

PUBLIC NOTICE AND AGENDA

**University Council Academic Policy Committee
Friday, March 29, 2019, 10 a.m.
Altgeld Hall 125
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois**

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MARCH 18, 2019 MINUTES – Pages 2-5

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Review Policies for Distance Education Courses Carrying Undergraduate Credit
[APPM Section III, Item 23](#) and [Approved Review Process](#) – Pages 6-8

Establish a plan for addressing topics/themes/considerations from survey data in our review of the current policy

Review guidelines for online courses carrying graduate credit offered by NIU
[APPM Section II, Item 22](#) – Page 9

Review policies from other institutions

Review rough draft of combined policy (walk-in)

VII. NEW BUSINESS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES

University Council Academic Policy Committee
Monday, March 18, 2019, 1 p.m.
Holmes Student Center 303
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Burton, Chen, Chmaissem, Collins, Ghrayeb, Henry (for Block), Ledgerwood, Newman

VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT: Block, Mershon, Staikidis, Stephen, Zamora

I. CALL TO ORDER

University Council Academic Policy Committee chair **V. Collins** called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

A quorum was established.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

J. Burton moved to adopt the agenda, seconded by **O. Chmaissem**. Motion passed.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE [FEBRUARY 22, 2019](#) MINUTES

J. Chen moved to approve the minutes, seconded by **J. Burton**. Motion passed.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Review Policies for Distance Education Courses Carrying Undergraduate Credit
[APPM Section III, Item 23](#) and [Approved Review Process](#)

Establish a plan for addressing topics/themes/considerations from survey data in our review of the current policy

Review guidelines for online courses carrying graduate credit offered by NIU
[APPM Section II, Item 22](#)

Review policies from other institutions

V. Collins reported on her meeting with Dean of the Graduate School, Brad Bond, regarding the possibility of combining the Policies for Distance Education Courses Carrying Undergraduate Credit with the Guidelines for Online Courses Carrying Graduate Credit Offered by NIU:

- Bond supports the idea of combining the two policies and welcomes the opportunity to work with the committee on this project. He would like to take the committee's recommendation to the Graduate Council before it goes to the University Council.
- Other stakeholders, such as Jason Rhode and Carolinda Douglass, should be included in the discussion.
- Items 4, 5 and 9 of the graduate policy are important and should be retained. In particular item 9 impacts financial aid. Samantha McCarron and Rebecca Babel would be valuable resource people on item 9.
- Consider the audience for this policy document. It makes sense that it would be faculty, but also the Office of the Provost and the Graduate School.
- Consider the possibility of requiring that online courses go through the curricular process.
- Consider the impact of faculty having needed resources (also noted in the survey).
- Consider faculty training on how to design online courses (also noted in the survey).
- Give attention to the quality of online programs (also noted in the survey)
- Keep in mind the difference between online programs vs. online courses.
- Consider using the term, "online" instead of "distance education." **V. Collins** noted that the committee discussed this at the February 22, 2019 meeting and decided to use the broader term, "distance education." The committee re-visited this discussion during today's meeting and, after further consideration, decided to use the term "online and hybrid" instead of "distance education."
- There is a need for the two currently existing policies on the grade appeal process to be reviewed. The committee acknowledged that this is not on its 2018-19 agenda.

Following **V. Collins'** summary of her meeting with Brad Bond, the committee agreed to develop a proposal that combines the two existing policies into one policy for online and hybrid courses.

First the committee members compared the two existing policies:

- Content contained within Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, and 10 of the graduate policy is also included within the undergraduate policy. The content contained within items 5-8 of the graduate policy are not.
- The graduate policy does not include definitions.
- The graduate policy does not include the HLC language.
- The policies use different titles.
- The policies use different structures/formats.
- The graduate policy does not include accessibility information.

The committee members worked to create a first draft of a combined policy using the 10-item graduate policy as a starting point. Discussion included the following:

- First, all guidelines to include in the combined policy will be identified. Decisions on how to categorize the guidelines will be discussed at a later meeting.
- The policy will begin with a definitions category that will include definitions of “online” and “hybrid.”
- The policy will refer to, but not include, the related HLC language.
- The title and specific policy guidelines will refer to online and hybrid courses.
- The revised policy will be numbered and may include headings.
- Two guidelines were deleted from the graduate policy.
 - Guideline 6 – because the committee felt the information was covered in other policies
 - Guideline 7 – because the committee felt the information was covered in guideline 4

- Guidelines were added (pulling from the undergraduate policy and considering feedback from the survey data) for the following topics:
 - Academic equivalency – replacing language in the undergraduate policy deemed unclear
 - Accessibility – using language from the Illinois State University (ISU) policy
 - Ownership/Intellectual Property – **O. Ghrayeb** will seek proposed language from Jason Rhode to share with the committee.
 - Identity verification – from the undergraduate policy
 - Evaluating online teaching – Some committee members believe this topic has been covered in other points dealing with academic rigor, through the use of the term, “academic equivalency.” Others believe the policy should include a point specifically about evaluation.
 - Quality – The committee discussed potential language on this point, acknowledged its importance, and wondered if it had already been covered in other points.
 - Faculty resources – using language similar to that used in the ISU policy
 - Technical/staff support – The committee discussed potential language to highlight a commitment to providing the necessary infrastructure for online and hybrid courses. **A. Newman** will work on some language and send it to **V. Collins**.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

O. Chmaissem moved to adjourn, seconded by **J. Burton**. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.



Policies for Distance Education Courses Carrying Undergraduate Credit Offered by Northern Illinois University

Section III. Item 23.

