

PUBLIC NOTICE AND AGENDA

**University Council Academic Policy Committee
Friday, October 25, 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 APRIL 22, 2019 MINUTES – Pages 2-3

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 4-6

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 III, Item 22 – Page 7

Review policies from other institutions

Review updated draft of combined policy (including operational definitions of online and hybrid courses) and determine whether a period review stipulation should be added – such appears only in the undergraduate policy

- B. Review comments on the proposed Policies for Online and Hybrid Courses Offered by Northern Illinois University using attached worksheet – Pages 8-11

Revise (as needed) the proposed policy document – Page 12-13

Discuss UCAPC recommendations to share with the University Council – Page 14

VII. NEW BUSINESS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES

University Council Academic Policy Committee
Monday, April 22, 2019, 10 a.m.
Altgeld Hall 125
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

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

VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT: Block, Mershon, Staikidis, Zamora

I. CALL TO ORDER

UC-Academic Policy Committee (UC-APC) chair, **V. Collins**, called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

II. VERIFICATION OF QUORUM

A quorum was established.

III. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A. Newman moved to adopt the agenda, seconded by **J. Chen**. Motion passed.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE [MARCH 29, 2019](#) MINUTES

J. Sariol moved to approve the minutes, seconded by **O. Chmaissem**. 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

Review [updated draft of combined policy](#) (including operational definitions of online and hybrid courses) and determine whether a periodic review stipulation should be added – such appears only in the undergraduate policy

V. Collins introduced the most recent draft policy updated per feedback from the March 29 committee meeting, input from Financial Aid, and input from Graduate School Dean Brad Bond. The committee reviewed it, and consensus was reached regarding two additional edits:

- When operationally defining online courses at NIU, use language from the Online Learning Consortium’s definition of online courses instead of from the Higher Learning commission’s definition
- Use “must” in policies 1-3, 6-9, and 11-14, and “will” in policy 5.

V. Collins will refine the draft policy per today’s discussion.

Next steps include:

- Present the proposed policy to the Graduate Council on May 6.
- Submit the proposed policy to the NIU Policy Library Committee for its review process, which includes a 30-day open comment period (comment period to take place in early fall 2019).
- Present the proposed policy to University Council in fall 2019.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.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



[NIU Home](#)

© 2018 Board of Trustees of
Northern Illinois University.
All rights reserved.
[Privacy Notice](#)

1425 W. Lincoln Hwy., DeKalb, IL 60115
815-753-1000

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



**Proposed Policy for Online and Hybrid Courses Offered by Northern Illinois University:
A Worksheet to Facilitate Our Review of Comments**

The comments included in this worksheet were either posted on the Policy Library Website during the 30-day comment period or sent to my email address. The latter are asterisked.

Positives

- aside from the points noted in previous comments, I think the policy is clear and concise.
- Thank you to those who participated in developing this policy
- Well done - this looks great! It will certainly help to have these items clarified for both students and instructors.
- Thanks for consulting with me about the accessibility requirements of online instruction. Katy Whitelaw, Information Technology Accessibility Officer

Title of Policy Document

- Has there been any discussion on naming the policy "Online and Hybrid Courses Policy" to aid in locating and identifying the policy in the library and A-Z index (rather than a policy starting with "Policy on/for")?

Decision	Should we change the location of the word policy in the title?
Current Title	Policies for Online and Hybrid Courses Offered by NIU
Possible Edit	Online and Hybrid Course Policies at Northern Illinois University

Policy 2

- General policy #2: ... equivalent to face-to-face versions of the same, **or similar**, course in terms of rigor... The courses in the M.S. Data Analytics program are only online and do not have a face-to-face equivalent. Some of them are similar to the courses in OMIS from which they were born.

Decision	Do we need to provide clarification that this policy only applies to online and hybrid courses that have F2F versions?
Current Language	Such courses must be academically equivalent to face-to-face versions of the same course in terms of rigor, learning objectives, and material coverage.
Note	Highlighted portion of the comment is not part of the policy statement.

Policy 4

- Thanks for consulting with me about the accessibility requirements of online instruction. I would like to add the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act 2.0 because it's slightly different from Section 508 Refresh of the Rehabilitation Act. See <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=96985>. Katy Whitelaw, Information Technology Accessibility Officer

Decision	Should we comply with Katy Whitelaw's request?
Current Language with Edits in Boldface	To ensure accessibility to students with disabilities, instruction in such courses is subject to requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act as amended, and the Illinois Information Technology Accessibility Act 2.0.

