

Approved by:

The College of the Environment – Curriculum Committee, May 5, 2023

The College of the Environment – Policy Committee, May 10, 2023

The College of the Environment – All-College Vote, June 5, 2023

College of the Environment Class Modality Policy

1. Guiding Principles:

The CENV expectation is that Bellingham-campus courses offered during the academic year will be offered in a face-to-face modality, supporting the character of the residential experience at Western. The Salish Sea Region courses and academic programs, as well as any other degrees specifically designed and approved for online or hybrid delivery, may include substantive remote modalities, as defined by the University. Departments may develop and seek approval for online certificates and degrees, subject to appropriate accreditation requirements.

1.1 When reviewing and approving a class for alternate modality:

1. CENV is committed to substantive and regular interaction and contact among students and between students and the instructor of record regardless of modality.
2. Face-to-face instruction is the core modality for students in the College, and there is an expectation that any proposal for an alternative modality will offer a compelling pedagogical rationale for that modality.
3. Classes taught in alternative modalities must meet the same student learning outcomes as the face-to-face modality of that class.
4. The principles outlined in this document apply to the delivery of all proposed and previously approved courses taught in online and hybrid modalities.
5. The development and maintenance of documents and use of these documents to evaluate and approve online and hybrid courses are the purviews of the College Curriculum Committee.

1.2 CENV will track modalities of courses scheduled

CENV is committed to maintaining the face-to-face modality of its Bellingham-campus academic programs. The intent behind maintaining the face-to-face modality on the

Bellingham campus is a) to ensure that students enrolled in College of the Environment programs offered on the Bellingham campus can be confident that the overwhelming majority (at least 90%) of the courses they need for their degree will be face-to-face, and b) to help departments be confident that students cannot create degree pathways where over fifty percent of their credits are from courses offered in alternative modalities, which may require separate approval and accreditation. The following actions will be taken to monitor course modality impacts on academic programs and student experiences:

1. The CENV course modality proposal form will require instructors to describe how the alternative modality may potentially impact the modality of the academic programs in which the course is listed.
2. During scheduling each year, the Department Chairs and Program Directors will have discretion to decide course modality, choosing from among the approved modalities for each course. A course approved for an alternative modality does not always need to be scheduled as such.
3. Chairs will strive to schedule at least ninety percent of Bellingham-campus academic year courses as face-to-face modality each year, while knowing that extenuating circumstances (e.g., faculty leaves, faculty disability accommodations, access to diverse and highly qualified non-tenure track instructors) can impact modality both during initial scheduling and due to emergent needs.
4. At the end of each academic year, the Chairs and Program Directors will report to the Dean a summary of the modalities of courses taught the preceding academic year to assess the impact alternative modalities may have had on specific academic programs and student pathways through them. If a potential impact is indicated that may continue into the next academic year, then the Dean and the Chair or Program Director of the affected academic program will develop a plan to remediate the potential impact.

1.2 Department or academic program modality policy

Each department or academic program may adopt its own modality policy. When developing its own policy, a department or academic program must adhere to the criteria and expectations outlined in this document.

2. Minimum Criteria for Courses with Alternative Modality

All courses approved for alternative modality for delivery in any term, for any degree must successfully demonstrate:

1. *A compelling rationale for hybrid and online modality.* In the case of online classes taught in the summer, enhancing student access constitutes a compelling rationale for online modality. For online or hybrid classes taught during the academic year, general student access alone will not be considered an adequate justification; justification for hybrid or online modality should articulate pedagogical benefits of the requested modality for that specific class.
2. *Sufficient total work and contact time.* In accordance with Washington state policy, there should be three hours per week of total student work per credit hour for a standard 10-week course (in practice, one “hour” is equal to approximately 50 minutes of actual contact time). Furthermore, contact time must follow WWU’s Academic Coordinating Commission credit-hour policy, which provides guidance on the amount of contact time (at least one hour per week per credit) and states that contact hours include direct instruction in the form of synchronous meetings and/or instructor-created recordings and readings, as well as regular and substantive interaction.
3. *Sufficient regular and substantive interaction.* The proposal should carefully outline how course components will ensure substantive and regular interaction with the instructor and provide evidence that the overall amount of work required is appropriate for the number of credits assigned for the course.

