

Policy on Graduate Online and Hybrid Courses: Student Engagement

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Preamble

For graduate students, the University of Oregon defines a credit hour as the student achievement that could be reasonably expected from approximately four hours of student engagement per week.¹

Graduate programs intend to prepare students for research, professional practice, scholarship, and/or artistic creation, and are characterized by a high level of expertise, originality, and critical analysis. They differ from undergraduate programs by requiring greater depth of study and increased demands on student intellectual or creative capacities; knowledge of the literature in a field; and ongoing student engagement in research, scholarship, and/or creative expression. Graduate students are expected to perform both higher quality and a greater quantity of work than undergraduate students.

There is no current policy that guides the approval of graduate online and hybrid courses. Existing graduate online and hybrid courses may be classes that were originally regularized having only traditional face-to-face meetings, but were not submitted for approval by the UOCC. There will also be new classes that are proposed for regularization as online or hybrid only. Therefore, we propose the following policy that outlines criteria for online or hybrid graduate courses.

Definitions

Hybrid Course: Course offered in a blended format with one or more required face-to-face class sessions and with one or more required online activities.

Online Course: Course that is delivered exclusively online.

Policy

Active academic engagement in online and hybrid courses could include, but is not limited to:

- submitting an academic assignment;
- taking an exam;
- participating in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction;

¹ This is for a course on the regular 10-week (plus 1 week for exams) quarter system schedule; there will be different calculations for the Law School and other course formats; appropriate engagement hours for these courses can be calculated.

- attending a virtual study/project group assigned by the instructor;
- contributing to an academic online discussion moderated by faculty;
- and engaging in interaction with the faculty member and class peers related to the academic subject of the course.

Providing students with class presentations (e.g. PowerPoint materials accompanied by a recorded audio lecture) will not be sufficient to account for all engagement and merely logging into the electronic classroom will not constitute academic engagement.

Regardless of mode of instruction, online and hybrid courses should be consistent in terms of quality, assessment, learning outcomes, requirements, etc., with courses offered face-to-face with the same department prefix, number, and course title. Credits hours assigned to a course delivered online must equal the number of credit hours for the same course delivered face-to-face. Credit hours will be based on at least an equivalent amount of work as represented in the definition of a credit hour.

The UOCC's approval of a new graduate online or hybrid class will require the consideration of supplemental information including but not limited to a) how classroom time will be replaced with alternative forms of student engagement (engagement between the students and the instructor; and perhaps engagement among the students, as appropriate to the instructional context), and b) how online/hybrid versions of existing courses will be equivalent in terms of student-learning outcomes to courses taught in the traditional face-to-face format. The supplemental information provided for online and hybrid courses will need to be included in the materials submitted by proposers.

Already existing graduate online and hybrid classes will also be required to follow the above guidelines and will be reviewed by the UOCC for equivalence and appropriate assignment of credit hours within the next 3 years.

(Text of policy draws liberally from similar policies at Temple University and Loyola University Maryland)