the instructor to provide additional information.

Asynchronous and Synchronous Online Course Approval Pathway
The course approval process is as follows:

1. Instructors first consult their department's policy about online courses in their curriculum, if one exists, and develop a course consistent with it.
2. Instructors work to obtain approval from their department for their course proposal.
3. Instructors may then contact the Office of Online Education (online@ucsc.edu) for consultation regarding development or support.
4. Instructors must then apply for approval from CCI, which requires an online supplemental form.
5. *Asynchronous courses only*: After three years, the department must submit a renewal request for the course to continue to be offered asynchronously.[3] Permanent approval can be requested after the first successful renewal cycle.

Hybrid Course Approval Pathway
The course approval process is as follows:
1. Instructors first consult their department's policy about hybrid courses in their curriculum, if one exists, and develop a course consistent with it.
2. Instructors work to obtain approval from their department for their course proposal.
3. Instructors may then contact the Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning (citl@ucsc.edu) or Online Education (online@ucsc.edu) for consultation regarding development or support.
4. Instructors must then request approval from CCI; in most cases this will only require a supplemental checklist.

A. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL OF ONLINE COURSES

1. Asynchronous online courses will be approved for up to three years after the initial offering of the course. Renewal will be based on CCI's assessment of a request for renewal.[4] Permanent approval can be requested after the first successful renewal cycle.

2. Required courses for undergraduate majors and minors, as well as graduate degrees, cannot be offered exclusively in an asynchronous online format. Required courses must be taught in-person at least once during any academic year in which they are offered. Exceptions to this policy can be requested and may be approved by CCI, and must be based on clear pedagogical advantages or on student demand.

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[3] In cases where there are multiple versions offered of the same approved course (for instance, WRIT-2), the department should address whether the versions will all continue to be offered. The department should also request voluntary feedback for the renewal request from the instructors who have taught the online versions.

[4] Grant-supported online courses such as those funded by Innovative Learning and Technology Initiative (ILTI) are subject to this approval process, but can fulfill their initial offering commitment regardless of the outcome of the three-year request for renewal.

3. All online and hybrid courses must be clearly identified in the schedule of classes. Courses will also be included in the course catalog.

4. All campus policies and regulations for courses and instruction (registration deadlines, academic integrity, grading, instructor availability, etc.) that apply to non-online courses also apply to fully online courses. Classes must conform to the standard 10-week (academic year) and Summer session schedules.

B. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION FOR ONLINE COURSE PROPOSALS

The supplemental questions are available on CEP, GC and CCI's websites and/or available in the CAT system.

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