

Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) & Graduate Council (GC) Policy on UCSC 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 UCSC, 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), CEP and GC (for overall policy).

Departments and other course-offering academic units 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 formats¹. 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-face², 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).

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.

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.

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. 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.

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

See following document.

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.

CEP/GC/CCI Supplemental Questions: Asynchronous, Synchronous, Hybrid

Asynchronous Online Supplemental Questions

Asynchronous: 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, 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).

Open-ended Questions

1. Explain why this course is appropriate in an asynchronous online format. If there are student learning outcomes that may be addressed through the offering format, explain them here.
2. Discuss the placement of the course in the department or program's curriculum and whether it is an undergraduate major, undergraduate minor, or graduate degree requirement (note that required courses must be offered in a non-asynchronous format at least once during any year that they are offered). If the course has an in-person counterpart, please discuss how the two versions would be scheduled in relation to each other, their expected enrollment levels, or any key differences between the two versions.
3. Describe the methods or approaches used to facilitate interaction between students to develop a sense of community. This is especially important in asynchronous courses because of the reduced reliance on face-to-face interactions. Examples include using and actively participating in discussion forums (text, video or audio); designing assignments that require peer-to-peer interaction; and creating a climate that is welcoming to all students. More examples of best practices related inclusion and equity are [available](#).
4. Describe instructor presence in a typical week for the course. Explain how the instructor engages with students through pre-recorded video(s), in discussion forums or through written feedback on submitted work, during office hours or other face-to-face interactions, feedback on students' assignments, or through other means.
5. For courses supported with Teaching Assistants, describe how Teaching Assistants engage with students through discussion forums, secondary discussion sections, feedback on submitted work, or through other means. If the course is not supported with Teaching Assistants, reply with "not applicable".

6. Describe the resources and structure provided to students to help them navigate, make progress, and succeed in this asynchronous course. Examples include: using an introduction module; adopting a modular course structure; hosting a synchronous meeting to orient students to the course early in the quarter and recording it for students who cannot attend; holding office hours at different times of the day to better accommodate students in different time zones; including time estimates for activities and assignments.
7. Explain how exams, such as midterms and finals, are administered and explain what steps are taken to maintain academic integrity. If the course uses remote proctoring for exams, information regarding the method for remote proctoring (i.e., ProctorU or Zoom-based proctoring) must be included on the syllabus. Instructors are encouraged to provide an in-person option for students to take exams on the UCSC campus whenever possible.

Check-box Statements (required)

- UCSC provides instructors with resources to assist with the design and development of courses that rely on technology to facilitate student learning; the primary contact for this is Online Education (online@ucsc.edu). I am aware of these resources and will make use of them as needed.
 - Courses that rely on technology to facilitate student learning provide opportunities to expand accessibility beyond what is typically accomplished through in-person learning. Videos must be captioned, course readings made compatible with screen-readers, live transcripts added, and so on. I am aware of these resources and will make my course accessible to all students.
 - Instructor presence is critical for student success. Teaching an asynchronous course shifts instructor responsibility more heavily to written and recorded engagement with students. This course will be designed such that instructor engagement with students will remain a central component of the educational experience.
 - I pledge that the course will be designed such that TA workload remains within contract limits.
 - I commit to use technologies approved for teaching by ITS and other campus oversight bodies. If I wish to adopt a new technology that does not appear on that list for use in a course, I commit to ensuring that the technology meets campus criteria for accessibility, privacy of student data, and data security. If you have questions about this, please contact its@ucsc.edu or fitc@ucsc.edu to discuss the technological tool in question.
 - Asynchronous course content, and in particular pre-recorded video, occasionally requires updating. Instructors are encouraged to review and update their course content as needed.
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Synchronous Online Supplemental Questions

Synchronous: 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.

