

Youngstown State University Cyberlearning (Distance Education) Policy

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Purpose	2
Scope.....	2
Definitions	2
Cyberlearning.....	2
Hybrid Modalities	2
Online Modalities	3
Services for the Online Community	3
The Department of Cyberlearning.....	3
Distance Education Learning Community (DELC).....	3
Other Support Areas.....	4
Course Design, Delivery, and Assessment	4
Curricula.....	4
Prerequisites and Readiness.....	4
Training	4
Course Delivery.....	4
Course Materials.....	5
Course Assessment.....	5
Institutional Policies and Procedures	5
Contact Hours	5
Course caps.....	5
Student Support Hours (Office Hours)	5
Use of Virtual Assistants	6
Program and Course Development	6
New Program Development	6
New Course Development (Web-based Only)	6
Current Course Redesign (Web-based Only).....	7
Rubric Review	7
Development Pay.....	7
Course Development Timeline	7
Intellectual Property Rights	8
Online Teaching and Learning Expectations	8
Quality Expectations.....	8
Student Interaction.....	8
Feedback.....	9
Student Integrity and Authentication	9
Student Authentication	9
Exam Proctoring.....	9
Academic Integrity and the Code of Conduct	10

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the delivery and management of distance education programs and courses at YSU. The policy is intended to ensure the high-quality and effective delivery of distance education to students, while also adhering to the institutional policies and regulations.

Cyberlearning (distance education) is part of a comprehensive approach to support YSU's mission as a student-centered university and to create an environment that empowers students to acquire intellectual and social capital to realize individual aspirations.

This policy:

- Provides faculty and administrators with a guide for developing and delivering online courses and programs.
- Communicates quality standards for delivering and assessing online courses and programs

Scope

This policy applies to all distance education programs and courses offered by YSU, including undergraduate and graduate programs, professional development and continuing education courses, and certificate programs. The policy applies to all faculty and staff who teach or support Cyberlearning at YSU. The policy also applies to all online or hybrid modalities, including web-based, hybrid, agile-hybrid, and online-live. This policy will be reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure that it remains current and effective in meeting the needs of Cyberlearning at YSU.

DEFINITIONS

Cyberlearning

Cyberlearning (Distance Education) is defined at YSU as instruction offered by any means where the student and faculty member are in separate physical locations or are using educational technology, such as a learning management or video conferencing system to complete coursework and attend course meetings.

Hybrid Modalities

Agile-Hybrid: 40-60% face-to-face instruction with asynchronous online interactions.

- Set Day/Time
- Set Location
- No Online Class Meetings
- Requires In-person Class Meetings

Hybrid: 40-60% face-to-face instruction with online interactions.

- Set Day/Time
- Set Location
- Set Online Class Meetings

- Requires In-person Class Meetings

Online Modalities

Online-Live: 100% synchronous instruction with some asynchronous online interactions.

- Set Day/Time
- No Set Location
- Set Online Class Meetings
- No In-Person Class Meetings

Web-Based: 100% asynchronous online instruction and interactions.

- No Set Day/Time
- No Set Location
- No Online Class Meetings
- No In-Person Class Meetings

SERVICES FOR THE ONLINE COMMUNITY

The Department of Cyberlearning

The Department of Cyberlearning works with faculty members on the infrastructure, design, development, and delivery of distance education courses. Staff from the Department of Cyberlearning works closely with other academic departments to enhance the quality of Cyberlearning through:

- Opportunities to improve skills in teaching and learning.
- Range of workshops, information sessions, and webinars on distance education.
- Support for faculty in developing hybrid/online courses.
- Help with using technology in a pedagogical manner.
- ADA-accessible materials for teaching and learning.

Distance Education Learning Community (DELIC)

The Distance Education Learning Community (DELIC) is designated to serve as an advisory team. The DELIC will be composed of:

1. the Cyberlearning Director.
2. Instructional Designer(s) (one of which will serve as DELIC Chair).
3. faculty volunteers and participants.

The charge of the DELIC shall be to use the needs of faculty teaching online to:

- Make suggestions for improvements on items such as new workshops, needed technology, and training through meetings scheduled at the discretion of the committee.
- Make suggestions for course development goals or plans based on identified needs of YSU students.
- Discuss the effectiveness of distance programs in promoting knowledge or skill acquisition.