Recorded video lectures may not be proposed as the only form of instructor interaction. At least 25% of contact time each week for all classes must include substantive interaction with the instructor. Substantive interaction is defined by the distance learning policy of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities¹, as a combination of at least two of the following modes of instruction:

- Conducting direct synchronous instruction
- Providing detailed feedback on a student's work (not simply a grade)

¹ <https://nwccu.app.box.com/s/mafhw08hcz4jrtj9nrz9dglr2f8vgqa>

- Providing tailored and contemporaneous information or responses to questions about the content of a course or competency in the form of written or recorded communication
- Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency
- Using other modes of instruction as described in the NWCCU distance learning policy and those that may be uniquely appropriate to the class

Independent asynchronous work, for example, reading course materials; listening to podcasts; organizing notes; watching videos not created by the instructor; and completing assignments, is considered to be "homework." Faculty should take care to discriminate between "contact time" and "homework" in proposing an alternative modality course.

4. *An accounting of resource requirements.* This should include a list of hardware, software, and other technology infrastructure tools required of the faculty instructor and students (e.g., computer, and stable internet connection, specialized equipment or software), as well as any technical or pedagogical training required for the instructor to effectively teach the class in an alternative modality.

APPENDIX I – Remote Modality Definitions

Course modality definitions

Alternative Modality: Online or hybrid modality.

Face-to-Face: Instruction is accomplished through regularly scheduled in-person class meetings. Alternative instruction may be employed on a limited basis to meet varying pedagogical needs. In this case, an account of alternative instructional time should be documented in the syllabus.

Hybrid: Instructional time is divided between face-to-face and online (in-person meetings are required, but less face-to-face time is included in the regular course schedule, replaced by alternative instruction methods including online instruction). At least 25 percent of instructional time should be scheduled face-to-face. Courses with classroom-based instruction linked to classrooms in multiple locations (the ITV model) are considered hybrid.

Online: Instruction occurs online. Scheduling options for online courses include:

- Synchronous – instruction occurs during regularly scheduled class meeting times
- Asynchronous – instructional time does not include scheduled meetings
- Mixed Synchronous & Asynchronous

Please check with WWU Academic Coordinating Commission (ACC) for updates to course modalities and definitions.

Appendix II – CENV Course Modality Proposal Form

This form will be used by the faculty submitting a request for an alternative course modality. Consider including these answers to prompts in the Curriculog form rationale, as appropriate. Upload this form to the Curriculog form, along with all syllabi, to demonstrate that the course meets the CENV policy.

1. Select the proposed remote modality:

- Synchronous online
- Asynchronous online
- Mixed asynchronous/synchronous online
- Hybrid

2. Which term(s) is this modality change proposed for:

- Summer
- Academic year (Fall, Winter, or Spring)

3. Which site(s) is this modality change proposed for:

- Bellingham Campus
 - Salish Sea Region Campuses
 - Online certificate or degree
- Other _____

4. Provide a compelling rationale for online modality.

10. **Per the US Department of Education definitions, when 50% or more of the courses or credits in an academic program are provided via distance learning, the program must be classified as an online/distance program. Please indicate how the alternative modality will influence the overall online/distance nature of the academic programs in which it is included (e.g., total percentage of program courses offered face-to-face versus online):**

Helpful Links:

- ACC Curriculum Management website <https://registrar.wvu.edu/curriculum-management>
- ACC [Course modality lookup tool](#) to see course offerings and their modalities since fall

approved 1.25.2021)

[ACC Policy on Credit Hours](#) (ACC approved 5.24.2022, Faculty Senate approved 5.31.2022)

[Permanent and Temporary Modality Changes](#) (ACC approved 5.24.2022, Faculty Senate approved 5.31.2022)

APPENDIX III – Procedure for Approval of Alternative Course Modalities

Step 1: Proposer completes the CENV Course Modality Proposal Form and attaches to the Curriculog proposal.

Step 2: Department reviews and when recording their decision, notes whether the proposal meets the college modality policy.

Step 3: College reviews and when recording their decision, notes whether the proposal meets the college modality policy.

Step 4: WWU Academic Coordinating Commission reviews and makes the final decision regarding approval of any request to change a class to remote modality.