Open-ended Questions

1. Explain why this course is appropriate in a synchronous online format. If there are student learning outcomes that may be addressed through the offering format, explain them here.
2. Discuss the placement of the course in the department or program's curriculum and whether it is an undergraduate major, undergraduate minor, or graduate degree requirement. If the course has an in-person counterpart, please discuss how the two versions would be scheduled in relation to each other, their expected enrollment levels, or any key differences between the two versions.
3. Describe the methods or approaches used to facilitate interaction between students to develop a sense of community. This can be accomplished through the use of active learning, small group work in breakout rooms or outside of scheduled class time, peer-review assignments, using ice-breakers early in the course, and so on.
4. Describe instructor presence in a typical week for the course. How is class time used, and how does the instructor engage with students outside of class, such as through feedback on assignments or in office hours?
5. Describe the resources and structure provided to students to help them navigate and succeed in this synchronous course. Examples include: using an introduction module; adopting a clear course structure; using the first synchronous meeting to orient students to the course; recording some or all synchronous sessions for students who are unable to attend; holding office hours twice per week and holding one in the morning and the other in the late afternoon to better accommodate students in different timezones.
6. Explain how exams, such as midterms and finals, are administered and explain what steps are taken to maintain academic integrity. If the course uses remote proctoring for synchronously-administered exams, information regarding the method for remote proctoring (i.e., ProctorU or Zoom-based proctoring) must be included on the syllabus.

Instructors are encouraged to provide an in-person option for students to take exams on the UCSC campus whenever possible.

Check-box Statements (required)

- UCSC provides instructors with resources to assist with the design and development of courses that rely on technology to facilitate student learning; the primary contact for this is Online Education (online@ucsc.edu). I am aware of these resources and will make use of them as needed.
- Courses that rely on technology to facilitate student learning provide opportunities to expand accessibility beyond what is typically accomplished through in-person learning. Videos must be captioned, course readings made compatible with screen-readers, live transcripts added, and so on. I am aware of these resources and will make my course accessible to all students.
- I commit to use technologies approved for teaching by ITS and other campus oversight bodies. If I wish to adopt a new technology that does not appear on that list for use in a course, I commit to ensuring that the technology meets campus criteria for accessibility, privacy of student data, and data security. If you have questions about this, please contact its@ucsc.edu or fitc@ucsc.edu to discuss the technological tool in question.
- I pledge that the course will be designed such that TA workload remains within contract limits.

Hybrid Course Checklist

Hybrid: A term used generally to describe models of teaching and learning that include multiple modalities in one course. These modalities might be: 1) asynchronous online and in-person (most common); 2) synchronous online and in-person; and, 3) online asynchronous and synchronous.

For the purpose of the hybrid course approval process, courses that take place with at least 50% of the standard contact hours in-person can use the hybrid course checklist below⁵.

Courses that will not have at least 50% of the standard contact hours in person should use either the Asynchronous Online or the Synchronous Online course approval processes. Determinations for the appropriate form should be made based on the dominant offering mode for the proposed course. To seek guidance on form selection, contact online@ucsc.edu.

⁵ Class time is defined as the number of instructional hours per week. An appropriate measure is the equivalent time spent in-person for a standard, fully in-person version of a course of the same credit count.

Checklist (required)

- In a typical week in this course, at least 50% of class time includes required face-to-face interaction between the instructor and students. Face-to-face interaction should primarily take place in-person, but may occasionally use Zoom or other video-conferencing technologies.
- Midterm or final exams, where present, are administered using the in-person component, and no high-stakes exams are administered using remote proctoring. However, if midterm or final exams are administered remotely, using remote proctoring, or delivered in a take-home format, explain what steps are taken to maintain academic integrity. [TEXT BOX for explanation that will go to CCI for review]
- UCSC provides instructors with resources to assist with the design and development of courses that rely on technology to facilitate student learning. Resources are available through the Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning (citl@ucsc.edu) and Online Education (online@ucsc.edu). I am aware of these resources and will make use of them as needed.
- Courses that rely on technology to facilitate student learning provide opportunities to expand accessibility beyond what is typically accomplished through in-person learning. Videos can be captioned, course readings made compatible with screen-readers, live transcripts added, and so on. I am aware of these resources and will aim to make my course accessible to all students.
- I commit to use technologies approved for teaching by ITS and other campus oversight bodies. If I wish to adopt a new technology that does not appear on that list for use in a course, I commit to ensuring that the technology meets campus criteria for accessibility, privacy of student data, and data security. If you have questions about this, please contact its@ucsc.edu or fitc@ucsc.edu to discuss the technological tool in question.
- I pledge that the course will be designed such that TA workload remains within contract limits.