Other Support Areas

- IT Service Desk

- Institute for Teaching and Learning
- Center for Student Progress
- MATH Assistance Center
- Writing Center
- MAAG library

COURSE DESIGN, DELIVERY, AND ASSESSMENT

Curricula

As with traditional courses, YSU's instructors have the primary responsibility and oversight for online curricula, ensuring the courses are rigorous and instruction is of high quality.

Prerequisites and Readiness

A student's success in an online or blended course is contingent on their understanding of the course structure and technology. Providing students with information on the required skills and technology for specific courses enables them to evaluate their own ability to succeed in the course.

Training

All individuals who will be teaching or will be a part of the online course development process must have participated in appropriate training as determined by the YSU Department of Cyberlearning. Acceptable training includes Preparing to Teach Online at YSU through the Office of Cyberlearning (which includes learning management system training) and/or APPQMR offered through Quality Matters with additional LMS training.

Course Delivery

YSU uses Blackboard as the learning management system (LMS). All faculty members teaching online or blended courses shall use the Blackboard platform. YSU will provide technical support for all online course developers and instructors.

If a third-party system (such as McGraw-Hill or Pearson) is used for the purpose of instruction, the first access point for students must still be the supported LMS and all grades and syllabi must be housed within the supported platform.

All web-based courses shall be developed and maintained using the approved YSU template within the LMS. Courses are automatically loaded into Blackboard with a supported template 8 weeks prior to each term. Student rosters are loaded into the LMS 14 days before the beginning of each term and are updated on a daily basis.

Course Materials

Online and blended course designers should actively seek out new and innovative ways to create course materials by researching best practices, collaborating with colleagues, and reaching out to content providers for inspiration and resources.

Instructors have access to various options for obtaining academic texts and supplementary materials such as Open Educational Resources, eTextbooks, and the bookstore. Instructors must communicate their needs to the appropriate personnel in the same way they do for traditional courses. Students should be provided with information on required materials as soon as possible to allow students to purchase from their preferred source. Courses that require accompanying technology from publishers or software companies must be compatible with the LMS and other YSU supported software.

Course Assessment

YSU evaluates the educational effectiveness of its online and blended courses. Courses must abide by approved descriptions and desired student outcomes, regardless of delivery format. Student satisfaction is evaluated through electronic surveys at the end of each semester.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

All online and hybrid courses are considered comparable to traditional courses and must adhere to the [Faculty Workload Policy](#) and the [Intellectual Property Rights Policy](#). In addition, faculty should implement the Academic Senate-approved [Common Syllabus](#).

Furthermore, all DE courses and programs must go through the standard curriculum approval process as established by the Academic Senate and Graduate Council.

Contact Hours

A web-based semester hour will be defined as the learning that takes place in at least 45 hours of learning activities, which include time in reviewing lectures or class meetings online, laboratories, examinations, presentations, tutorials, preparation, reading, studying, hands-on experiences, and other learning activities or a demonstration by the student of learning equivalent to that established as the expected product of such a period of study.

Course caps

Course caps in online and hybrid courses should reflect the course caps for traditional courses. DE course caps may not vary from departmental course caps unless approved by the Department Chair, Dean, and Provost.

Student Support Hours (Office Hours)

As indicated in the CBA (Article 27.6), for an online course(s), the faculty member shall establish office hours for consultation with students at a distance utilizing available communication tools including email, chat, computer conferencing, or other technologies. Such online office hours shall count toward the seven (7) required office hours. The physical location of these online office hours is at the faculty member's discretion. These online office hours may fall beyond the standard institutional business operations of the university; however, the students must be informed of the office hours in the syllabus. For each online course, the faculty member must conduct at least one (1) office hour online per week. If the faculty member is teaching all online courses, all seven (7) hours will be scheduled online across at least 3 calendar days per week, and no on-campus office hours shall be required.

Faculty members teaching distance education course(s) shall post a statement regarding the methods and procedures to be utilized for office hours. Faculty members teaching distance education course(s) shall respond to student communications that occur outside of the scheduled office hours within two (2) business days of the receipt of the student communication.

