Online Education Policy

Abstract

SF State recognizes that most university classes use the Internet to some degree and some university courses (or classes) are conducted entirely online. This policy has been created to promote the continuation of a high-quality educational experience for students, faculty members, and the SF State community through the use of online resources.

Key Words: fully online, hybrid, learning mode

Author/Source: Academic Policies Committee with consultation from the Online Education Committee

Responsible Unit: Academic Technology, DUEAP

History

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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Revisions are largely in response to the changing federal definition of online education and subsequent changes in accreditation requirements.</td>
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<td>In addition, other minor updates were made.</td>
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<td>Added the definition for learning management system and policy language on student workload and recording synchronous sessions.</td>
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<td>Added additional definitions for clarity, addressed remote proctoring (third party and otherwise), and addressed use of student video in</td>
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<td>remote class sessions. Specified synchronous class sessions must be scheduled within standardized time blocks.</td>
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• Modifying definitions including updating the name of the Romberg Tiburon center, combining the definitions of face-to-face and technology enhanced classes, clarifying that fully online courses can be asynchronous or synchronous, and updating DUEAP name.

• Clarify that it is a department committee that approves learning modes for course sections offered by a department.

• Provide greater flexibility for faculty to allow a limited change in class meetings from face-to-face to online in order to accommodate unexpected circumstances or provide the equivalent of a minimum of 15 weeks of instruction.

Rationale

*SF State recognizes that most university classes use the Internet to some degree and some university courses (or classes) are conducted entirely online. This policy has been created to promote the continuation of a high-quality educational experience for students, faculty members, and the SF State community through the use of online resources.*

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Policy
General Assumptions

The goal of online education is to expand educational opportunities for SF State students by offering courses with high quality and convenience and flexibility. SF State is dedicated to providing all students with an accessible education.

- The addition of online classes, content, and activities to SF State's curriculum has been a positive contribution to SF State's academic environment and is consistent with its present mission and role as a public educational institution.

Regardless of mode of instruction, all courses shall abide by the same academic policies and laws.

Definitions

Definitions of Courses

- In a **face-to-face course**, with the exception of field trips, all class sessions and other meetings are physically held on SF State campuses; including, but not limited to, the main campus and satellite locations. Face-to-face courses, in which students attend all class sessions in an assigned face-to-face environment, may be technology-enhanced, with online technology primarily used to engage the students with the curriculum and learning process, but not to replace physical meetings between the instructor and the students.

- **Hybrid courses** are a mixture of online and face-to-face class sessions. The university courseschedule specifies the number and location of face-to-face or synchronous classes, or other meetings. The online sessions may be asynchronous, synchronous, or both. A course must meet in person more than half of the course meetings in order to be considered an in-person course for the purposes of major program status.

- **HyFlex courses** are class sessions that allow students to choose whether to attend classes face-to-face or online, (e.g., synchronous, asynchronous, bichronous).

- In a **fully online course**, instructors provide instructional support and students complete course requirements through a variety of modalities that are unrestricted by physical place. The online sessions may be asynchronous, synchronous, or both.

- **Asynchronous online courses** do not meet face-to-face, do not receive a room reservation on campus, and do not require meetings with students at the same time or at a particular time.

- **Bichronous online courses** include asynchronous and synchronous class sessions.

- **Synchronous online courses** meet at a scheduled time in an online environment, such as a web conference.

- **Distance education** courses include hybrid with less than 50% of meetings in-person, HyFlex, asynchronous, bichronous, synchronous and face-to-face courses that are recorded so that students can view the session remotely either synchronously or asynchronously. Courses that use lecture capture and that expect students’ participation in person are not considered distance education.

Definitions of Programs

- Online programs are those in which students complete 50% or more of the units for a major, minor or certificate using distance education courses. A course must meet online more than half of the course meetings in order to be considered a distance education course for the purposes of major program status. Programs in this category must be
approved on campus, and the Chancellor’s Office and WASC will be notified. WASC may also review the program through the substantive change process. During institutional reaccreditation, all programs in this category are separately reviewed during the reaccreditation process.

- The difference in online and distance education programs is in the level of flexibility; distance education programs are the more flexible. Distance education programs are those in which students may complete 50% or more of the units for a major, minor or certificate using distance education courses. Programs in this category must be approved on campus, and the Chancellor’s Office and WASC will be notified. WASC may review the program through the substantive change process. During institutional reaccreditation, all programs in this category are separately reviewed during the reaccreditation process.

- Fully online programs are those in which students complete 100% of the major, minor or certificate requirements using fully online courses. Programs in this category must be approved on campus, and the Chancellor’s Office and WASC will be notified. WASC may also review the program through the substantive change process. During institutional reaccreditation, all programs in this category are reviewed during the reaccreditation process.

- Emergency remote instruction is used when the campus environment is not available to support traditional instruction, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-21, and faculty and students are forced to use a variety of technologies to conduct teaching and learning activities.

- Remote proctoring: Remote proctoring is the process of monitoring students while they take an exam or other academic assessment in an online setting. This may include a person (i.e., proctor) synchronously viewing students, video recordings of students taking an exam, the use of artificial intelligence to notify proctors or instructors to scrutinize a students’ synchronous video or a portion of an asynchronous recording, and the collection of biometric or other personal data.

