

CHSS Course Modality Principles and Process

(Approved by FAC on 11/8/22; Revised by FAC on 1/24/23; Revised by FAC on 4/19/23;
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Guiding Principles:

When evaluating all courses across modalities, CHSS will prioritize and adhere to the following principles:

- Commitment to substantive and regular interaction and contact among students and between students and the instructor of record;
- A recognition that face-to-face instruction is the core modality for students in the College, and an expectation that any proposal for an alternate modality will offer a compelling educational or pedagogical rationale for that modality;¹
- The need for a careful delineation in course proposals between “class time work” or “contact time” (or its asynchronous equivalent) and “homework” (the expected work that all students are expected to do in order to prepare for their class or contact time);
- A distinction between courses taught “in load” and “out of load”, and maintenance of a higher bar—in terms of face-to-face contact—for courses that are taught as part of a standard faculty load, using state funding.

All departments need to adopt their own modality policies. They may adopt this policy or develop their own. If developing their own, departments must adhere to the criteria and expectations outlined in this document.

The principles outlined in this document apply to the delivery of all proposed and previously approved courses taught in online and hybrid modalities.

Modality Definitions:

Face-to-Face Modality

Face-to-face courses, the dominant modality at Western, provide instruction through regularly-scheduled in-person class meetings.

In face-to-face class, online or alternative activities used in lieu of some face-to-face instructional time are ad hoc rather than a recurring component of the course design. When describing face-to-face modality, the ACC Handbook states: “Instruction is accomplished through regularly scheduled in person class meetings. The expected instructional time should be accomplished through regularly scheduled face-to-face 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.”²

¹ This recognition is in line with the University’s broader commitment to in-person instruction and interaction as the heart of Western’s educational mission. In his 2021 Convocation Address, President Randhawa explained, “We have discovered that there are many valuable ways that we can do our work and deliver education remotely, but let’s remember that we are strongest when we are together, teaching and working in community with others. Our presence matters to our students and your presence matters to your colleagues, to me, to Western.”

² ACC Handbook, Chapter 4, “Course Modalities/Instructional Methods”

Courses that maintain in-person instruction through regularly scheduled in-person meetings are considered face-to-face even if they regularly incorporate online tools as part of students' out-of-class responsibilities (e.g. homework). Assigning podcasts, or even faculty-produced asynchronous lectures for students to view in lieu of traditional reading assignments, does not require a hybrid modality course definition. For that reason, a "flipped" classroom— in which students view on-line lectures asynchronously and faculty use in-person instructional time for discussion or guided work— would still be considered "face to face" because it preserves in-person contact hours.

Moreover, in face-to-face classes, faculty have the discretion to schedule a limited number of class meetings (e.g. 2-3) remotely for either pedagogical or scheduling purposes, such as to run a short online simulation or to accommodate faculty conference travel.³

Online Course Modality

Online courses provide instruction remotely through asynchronous and synchronous means. While these courses do not meet face-to-face, faculty are responsible for designing activities— whether synchronous or asynchronous— that maintain the College's expectations of substantive and regular contact among students and between students and the instructor of record.

Asynchronous recorded video lectures can count towards contact time only when they are accompanied by additional substantive interaction on the lecture material. We expect that recorded video lectures, even when accompanied by additional substantive interaction on the lecture material, will account for no more than a third of the total contact time for the course.

Note:

While the Office of the Dean cannot make decisions about curriculum, the College has made a commitment to ensuring that state funds go exclusively to fund face-to-face instruction. The college will not approve the scheduling of online courses as part of a faculty member's regular academic year course load.

- The department chair and CHSS Dean may make exceptions to this policy to address emergency needs for courses that have been curricularly approved for online modality.

Hybrid Course Modality:

Hybrid courses divide their instructional time between regularly-scheduled face-to-face class meetings and online instructional activities. What distinguishes hybrid courses from face-to-face courses with an online component is that "the online learning activities are designed to replace a significant amount of onsite learning activities."⁴

In CHSS, hybrid courses may only be scheduled during the academic year and as a part of a faculty member's regular teaching load if they provide at least 67% of their instructional time over the course of the term in regularly scheduled face-to-face meetings, with the remaining hours presented through synchronous or asynchronous online instruction.

³ Per ACC policy, in face-to-face classes, on-line class meetings are to be ad hoc rather than a recurring and regularly-scheduled component of the course calendar.

⁴ Stein and Graham (2020). *Essentials for Blended Learning: A Standard-Based Guide*. Taylor & Francis, 2020.

Example: MWF class, on-line every Wednesday (33% on-line)
 Tues/Thursday class, on-line every other Thursday (25% on-line)

We recognize that this threshold is higher than the ACC minimum threshold of 25% face-to-face time.

Given this distinction, faculty have the opportunity of seeking “summer only” approval for hybrid courses in which less than 67% of instructional time takes place face-to-face. For courses that meet the 67% threshold, faculty can seek “full year” hybrid approval.

Process for Approving Courses of Alternate Modality:

As with the approval of traditional face-to-face courses, approval of hybrid and online courses is a two-stage process within the College (subject to final review by the University Academic Coordinating Commission).

