

(Adopted at the 5/2 ACM; modified 9/3 to align with College of Humanities)

Assignment of Online Courses

Assignment of teaching, including online, distance learning, service-learning, and laboratory classes, “are determined by the appropriate administrator after consultation with the department chair or designee and/or the individual faculty member (CBA, Article 20).” Decisions about assigning online courses, who is qualified to teach them and when to offer these courses are based on the programmatic needs of the College and the Department. For the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, the following policies and procedures are to be followed in the assignment of online courses:

- Faculty members who are interested in teaching online courses, either fully or hybrid, shall complete one workshop in Moodle and one additional workshop dealing with online pedagogy or an advanced workshop in the use of Moodle. One of these must be completed no later than Fall 2013, and one additional workshop shall be completed at least once every two years thereafter.
- Workshops may be offered by the college, Academic Technology, or any other unit of the university with an expertise in online instruction, or by an off-campus professional organization with expertise in online instruction. It is expected that as faculty acquire more online teaching experience they will take more advanced training. The objective of this policy is to create a culture of engaged online teaching in which our students are provided a meaningful learning environment that includes the presentation of high quality content, interactivity, and responsive communication between students and faculty.
- No faculty member may teach more than two online courses in any semester. Exceptions to teaching more than two online courses may be allowed if teaching more than two online courses per semester will benefit the programmatic needs of the College. Exceptions will be reviewed and granted by the Dean.
- Courses that are not designated as online may not be changed into online or hybrid courses after enrollment has begun.

Peer Review of Online Classes

Consistent with Section 600, student evaluations are required for all faculty who teach, including faculty who teach online courses. Unless department procedures require more, the number of classes to be evaluated each year is a "minimum of two (2) classes annually." For faculty who teach online classes, a minimum of one online class annually will be required to have student evaluations.

Peer class visits of online courses should take place as part of the performance or periodic review process including reviews for RTP, appointment or reappointment, or post-tenure review.

It is the responsibility of the department chair or their designees to conduct peer. class visits, including peer visits of online courses. The person conducting the peer visits should be a tenured faculty member, and in the case of peer visits of associate or full professors, the peer reviewer should be at the rank of full professor.

Faculty who teach online shall be evaluated by the chair or designee when they teach their first online class and thereafter at least once every 24 units of online teaching or once every two years, whichever comes sooner. This is a minimum requirement, more class visits may be required by the department or requested by the faculty.

Each department is expected to develop a peer evaluation process specifically for online courses. A useful guide for establishing these procedures can be found at: http://www.csun.edu/~pprcomm/documents/guidelines/BestPractices_PeerReviewofTeaching.pdf.

Best Practices in Reviewing Online Classes (from PPR)

For hybrid classes the peer review can be a blended peer review. For example, the peer reviewer can attend a class when it meets face-to-face and when the class meets online. This will provide the peer reviewer with information about how the face-to-face portion connects with the online portion of the class. The blended peer review also enables the peer reviewer to see the instructor's pedagogy, delivery, engagement of and interaction with students as it is done in a physical classroom visitation.

Online classes can be peer-reviewed by having the peer-reviewer log-in as a guest when the class is synchronized (meeting online at the same time). Another way is to have the peer-reviewer "lurking" – sitting in as a "technician," while the class is in session. "Lurking" provides the peer-reviewer with information about the instructor's online teaching and interaction with students without the students' knowledge.

Suggested Steps for Peer Reviewing a Fully Online Course

1. Request to observe the online course. This involves asking for the following from the online instructor:
 - a. Enrollment into the online course. You should decide whether you would like to be enrolled as a formal guest or as a lurker. A formal guest would be introduced to the students and have a presence in whole class and group discussions and on participant lists. Someone who is lurking is not typically introduced to the students and is not an active member of online discussions or interactions. The lurker is transparent, the same way a technical support person would be. There are benefits and challenges to both designations.
 - b. Information on how to log-in.
 - c. Information on where the syllabus or syllabus information is located and how to access it. The syllabus could be posted as one piece for reading online, copying and pasting into a word document, and /or downloading. Or, it could be posted in a folder as several separate pieces: course description, course schedule, readings and resources, contact information, and objectives. You could request that the instructor e-mail you a copy of the syllabus or place a paper copy in

your mailbox; however, this would be extra work for the online instructor if the syllabus was developed and posted in pieces.

2. Arrange for an observation time frame.

In an online course this could vary (e.g., an hour, a day, a week, a specific time) depending on how the course is set up in regard to synchronous and asynchronous aspects such as due dates.

3. Log-in to the course and review the syllabus or syllabus information according to the evaluation criteria.

4. Visit a few sections of the online course and review them according to the evaluation criteria. Sections could include lectures, topic information, resources, whole class discussion forums, group forums, blogs, assignments, weblinks, course information, activities/exercises, reviews, and quizzes. As with on-ground observations (a typical face-to-face, residential CSUN course), as a peer reviewer you may not have access to some important sections/components of the course such as quizzes, each student's grade book, and personal communication of students with other students or students with the instructor.

5. Follow the same format for providing feedback as with other classroom courses, either a letter or a letter and follow-up meeting to provide feedback.

Other Relevant Tips for Reviewing On-line Courses

1. When reviewing and evaluating an online course and its instructor be aware of the following issues:

If there seem to be formatting, layout, or technological problems/challenges - remember that the instructor has little control over much of the availability and functioning of the technology. It is unfair to include such technology related items or problems in instructor evaluations. However, it is fair to assess what the instructor has done to compensate for those problems and make information easier to find (e.g., posting an assignment due date in many places at multiple times, giving lots of reminders about locations or different types of information).

2. If there seems to be a paucity of visible communication and interaction, it may be that the communication is rich and robust but it is occurring via independent technologies and/or private means. If there seems to be a lack of visible interaction, you may want to ask the instructor how and where it may be occurring.

3. If the online discussions and interactions seem shallow, off topic, or profuse, they may be. Educators who are new to online instruction may not yet be knowledgeable about ways to allow students to communicate on topic and off topic as well as freely explore new technologies.

4. Look for indications that the instructor is designing, setting up, staging and giving feedback to encourage rich discussion and interaction (e.g., positing protocols and specific directions/activities for discussion topics, giving feedback that brings a discussion back on topic, reminding students that there are special forums for sharing off topic information). Look for specific ways that the instructor is allowing for off topic interaction. Ways to allow for off topic

communication (e.g., sharing locations of additional information/resources, sharing new ideas, asking questions about procedures, coursework, or the field) can range from setting up special discussion forums with labels designating them as off topic to simply suggesting that the students communicate off topic issues within the message center or by e-mail.

5. Look for indications that the instructor is introducing a new technology and inviting free exploration.

http://www.csun.edu/~pprcomm/documents/guidelines/BestPractices_PeerReviewofTeaching.pdf