- Third-party remote proctoring: Third-party remote proctoring services are provided by organizations external to the California State University system.

- Learning Management Systems (LMS): A learning management system is an online system that provides a variety of assessment, communication, information and file-sharing opportunities in support of the teaching and learning process. SF State’s current LMS is called iLearn. All classes in all delivery modes are provided with an iLearn site to support student learning.

Quality and Educational Effectiveness

- All online education programs and courses shall be consistent with the educational mission of the University.

- Tenured / tenure-track faculty are essential to the integrity of any academic program.

- Faculty members shall use teaching practices that are appropriate to the mode of instruction. The selection of course material is the purview of the faculty member teaching the course. The university shall provide professional development and support for faculty as necessary to ensure a successful educational experience for students. Departments shall ensure that faculty assigned to teach online courses are appropriately prepared.

- Courses with the same course prefix, number and title shall adhere to the same student learning outcomes no matter the mode of delivery.

- Departments, schools and programs must monitor and ensure that student learning is
comparable for all students in courses and sections taught in different learning modes.

- When assessing program learning outcomes, programs must monitor and ensure that student learning in the program is comparable for all students completing program requirements in distance education courses, hybrid courses and face-to-face courses.

**Communication & Support**

- Faculty members shall designate a primary method or methods of communication for use in each class.

- Faculty members shall define a reasonable response time with respect to answering student communications through the designated method and provide adequate and appropriate opportunities for timely interaction between the faculty member and students.

- Faculty members shall make clear the standards of conduct that are expected in all class and university environments, such as classroom or Internet etiquette. Students shall abide by the official Student Code of Conduct.

- Faculty members shall define student expectations in the course syllabus including, but not limited to,
  - Attendance and participation in class activities
  - Policies or consequences for late or missing assignments
  - Appropriate interactions between students and students and faculty for the course modality, such as whether technologies such as chat or the learning management system will be used in the class.
  - Access to specialized hardware, software, or platforms like Portfolium for eportfolios, or Twitter for social media or
  - Technical skills required to succeed.

- Guidelines and policies that apply to any course also apply here. The Course Syllabus policy (S15-257) should be reviewed for a full list of requirements.

- Opportunities should be provided for faculty to offer input on major changes in course technologies.

**Student Services**

- Student services need to be accessible to students who may not be coming to campus.

Units on campus who provide services need to make clear on websites how their services can be accessed remotely. Such services include but are not limited to:

- Undergraduate advising center
- College advising centers
- EOPP and Metro for those student populations
• Departments must provide information to students about how they will be able to access advising for the program remotely, as well as how they will be able to access other department-provided support such as tutoring.

### Student Assessment in Courses

Assessment strategies will be consistent with course goals and objectives and clearly stated for students.

• The use of third-party remote proctoring is not allowed in SF State courses starting in the Spring 2021 semester. Exceptions such as for the culminating experience, capstone, or certification exams at the undergraduate or graduate level which require the use of third-party remote proctoring, may be granted by the college dean or designee in consultation with Academic Technology, the Center for Equity & Excellence in Teaching & Learning, and Disability Programs and Resource Center.

### Student Workload and Credit Hour Requirements

• All distance education courses must be designed to provide students with the appropriate hours of direct and out-of-class activities expected for the number of units and type of course, as defined in the credit hour policy.

• The course syllabus (see Course Syllabus Policy S15-257) must communicate the number of hours of direct and out-of-class work expected of students, in accordance with the definition of the credit hour. Courses that use an asynchronous learning mode for part or all of the class sessions must communicate the asynchronous class activities that represent direct instruction as well as those that represent out-of-class work in the syllabus. This information may also be communicated on the course website (e.g., iLearn Learning Management System).

• The faculty teaching support center (currently the Center for Equity and Excellence in Teaching and Learning) will provide guidance to faculty about how to estimate the equivalence of asynchronous learning activities that considers the variety of types of assignments and diversity of students.
Use of Student Video in Synchronous Courses

- The use of student video in web conferencing (such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams) can be required by faculty to support engaged learning and ongoing informal formative assessment in an online synchronous environment.

- When faculty require video sharing, students may request a video sharing exemption from the faculty member for concerns such as: privacy, equitability, or accessibility concerns, or during periods of emergency remote instruction. If reasonable accommodations based on disability are needed the student should meet with DPRC.

- However, when direct observation is required for course completion such as in performing arts or classes requiring presentations or supervision (e.g., health sciences clinical skills, credential student teaching), faculty may deny a student’s request for exemption.

- If students are required to share their video, the course schedule and the syllabus (see Course Syllabus Policy S15-257) must indicate this requirement.

Recording Synchronous Class Sessions

- Any time that a class session is recorded by the instructor during a synchronous class session, students will be notified. If students do not want their likeness, words, or their name during class participation included in the recorded class session, students must be given the option to turn off their video and anonymize themselves during session recordings.

- Recordings will be available for viewing subject to the following: Only students enrolled in the subject class may view the recording.