In conformity with federal guidelines, the Higher Learning Commission defines distance learning or distance education as:

Education that delivers instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and that supports regular and substantive interaction between students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously using one or more of the following technologies: the Internet; one-way and two-way transmission through open broadcast, closed-circuit cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; audio-conferencing; or videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs used in conjunction with any of the other technologies.

The Higher Learning Commission further defines a distance education course as one in which 75% or more of the instruction is offered by distance education. Courses that include some distance education component, but less than 75%, are referred to as hybrid or blended courses.

Except for those aspects noted below, distance education courses and hybrid courses are expected to be treated as equal to face-to-face courses. To ensure that distance education courses are equivalent in student outcomes, the following considerations should be given particular attention.

Instructor Considerations

Distance education courses must be accessible to all NIU students and should include significant interaction (e.g., email, discussion boards, chat lines, etc.) between students and instructor, and among students, when such opportunities would normally be part of the course if offered in traditional on-campus mode.

Instructors should pay particular attention to and provide explicit plans for assessing the effectiveness of teaching the course online and communicate these plans and the results of their implementation when requested to do so.

Ownership and use of online material is governed by the university intellectual property policy.

Unit/College Considerations

Because the usual criterion of "contact hours" may not be germane, proposals for undergraduate-level courses intended to be offered via distance education should include a rationale as to how the number of credit hours for each proposed course has been determined. This rationale must comply with the credit hour policies articulated in APPM Section III, Item 2.

The course status of distance education courses will be clearly indicated in the **online course finder**. Any special requirements, including limitations regarding who may enroll in a course in a given term, should also be announced.

The determination of the mode of delivery for a given course rests with the unit.

University Administrative Considerations

Persons receiving undergraduate academic credit for an online course must be admitted to NIU just as would be required for any other course for undergraduate credit.

All online courses carrying undergraduate credit must be assigned an official instructor of record.

HLC requires institutions to verify the identity of students who participate in courses or programs provided to the student through distance education.

Undergraduate distance education courses need not conform to the standard calendar defined in the **Course Finder**. However, they will be assigned to an academic term for purposes of drop/add, withdrawal, refund policies, etc.

Periodic Review: These Policies shall be reviewed every five years by the Academic Policy Committee of the University Council.

Approved by the University Council April 30, 2014

Editorial Modification, October 16, 2017



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Process for Reviewing Policies for Distance Education Courses Carrying
Undergraduate Credit Offered by Northern Illinois University

1. Prepare questions to guide the review process.
 - In what ways (if any) do the policies need to change?
 - What is missing (if anything)?
 - What no longer is relevant (if anything)?
 - What is unclear (if anything)?
 - Additional comments?

2. Establish a pertinent database to facilitate decision making.
 - We'll need to decide who to gather data from.
 - We'll need to determine our method for gathering data (e.g., survey)

3. Determine changes needed (if any) based on analysis of the data collected.

4. Share findings at University Council meeting.

Approved by the UC Academic Policy
Committee on October 4, 2018



Guidelines for Online Courses Carrying Graduate Credit Offered by Northern Illinois University

Section III. Item 22.

1. An online course carrying graduate credit must have an official instructor of record, just as any other course offered for graduate credit.
2. Persons receiving graduate academic credit for an online course must be admitted to the NIU Graduate School or to the status of student-at-large, just as would be required for any other course for graduate credit.
3. Limitations, regarding who may enroll in a course in a given term, should be published in the same fashion as the availability of that course is publicized. For example, the fact that the delivery system for a course is the World Wide Web/Internet should be indicated.
4. If a new graduate-level course is created that is intended to be offered primarily or exclusively online, its submission to the curricular-approved process must include providing the curricular committees a rationale as to how the number of credit hours has been determined. This may be done in a variety of ways and is necessary because "contact hours" may not be a germane criterion.
5. Online graduate courses should not be identified differently on NIU transcripts.
6. Acceptance of a graduate student's transfer of credit from online courses should be subject to the established limits on transfer of course credit. Similarly, there should be no special limitations on the amount of credit from online courses that may be applied toward an NIU graduate degree.
7. Graduate courses and programs offered online should be subject to the same approval processes as for other graduate courses and programs. It should be left up to individual departments and colleges by what mechanism courses gain their approval for online delivery. There should not be any special curricular approval mechanism for an existing degree program to be offered entirely online. As nothing special is recommended for online course approval, then when there are sufficient courses online, there will be a degree program online.
8. Current rules regarding number of hours of credit that a graduate-level student can take in an academic term should apply to online courses as well. That is, these courses will count in the student's course load.
9. Online graduate courses should adhere to the same academic calendar and related rules (drop/add, withdrawal, refund policies, etc.) as traditional graduate courses. The use of the boundaries of the existing academic terms is sound both academically and administratively.
10. Delivery of graduate courses by remote electronic means can be important and appropriate but such courses ought not become the electronic equivalent of correspondence courses. Therefore, courses delivered by these means must include significant interaction between students and instructor, and among students, when such opportunities would normally be part of the course if offered in traditional on-campus mode.

Approved by the Graduate Council, October 5, 1998

Last Updated: October 5, 1998

Revisions approved by the Graduate Council December 1, 2014