Stage 1: Departmental Review

1. For hybrid courses intended to be taught as part of a faculty member’s in-load teaching assignment, check course syllabus for appropriate ratio of face-to-face contact time and online interactions if seeking approval.
2. Assess syllabus and proposal according to disciplinary and departmental expectations, including department modality policy if appropriate.
3. If the course is to be taught during the academic year as part of a faculty member’s regular teaching load, review the proposal’s educational rationale for hybrid modality. Provide a concise departmental statement articulating how or why the proposed modality serves a compelling educational purpose.
4. If course is exclusively to be taught out of load through OCE, either during the academic year or summer, outline reasons why online or hybrid modality ensures access/flexibility of attendance needs or pedagogical best practice.

Stage 2: Curriculum Council Review

1. Review course syllabus to assess evidence of substantive and regular interaction both among students and between students and faculty member.
2. Review syllabus and proposal to ensure that the learning goals and course expectations are clear and that the student workload is appropriate for the number of credits assigned to the course.
3. Review educational/access rationale for alternate (hybrid or online) modality. Rationales based on access alone will only be accepted for course to be taught out of load through OCE.

Minimum Criteria for Courses with Hybrid Modality

Courses approved for hybrid modality will successfully demonstrate:

1. *The function or method of the online components of the course.* What can students expect to do online that will differ from the kind of work they'll encounter in person? For example, does the online component consist of interactive online training simulations? Does it consist of online small group meetings?
2. *A compelling educational rationale for hybrid modality.* For a rationale to be compelling, it must showcase the distinct benefits which the online components provide for student learning/ engagement. Moving part of a course's scheduled contact hours to an online modality must accomplish course learning objectives in a way that in-person instruction or class time does not or does not do as well. Note: *Enhancing student access* does not constitute a compelling educational justification for hybrid courses.
3. *Maintenance of educational quality.* The proposal must demonstrate that the overall quality of the course as defined by departmental standards is being maintained. In other words, departments should provide evidence that the "added value" in support of a learning outcome does not diminish the overall educational experience.
4. *Sufficient substantive interaction.* The proposal should carefully outline how course components will ensure substantive and regular contact and provide evidence that the overall amount of work required of the student work is appropriate for the number of credits assigned for the course.⁵

We assert that substantive and regular contact is necessarily interactive. In hybrid modality courses, recorded video lectures can count towards contact time only when they are accompanied by additional substantive interaction on the lecture material. We expect that recorded video lectures, even when accompanied by additional substantive interaction on the lecture material, will account for no more than a third of the total contact time for the course.

Independent or "asynchronous" work (e.g. reading course materials, listening to podcasts, participating in discussion boards) is a required component of all courses.⁶ Faculty should take care not to substitute "contact time" with "homework" in designing a hybrid or online course.

5. *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. zoom account, laptop computer, stable internet connection).

Minimum Criteria for Courses with Online Modality

As noted above, CHSS only permits the teaching of online courses "out of load." In other words,

⁵ See ACC Handbook, Chapter 4, for a definition of "regular and substantive interaction" and for the required components to demonstrate it. Per this definition, a recorded video, viewed asynchronously, is not a demonstration of "substantive interaction."

⁶ Per ACC and university guidelines, students should spend approximately 30 hours per credit per quarter (or 3 hours per week over 10 weeks). Faculty proposing new courses, especially those with substantial asynchronous components, should take care to articulate how this expectation is maintained.

faculty may teach online courses in the summer or on contract with Outreach and Continuing Education (OCE) during the academic year, but they may not teach them as part of their regular load (which is funded using state funds).

Courses approved for online modality will successfully demonstrate:

1. *A compelling rationale for online modality.* In the case of online classes taught in the summer or during the academic year through OCE, enhancing student *access* **may** constitute a compelling educational justification. For a rationale to be compelling, it must showcase the distinct benefits which online modality provides for student learning/engagement. Moving part of a course's scheduled contact hours to an online modality must enable students to access and engage with course content or accomplish course learning objectives in a way that in-person instruction or class time does not.
2. *Maintenance of educational quality.* The proposal must demonstrate that the overall quality of the course as defined by departmental standards is maintained. In other words, departments should provide evidence that the "added value" in support of a learning outcome does not diminish the overall educational experience.
3. *Sufficient substantive interaction.* The proposal should carefully outline how course components will ensure substantive and regular interaction and provide evidence that the overall amount of work required is appropriate for the number of credits assigned for the course.⁷ What can students expect to do online that will differ from the kind of work they'll encounter in person? For example, does the online component consist of interactive online training simulations? Does it consist of online small group meetings?

We assert that substantive and regular contact is necessarily interactive. In asynchronous online courses, recorded video lectures can count towards contact time only when they are accompanied by additional substantive interaction on the lecture material. We expect that recorded video lectures, even when accompanied by additional substantive interaction on the lecture material, will account for no more than a third of the total contact time for the course.

Independent asynchronous work (e.g. reading course materials, listening to podcasts, participating in discussion boards) is a required component of all courses.⁸ Faculty should take care not to substitute "contact time" with "homework" in designing a hybrid or online course.

6. *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. zoom account, laptop computer, stable internet connection).

⁷ See ACC Handbook, Chapter 4, for a definition of "regular and substantive interaction" and for the required components to demonstrate it. Per this definition, a recorded video, viewed asynchronously, is not a demonstration of "substantive interaction."

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