- Students may not post or use the recordings in any form (e.g., audio transcript, chat transcript, screen shots) in any other setting (e.g., social media) outside of the class, for any purpose. Students who violate this will be subject to student discipline, up to and including expulsion.

- With the exception of peer reviews of courses, faculty who wish to use recordings of synchronous class sessions outside of the current class must receive the consent and signed recording release forms from all students present in the class session. The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs process provides a university-approved recording release form.

- Students are not allowed to capture audio, photos, or video from class sessions on their own devices without explicit permission from the instructor or unless specifically requested by DPRC. Recordings cannot be shared by students without explicit consent of the faculty member and anyone present.

- The information in this section of the policy must be communicated to students in the course syllabus (see Course Syllabus Policy S15-257).
Course and Program Approval

• Faculty members teaching online courses have the same control and ownership of the substantive and intellectual content of their courses that faculty have with any other course.

Through expertise in their field, faculty and departments are best suited for determining the content, pedagogy, and modality of individual courses offered in the degree programs. In planning for the next semester’s course schedule, deans provide their departments with the profile of course modalities needed by their college, based on University needs. This profile could be, for instance, seventy percent of all courses should be face-to-face or as detailed as General Education courses should be primarily face-to-face or first-year courses should include a variety of modalities.

• After receiving the information from the dean on the desired modality profile, each department, using the internal decision-making process that best aligns with their department standards, decides how to best meet that profile with their faculty, their training for various modalities, and course assignments as closely as possible. Decisions about the modality of individual courses should be made by departments in a collaborative process with appropriate administrators.

• In case the Department/Department Chair and individual faculty member disagree about the modality of a given course/section, the Chair and faculty member will work with the Dean (or appropriate administrator) to resolve the disagreement, with the focus being enhancing effective student learning.

• Although courses must be using the learning modes approved by the department.

• The learning mode of a course cannot be switched to another learning mode after registration has started, except with college approval. Students plan their schedule based on course learning mode and that information must be reliable.

• Departments should seek student input about their satisfaction with the learning modes of the course and use that information to make necessary improvements or changes to approved learning modes.

An instructor teaching a face-to-face course may adapt to unforeseen circumstances by teaching a maximum of 15% of the class session during the semester using an online learning mode. Similarly, an instructor teaching a synchronous online course may adapt to unforeseen circumstances by teaching a maximum of 15% of the class sessions during the semester as asynchronous online sessions. Department chairs, school directors, and students must be notified of the change in learning mode.

• Only the president, or their designee, can authorize a campus-wide change in modality due to unforeseen or emergency circumstances.

• Any degree, minor, certificate, or credential program, new or existing, in which 50% or more of the program units will be delivered using distance education courses must consult with the Division of Undergraduate Education and Academic Planning to begin the proposal and review process.
• No individual, program, or department shall agree in a contract with any private or public entity to deliver courses or programs on behalf of SF State without prior university approval.

• Excluding students studying outside of the United States, unless there is a state authorization agreement, students enrolled in distance education programs must be located in California.

Recognition

• All classes are subject to the same principles of peer review and student evaluation for purposes of the Retention, Tenure, and Promotion processes. All courses shall be equally recognized and rewarded when considering curriculum and professional development.

Scheduling

• Information about the approved learning modes for a course must be communicated centrally and scheduled using one of the approved learning modes. Department and college schedulers are responsible for ensuring that the learning mode indicated in the student information system (currently Campus Solutions) is approved for the course.

• Academic Resources will be responsible for ensuring that the learning mode is accurately represented in the class schedule. Academic Resources will audit the allowed learning mode during the schedule building process to verify that the learning mode is approved.

• Synchronous class meetings must be scheduled within the standard time blocks and can be scheduled anytime within the specified time block. Academic Resources will audit the schedule of any synchronous class meetings.

• The SF State Bulletin and official Class Schedule shall provide tips and suggestions for students considering taking online courses.

• It is the responsibility of the student to take into account the instructional mode, to review the guidelines tips and suggestions on online courses, and to have access to required technological resources.

Faculty Workload

• Class size, course classification, and corresponding faculty workload and should be comparable to courses taught in a face-to-face mode, taking into account the level of interaction between faculty and students in the course environment, as well as the physical class sizes common on the campus.
Accessibility

- All classes shall comply with applicable law and policies in effect at the time, including but not limited to: the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as Amended (2008), Section 504 and 508 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, California Government Code 11135, and CSU Executive Order 1111.

- All students shall have access to the course evaluation process.

Intellectual Property and Copyright

- Intellectual property created during the development of online courses shall follow the Intellectual Property Policy that SF State has in place at the time the materials are created.

- In the event that a faculty member is not able to complete a course due to unforeseen causes, such as sickness or relocation, the university administration may grant another faculty member access to the class roster, class syllabus, and points or grades earned by students up to the time the original faculty member stopped teaching, and any other class materials available to the administration. While the new instructor may use this material to complete the class for that semester, the new instructor and the university administration must honor the intellectual property rights of the original instructor.

Signed Memo:
S22-264 memo