Policy 6 (Three separate comments)

- Thank you to those who participated in developing this policy. I'm looking at item #6 on copyright ownership. The APPM, Section VI, Item 4, which is cited in the policy, states the following: "(d) When the development of instructional or informational materials employs information technology and is a collaborative effort between faculty or other developer(s) and the University, there will, at the outset of the development project, be a written agreement between the developer(s) and the University, stipulating the materials and the rights to use, reproduce, modify, publicly display, distribute, and profit from the materials. It is the responsibility of developers to identify any materials included in their work that are owned by parties other than the developers and the University and to obtain written permissions or licenses from such third-party owners. Generally in a collaboration of this type, the University owns the medium in which the instructional or informational materials are embedded (e.g., Web site, CD-ROM, video recording, audio recording) and owns the rights to use, modify display, sell, license, or distribute (for financial gain or otherwise) that medium." Most faculty receive some form of instructional support for developing an online course, which might then be considered a "collaboration" according the APPM. It isn't clear what "medium" means in this context and how that might be separate from "content." It looks like there would need to be a written agreement for each online course, and there is little guidance for what those might look like here. The IP policy was last revised in 2007; I wonder if perhaps it should be revisited? In some disciplines and in some contexts, it will be important for online course materials to retain status as "traditional academic copyrightable works."
- I agree that this needs some reconsideration so as to clarify the terms of course ownership. What if there is no support for development?
- APPM Section VI, Item 4 does not currently exist; perhaps it is in the works.
<https://www.niu.edu/academicaffairs/appm/index.shtml>

Current Language with Edits in Boldface	Ownership of such courses (faculty, university, shared) must comply with the stipulations of copyright described in APPM Section VI, Item 4 Section I, Item 6.
Notes	The first two comments mirror concerns identified last year from our policy review survey. These continued comments validate our decision to recommend the appropriate committee (those responsible for reviewing NIU's Intellectual Property Policy) to investigate stipulations pertaining to ownship of online and hybrid courses.
Decision	How do we want to handle this matter?

Policy 8

- Does number 8 exist only to satisfy financial aid? An online program desiring to offer four 10-week sessions per year has to overlap two sessions (say, spring) to accomodate this restriction. Would a separate registration system (or sufficient modification to existing) satisfy the federal financial aid requirements?

Decision	Do we know the answer to this question? What is the best way for us to respond to this comment?
----------	---

Policy 11*

- Add language because we inadvertently omitted “student-at-large” (which appears in the graduate version) when combining the undergraduate and graduate policy documents.

Current Language with Edits in Boldface	Persons receiving academic credit for such courses must be admitted to NIU or (for graduate students) be a student-at-large.
Decision	Should we comply with this request?

Policy 12 (Two separate comments – the same concern)

- aside from the points noted in previous comments, I think the policy is clear and concise. I am eager to learn the answer to how one confirms the identity of the person actually participating in an online discussion board, taking a test, etc.
- The identity of students participating in such courses must be verified by NIU to ensure that persons registered in the courses are the ones participating in them" How?

Decision	Do we know the answer to this question? What is the best way to address this comment?
----------	---

Policy 14*

- Add language to clarify that NIU is responsible for making sure this policy is followed.

Current Language with Edits in Boldface	Best practices in completing online and hybrid courses successfully must be made available to students by NIU on a regular basis.
Decision	Should we comply with this request?

Policy 15

- Add language to clarify that NIU is responsible for making sure this policy is followed.*

Current Policy with Edits in Boldface	Technical support staff must be available to faculty and students by NIU on a regular basis, and must actively work to prevent and quickly resolve technology-related problems from occurring.
Decision	Should we comply with this request?

- Concerning technical support. Much of the online work takes place on the weekend and a policy should exist to ensure technical resources - like, Blackboard access - is available to students and instructors during the entirety of the weekend. IT maintenance should be scheduled outside of the online course schedules.

Decision	What is the best way to address this concern? Should we add language to the current policy or create a new policy?
Current Language	Technical support staff must be available to faculty and students on a regular basis, and must actively work to prevent and quickly resolve technology-related problems from occurring.
Possible New Policy	Technical support must be available by NIU in the evenings and on weekends to ensure students and instructors have access to its learning management systems.

Policy 16*

- Add an additional policy.

Proposed New Policy	Faculty members will retain the same degree of academic freedom in creating and delivering online and hybrid courses as they do with traditional face-to-face courses.
Decision	Should we comply with this request?

General Comment

- On a tangential but potentially related issue, is this the place to say something like - Hybrid course face-to-face meetings held at the regional centers must be scheduled through the division of Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development.

Decision	What is the best way to address this comment? It is not linked to any of our current policy statements. Should we add a new one?
Possible New Policy	When hybrid courses are held at regional centers, the face-to-face meetings must be scheduled through NIU’s Division of Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development.

Definition of Hybrid Course*

- Since the proposed policy’s definition for “online” includes a metric of “100% of the course activity is done online,” for continuity, a similar metric “75%-99%” needs to be included to avoid the confusion that existed prior to summer 2014.

