

WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ONLINE AND HYBRID/BLENDED COURSES APPROVED May 19, 2005

This policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate online and hybrid/blended courses.

A. Definitions

1. Online Course – an online course is a course taught 100% online. Instructors may supplement this course with non-mandatory in-person meetings.
2. Blended Course – a course that meets approximately no less than 25% and approximately no more than 75% online.
3. Supplemental Course – a traditional course that meets in the classroom 100% of the time but uses BlackBoard for supplemental posting of course materials, facilitating discussions, extending office hours etc.
4. Course Management Software – computer software such as BlackBoard that is used to deliver online, blended, and supplemental courses.

Quality web-based teaching and learning is learner-centered and fosters meaning-making discourse; moves from knowledge transmission to learner-controlled systems; provides for reciprocal teaching; encourages active participation and knowledge construction, promotes active learning and such high level thinking skills as analysis, synthesis and evaluation; allows group collaboration and cooperative learning; provides multiple levels of interaction; and focuses on real-world problem-solving.

The number of online courses to be taught by each faculty member per semester or summer is based on academic programmatic need with the approval of the department chair, college dean, and the Provost and Executive Vice President. No faculty will be allowed to teach more than 2 courses or 6 credits, whichever is greater on-line in each of the two semesters, or one course or 3 credits, whichever is greater, in each of the summer sessions, unless in extraordinary circumstances and upon the express approval of the department Chair, college Dean, and the Provost and Executive Vice President.

B. Online Courses Development/Approval Process

1. New Courses

The online course approval process originates in the academic departments. All new online courses must go through the established practice and process at the University for the approval of new courses. They must conform to all departmental and University standards for content, pedagogy, and academic rigor.

2. Existing Courses

Faculty wishing to offer existing courses online must submit their requests to the department chair or program director as part of the process for developing and approving year-long teaching schedules by the program director, department chair, college dean, and provost and executive vice president. Courses listed in the University's master schedule of classes to be offered as

online or hybrid/blended courses cannot be changed to a traditional classroom setting at the beginning of registration or any time during the semester, and vice versa.

3. Hybrid/Blended Courses

A. A hybrid or blended course is defined as any course that meets both online and in a traditional classroom setting and also uses web-based teaching and learning components. Using technology such as BlackBoard or other course management software for such purposes as posting course materials, communicating with students outside of class, etc., does not constitute a hybrid course. Hybrid/blended courses must only be offered with prior approval from department chairpersons, program directors, and college deans.

B. Hybrid courses must be listed as such in the Master Schedule. Faculty are not permitted to change course modality after the beginning of registration or at any time during the semester or summer, and vice versa.

C. Hybrid courses must meet the same academic rigor and standards as those offered fully online or in a traditional classroom setting.

C. Online Faculty Professional Responsibilities

All online instructors must adhere to the following professional responsibilities:

1. Careful preparation of the material with which the course deals, aimed at the appropriate level, following approved guidelines established by the respective curriculum committee at the departmental, college, and University levels.

2. On the first day of the semester, the instructor will have the following material posted:

- Welcome letter (posted at <http://www.wpunj.edu/irt/teambb/welcomeletters/>)
- Syllabus, course objectives, course outline, methods of evaluation, major teaching procedures, course requirements, instructor's office location and hours (posted in the course management software [Blackboard]). Instructors will announce where to find these materials.

3. The instructor shall present the subject matter online in an appropriate manner, which reflects the intent and emphasis of the course.

4. The instructor shall give online examinations and/or papers that reflect the emphasis of the course and which are designed to provide both the instructor and the student with information about their respective progress. Such examinations and papers should be given at the proper time, following established University policies.

5. A schedule of online class "meetings" (discussion group meetings, assignment due dates, etc.) will be posted in BlackBoard on the first day of class. In the event of illness or other reason for cancellation of such meetings, the faculty member shall notify the department chairperson and class via an announcement in BlackBoard as early as possible. The faculty member shall either arrange to reschedule discussion group meetings and/or assignment due dates or participate in them asynchronously following his/her return to the class.

6. The instructor should log on and “meet” (send messages and provide feedback on assignments) with his or her online class at least twice a week for the full contact hours allotted to the course based on the number of credit hours it carries.

7. Every online faculty member shall be available to confer with students, in his or her classes or during his or her office hours, concerning their progress, and, where applicable, with his or her advisees concerning their programs. Online faculty must offer a combination of on campus and virtual (online) office hours. Office hours shall be posted online and announced to students. Since individual students may have classes at the time of the announced hours, it may be necessary to arrange additional conference time by mutual agreement between students and faculty members.

During the periods of registration and advisement, faculty members engaged in academic advisement are expected to be available for student conferences outside of the regular office hours. The appropriate department chairs and deans determine such times and days.

8. Attendance regulations and the maintenance of appropriate records shall follow established University policies. All grades must be submitted on the specified dates. Online faculty members must advise students that their attendance is measured by logging on a minimum of two days a week and participating in discussions and/or submitting assignments.

9. Faculty members shall not knowingly violate, or attempt to violate or bypass, duly promulgated and approved University policy and regulations.

10. Each faculty member shall, in the performance of his or her University duties, conduct himself or herself in a manner consistent with his or her professional responsibilities.

11. Full-time faculty members are expected to continue to assume their share of committee/service assignments and student advisement responsibilities in accordance with University and department policies.

12. Full time faculty members must attend committee and faculty meetings. Teaching online does not excuse faculty members from participating in person in committee work and faculty meetings.

13. Faculty members shall be subject to periodic evaluations concerning teaching and professional competence, according to established University policies. Such evaluations shall include both student and peer evaluations, using forms prepared by the faculty.

Faculty members who teach online and/or hybrid classes are not exempt from these responsibilities. Online instructors must maintain their participation in department/college/university committee/service work and also offer in-person office hours. Substituting online for some in-person office hours can only be done with approval from chairpersons and college deans.

D. Faculty/Course Evaluation

Faculty members shall be subject to periodic evaluations concerning teaching and professional competence, according to established University policies. Such evaluations shall include both student and peer evaluations, using forms prepared by the faculty, approved by the respective department, the Union and the Administration.

A. The instructor teaching a fully online course will post a link to the online student

evaluation form. An Announcement@ regarding the student evaluations (when they will occur, how to fill out and submit them, etc.) will be sent automatically through the online course management tools and will be facilitated by Instruction and Research Technology (IRT).

B. Blended/Hybrid courses will be evaluated either in-person or online during a regular class session.

C. Evaluations will be posted during the recommended weeks of the semester and remain available for a one-week window, thus ensuring access to all online students.

D. Completed evaluations will automatically be sent to IRT electronically for transmission to the respective departments and faculty.

E. After grades have been submitted for the semester, summary evaluation sheets of instructors will automatically be sent to individual faculty members. In cases involving retention, tenure, promotion or range adjustments, copies of the summary evaluation sheets will be sent to the respective department chairperson for inclusion in their portfolios.

Approved May 19, 2005

Chernoh M. Sesay

Provost and Executive Vice President