

Appendix A – Hybrid and Online Course Policies

Definitions of E-learning From Online Learning Consortium (formerly Sloan Consortium)

Source: <http://onlinelearningconsortium.org/updated-e-learning-definitions/>

COURSE-LEVEL DEFINITIONS

Below, we have distilled current practices into six categories that reflect the variety of applications that are in use today.

1. Traditional Classroom Course – Course activity is organized around scheduled class meetings.

Traditional courses are measured by the number of hours spent in required class meetings or other traditional activities, such as laboratories, field trips, or internships. Such courses may involve some sort of computer usage—for example, a software simulation or laboratory or design software for art or engineering applications—but the course is still anchored to the normal time spent in classes. For the purposes of this paper, courses that use technology at this level are considered to be “traditional classroom” courses.

2. Synchronous Distributed Course—Web-based technologies are used to extend classroom lectures and discussions to students at remote sites in real time.

These courses use web conferencing or other synchronous e-learning media to provide access to a classroom experience by students at off-campus locations (such as places of employment, other campuses, etc.) while otherwise maintaining a traditional classroom structure. These courses may mix on-campus and remote students.

3. Web-Enhanced Course – Online course activity complements class sessions without reducing the number of required class meetings.

The University of Central Florida was among the first institutions to adopt this term as an official category. When Internet access is required to complete course requirements, and when this Internet-based work augments classroom activity or supplants less than 20 percent of the traditional classroom activity, the course is considered a “web-enhanced course.” Traditional courses and web-enhanced courses are very similar, but are placed in separate categories because web-enhanced courses require additional faculty and student support, and very likely additional technology. Web-enhanced courses are not normally considered to be e-learning courses, but are described here because they may be a step toward a hybrid or online course. The National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) calls this a “supplemental” approach, in which some technology-based, out-of-class activities are used to encourage greater student engagement with course content.

4. “Emporium” Course – This model, designed for on-campus use, eliminates all class meetings and replaces them with a learning resource center featuring online materials and on-demand personalized assistance.

This model was developed through several innovations funded by the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) designed to give campus-based students control over when they study. The purpose is to allow students to choose when they access course materials, to choose what types of learning materials they use depending on their needs, and to set their own pace in working with the materials. It assumes that students have access to sophisticated instructional software and one-on-one on-site help. It replaces formal class meetings with increased access to instructional assistance and allows institutions to combine multiple lecture sections into one large section.

A variation on the Emporium model is the **Flex Course**, developed at Herkimer Community College in New York State, in which students have available to both classroom-based and online options for all or most learning activities and may choose to participate entirely online, entirely in class, or mix online and in-class sessions.

5. Hybrid Course – Online activity is mixed with classroom meetings, replacing at least 20 percent, but not all required face-to-face meetings.

When the technologies used for education and communication outside the classroom are used to *supplant* some of the classroom work, reducing the time actually spent in the classroom, the result is a hybrid course. For example, if a course traditionally meets in a classroom three times per week, a hybrid version might use online sessions to replace one or two of

the traditional weekly classroom sessions or to eliminate all but a few key face-to-face sessions for laboratory work or examinations. A general rule is to classify a course as hybrid if online components replace a minimum of one class meeting per week in a typical three-credit course or to replace all but a few key face-to-face sessions for laboratory work or examinations. Some institutions use hybrid courses with traditional on-campus students to improve efficiency in the use of limited classrooms. For example, replacing 50% of classroom experiences with online experiences would allow an institution to schedule a second course in the same room. The National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) describes this as a “replacement” approach, in which online activity replaces some class meetings. The Sloan Foundation required that funding for such courses use online experiences to offset at least 30 percent of traditional classroom experiences.

A variation—call it **Hybrid-Plus**—identifies courses that are mostly online but that require a small number of scheduled classroom or other on-site group events. These courses are at least 80% online.

Hybrid courses are one component of E-Learning. They are particularly relevant in programs that serve students within commuting distance of campus. They increase flexibility but do not totally eliminate the need for students to have physical access to a campus facility. Hybrid courses will be attractive to many traditional full-time students, in addition to non-traditional learners, typically working adults who are within commuting distance and who wish to earn a degree.

Note that, in the past, the terms “blended” and “hybrid” have been applied at both the course level and the program level without differentiation. This has created a degree of confusion. Our definitions use “hybrid” at the course level and “blended” at the program level to allow for clearer distinctions in usage.

6. Online Course – All course activity is done online; there are no required face-to-face sessions within the course and no requirements for on-campus activity.

Online courses totally eliminate geography as a factor in the relationship between the student and the institution. They consist entirely of online elements that facilitate the three critical student interactions: with content, the instructor, and other students.

While these courses may appeal to on-campus students, they are designed to meet the needs of students who do not have effective access to campus. They may reside near the campus, or they may reside quite a distance away in other states or even in other countries. Over the years, universities have sought to serve this “non-traditional” population through a variety of media—from correspondence courses to satellite teleconferences—but only since the mid-1990s has technology enabled easy and continuous communication—interaction—among the learners and instructors at a distance. The Internet also has made library and other information resources available to this group. Improvements in basic technology also permit this user group access to complex data as in precision images, mathematical visualizations and simulations of various kinds. Social networking applications allow these learners to participate in both formal and informal learning communities.