Use of Virtual Assistants

Virtual assistants can be made available for stacked online courses. Information on the Virtual Assistant Program at YSU can be accessed on the [Cyberlearning website](#) under [Forms and Procedures](#).

PROGRAM AND COURSE DEVELOPMENT

New Program Development

If a new online program is proposed, or a current program is proposed to be offered completely online, faculty members will work with the academic dean to complete the Proposal to Offer an Online Program form. The entire process for proposing and securing approval to develop or change a program to fully online can be found on the [Cyberlearning website](#) under [Forms and Procedures](#).

New Course Development (Web-based Only)

Faculty members are not permitted to develop a web-based course without prior approval by the Chairperson, Dean, and Provost (or designee) via the Application to Develop or Redesign an Online Course. The decision to use the online asynchronous (web-based) modality must be made on a course-by-course basis, with consideration given to the content of the course, the needs of the learners, the marketability of the course, and the flexibility needed in the course delivery.

Creating a Blackboard shell and redirecting to a third-party website for all course content does not constitute course development or redevelopment and will not be subject to supplemental payment.

All instructors wishing to teach online shall fill out the Application to Develop or Redesign an Online Course, found on the [Department of Cyberlearning website](#) under [Forms and Procedures](#). The following shall also accompany the application:

1. Outline of the program in which the course will be taught (i.e., course and program map)
2. Justification for use of the online asynchronous (web-based) modality
3. Prerequisites for the course
4. Course syllabus including tentative lecture schedule
5. Enrollment estimates
6. Any partnership information (if applicable)

Current Course Redesign (Web-based Only)

Faculty members shall update their course on an ongoing basis, however, faculty members redesigning the entire course and seeking payment for such redevelopment must fill out and gain Provost (or designee) approval through the Application to Develop or Redesign an Online Course, found on the [Department of Cyberlearning website](#) under [Forms and Procedures](#). Redevelopment for payment occurs only in circumstances where substantial redevelopment is necessary.

An online course qualifies for course redesign if it has been at least 5 years from the development or previous redesign, significant changes are being made, and it falls under one or more of the following categories:

1. **Accessibility:** re-working of the online course so that it incorporates newer technologies to ensure equal access to all.
2. **Consistency of learning outcomes:** re-working content across several sections of the same course being taught by different faculty in order to more accurately measure learning outcomes.
3. **Quality:** to ensure that content is current, pedagogically sound, and learner centered.
4. **Scalability:** re-working the content in order to accommodate growing numbers of courses/sections that could be offered and taught each term.

Rubric Review

Following the application approval and course development, a rubric review will be conducted. The review process includes two reviews of the course, one from an Instructional Designer in the Department of Cyberlearning and one from a colleague of the developer’s choice. Each review will evaluate several criteria based on an internal review rubric to determine whether the course is ready to be put online.

Development Pay

After the course has received certification via the Cyberlearning Rubric Review, the Department of Cyberlearning will initiate the supplemental payment process. The development compensation structure will follow the current YSU-OEA union agreement for both full and part-time faculty. Payment can take up to three (3) months after submission of required paperwork by the faculty member.

Course Development Timeline

Web-based course development should follow the timeline below to ensure that the developer, peer reviewer, and staff in the Department of Cyberlearning have enough time to complete all of the necessary steps.

Minimum Time to Course Start	Activity	Time Needed
16 weeks	Chairperson, in conjunction with the faculty member, submit online course development form to Department of Cyberlearning and wait for approval.	1-2 weeks
14 weeks	Faculty member starts training through the Department of Cyberlearning or Quality Matters.	1-2 weeks
12 weeks	Faculty member starts the development process with the help of an Instructional Designer.	4-8 weeks
4 weeks	Faculty submits fully developed course to the Department of Cyberlearning for formal rubric/peer reviews.	1-2 weeks
2 weeks	Payment paperwork is started by the Department of Cyberlearning and sent to the faculty member.	1-2 weeks

Intellectual Property Rights

An online course is considered property of the University, per [BOT Policy 3356-10-18](#), with the faculty member developer being granted a nonexclusive, perpetual, royalty-free license to use works created.

ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Quality Expectations

In all cases, courses have to include **regular and substantive interaction**. Regular and substantive interaction is characterized by:

High-quality social presence:

- The instructor regularly visits online forums and actively participates by posting several times a week.
- Instructor posts are directed toward the learners.
- The instructor maintains a professional demeanor and shows respect for diversity and the opinions of others.