Decision	Should we comply with this request?
Background	<p>According to Terry Borg, our proposed definition of online does not specifically address the directive provided by then Interim Executive Vice President and Provost Freeman per the HLC’s definition.</p> <p>“Starting in summer 2014, the mode of instruction for course sections should be coded in MyNIU as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current W code will be changed to read online=100% (no face-to-face) • The current WF code will be changed to read online=75%-99% (some classroom)”
Note	<p>Such would unnecessarily limit what constitutes a hybrid course. I know of at least one hybrid course currently being offered that is 50% online and 50% in person.</p> <p>What is the WF code? Does it need to change?</p>

Policies for Online and Hybrid Courses Offered by Northern Illinois University

Below are general policies governing online and hybrid courses carrying undergraduate and/or graduate credit at Northern Illinois University (NIU). NIU defines online courses as those in which 100% of course activity is done online; there are no required face-to-face sessions within the course and no requirements for on-campus activity. NIU defines hybrid courses as those in which online activity is mixed with classroom meetings, replacing a significant percentage, but not all required face-to-face instructional activities.

General Policies:

1. Such courses must have an official instructor of record.
2. Such courses must be academically equivalent to face-to-face versions of the same course in terms of rigor, learning objectives, and material coverage.
3. Such courses 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.
4. To ensure accessibility to students with disabilities, instruction in such courses is subject to requirements that may be imposed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act as amended.
5. Such courses will be evaluated for quality on a regular basis using appropriate methods that include but are not limited to student course evaluations.
6. Ownership of such courses (faculty, university, shared) must comply with the stipulations of copyright described in APPM Section VI, Item 4.
7. The instructional delivery mode (online, hybrid, face-to-face) must be indicated in the NIU course finder.
8. Such courses must adhere to the same academic calendar and related rules (drop/add, withdrawal, refund policies, etc.) as traditional courses. Fall and spring courses must occur within the established start and end dates for the term, and summer courses must fall exclusively between the last day of spring and first day of fall to maintain federal financial aid eligibility under term rules. Within term boundaries, courses may vary in duration. For modest exceptions to this scheduling policy, contact Financial Aid.
9. Proposals for such courses must include a rationale as to how the number of credit hours per course was determined, in compliance with credit hour policies articulated in APPM Section III, Item 2.
10. Current rules regarding the number of credit hours students can take in an academic term apply to these courses.
11. Persons receiving academic credit for such courses must be admitted to NIU.
12. The identity of students participating in such courses must be verified by NIU to ensure that persons registered in the courses are the ones participating in them.
13. Professional development opportunities featuring best practices in designing, delivering, and maintaining quality online and hybrid courses must be made available by NIU to faculty on a regular basis.
14. Best practices in completing online and hybrid courses successfully must be made available to students on a regular basis.
15. Technical support staff must be available to faculty and students on a regular basis, and must actively work to prevent and quickly resolve technology-related problems from occurring.

Policies for Online and Hybrid Courses Offered by Northern Illinois University
(Policy Development Summary)

During the 2018-2019 academic year, the University Council Academic Policy Committee (UCAPC) was tasked with reviewing policies governing distance education courses carrying undergraduate credit offered by NIU. While completing our review, we learned that a graduate version of the policy also existed. In consultation with Graduate School Dean Brad Bond, we reached consensus that only one policy was needed. The two policy documents were consolidated into one and titled *Policies for Online and Hybrid Courses offered by Northern Illinois University* after completing the following tasks:

- Soliciting input from stakeholders (NIU's Executive Director of Extended Learning, online program coordinators/resource persons from our seven colleges, UCAPC members) via an online survey pertaining to the undergraduate policy document.
- Reviewing survey data for recurring topics and considerations.
- Reviewing pertinent documents (e.g., comparable policies from other institutions, Higher Learning Commission publications).
- Carefully comparing the undergraduate and graduate policies for overlap and uniqueness.
- Soliciting input from Dean Bond, Rebecca Babel (Director of Financial Aid), and Katy Whitelaw (Information Technology Accessibility Officer) regarding specific items.

The consolidated policy, reviewed and approved by Graduate Council on May 6, 2019, contains 15 policy statements. Five of the statements (1, 3, 8, 9, 11) appeared in both the undergraduate and graduate policies, six (2, 4-7, 12) appeared only in the undergraduate policy, one (10) appeared only in the graduate policy, and three (13-15) were created anew. The policy begins with operational definitions of online and hybrid courses using language from the Online Learning Consortium. The definition of online courses needed to be revised because it no longer aligned with NIU's current definition. The new definition is more stringent than the Higher Learning Commission's definition. The definition of hybrid courses was added to clarify the nature of such courses.

UCAPC Recommendations for University Council

1. Review and revise the Intellectual Property Policy to address concerns pertaining to ownership of online and hybrid courses. The policy was last revised in 2007, well before the Higher Learning Commission's visit and NIU's Strategic Enrollment Plan emphasizing online learning.
2. Create a detailed faculty handbook on best practices in designing, delivering, and maintaining quality online and hybrid courses that includes exemplars, as well as pertinent readings and links.
3. Enhance NIU's course finder so the course delivery mode (online, hybrid, face-to-face) is explicitly indicated.