High-quality cognitive presence:

- The instructor actively encourages discussion among students.
- The instructor's postings are clearly written, original and relevant to the topic at hand.
- The instructor's reasoning demonstrates advanced analytical skills and critical thinking abilities.
- The instructor encourages students to reach their full potential.
- The instructor always provides sufficient supporting details and examples to help students understand the topic.

High-quality writing skills:

- All of the instructor's postings and course materials are well-written, demonstrating accurate spelling and grammar, good organization, thorough editing, conciseness and clarity.

Student Interaction

To ensure successful online and hybrid courses, participation and regular and appropriate interaction between students and faculty is required. Multiple forms of interaction are expected, such as:

- Participating in online discussions
- Submitting assignments and receiving feedback
- Participating in group projects
- Interacting with the instructor and other students through email, messaging, or video conferencing
- Taking quizzes and exams
- Providing feedback on the course and the learning experience

It is important to note that the specific interactions will vary depending on the course and the instructor, but generally it should provide opportunities for students to actively engage with course material and with each other, as well as with the instructor and other course facilitators.

Regular and appropriate interaction between students and faculty is crucial. All students are expected to actively participate in various forms of interaction, such as online discussions, assignments, group projects, communication with the instructor, quizzes, and exams. This helps to ensure that students are fully engaged with the course material and with each other, and that they receive personalized instruction and support.

In distance education, instructors should aim to cater to the unique needs of students and promote active learning by incorporating diverse teaching methods that accommodate different learning styles.

Feedback

Faculty members are responsible for monitoring student effort and providing regular and prompt feedback on student performance. They should create opportunities for communication and respond within 2 business days to student questions and concerns. The response time should be clearly stated in the syllabus. It should be noted that a business day is only considered as such if the course meets or has work due on a Saturday or Sunday during the term.

Additionally, instructors shall post grades on the University LMS within 1 week of submitting the assignment or exam. Faculty members will alert students in advance, when necessary, if it appears that they will deviate from posting grades.

STUDENT INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICATION

Student Authentication

At the time of admission, students receive a unique username and secure password to access the learning management system (LMS). Student rosters are pushed automatically from Banner to the LMS. Students should never be given access to a course in the LMS unless they are officially registered for the course in Banner. Approval is needed from the Department Chair and Registrar for all exceptions.

If additional means of authentication are used, students must be notified in writing of these expectations and any associated costs at the beginning of the course.

Exam Proctoring

YSU offers two online proctoring and identity verification solutions through Respondus Lockdown Browser/Monitor and Examity. These are the only two products currently supported by YSU. Use of Examity is limited to two high-stakes exams per course each term and live proctoring through Examity should only be used if it is a requirement for accreditation purposes. Use of Respondus is unlimited.

When proctoring an exam online, ensure that:

- One of the two supported proctoring services listed above is used. Do not proctor an exam through unsecured applications such as Zoom, WebEx, or MS Teams.
- Students are never required to make their personal testing environments visible to their peers or to anyone other than the official proctor.
- Proctoring expectations and requirements are clearly stated in the syllabus that is distributed at the beginning of each term. Students should have plenty of time to make alternative arrangements if desired, such as finding a public testing facility.

Academic Integrity and the Code of Conduct

Students in all classes, regardless of delivery format, must adhere to YSU's Academic Integrity policy and to all policies and standards published in YSU's Student Handbook.

In compliance with U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) rules, an institution offering distance education must provide enrolled and prospective students with contact information for filing complaints with its accrediting agency and with the appropriate state agency for handling complaints in the student's state. Youngstown State University (YSU) seeks to resolve student grievances, complaints, and concerns in a fair, amicable, and prompt manner. Before submitting a complaint to the Department of Higher Education—students residing outside of the State of Ohio while attending YSU, who desire to resolve a grievance, should exhaust all opportunities for resolution outlined in our Academic Grievance Policy - Undergraduate Policy or Graduate Policy. If the institutional procedure has been utilized with no resolution, the student may file a complaint with his/her state. YSU is fully accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Complaints can be filed by visiting the HLC website.