

ONLINE AND HYBRID COURSE POLICY

I. Definitions of the Online and Hybrid Formats

A. MCLA defines an online (or fully-online) course as one in which all of the following are true:

1. All required actions and interactions of students and faculty occur in the College's learning management system (LMS) ("online");
2. All required resources (texts, media, materials, tools) are accessible through the LMS or other readily accessible format;
3. No in-person or face-to-face ("on-ground") interactions are required or expected.

B. MCLA defines a hybrid course as one in which all of the following are true:

1. The required actions and interactions of students and faculty occur both in physical space ("on-ground") and in the College's learning management system (LMS) ("online");
2. The on-ground and online course components are demonstrably, consistently, and pedagogically integrated;
3. A student is required to spend a meaningful portion of their total instructional time, greater than 0% and less than 100%, engaging with resources and activities in the LMS, as measured by a standard conversion between online activities and on-ground instructional time;
4. The difference between a course's on-ground instructional time and its total minimum instructional time, as outlined by federal and accreditation guidelines, is met by the measured online instructional time, as an alternative to "seat time", as calculated in I.B.3.

C. The Director of Academic Technology or their designee will determine whether the above structural criteria have been met for a given course.

II. Preparation for the Online and Hybrid Formats

A. MCLA recognizes that success in the online and hybrid formats requires both students and faculty to have skills distinct from, and in addition to, those needed for success in on-ground courses.

B. Before a faculty member begins teaching an online or hybrid course at MCLA, they will have completed sufficient training, offered by the Center for Academic Technology, to design and teach online or hybrid courses using specific standards of design and practice. Alternatively, a faculty member may complete a proficiency test to demonstrate meeting these standards, as administered and observed by the Center for Academic Technology. The Director of Academic Technology will ensure that, at minimum, this training or proficiency test will include demonstrated proficiency in:

1. Identifying course and program outcomes and mapping them to online activities;
2. Calculating online workload to ensure credit hour requirements;

3. Meeting baseline standards of accessibility and universal design;
4. Supporting student success in the online environment with resources including:
 - a. Course description
 - b. Course outcomes
 - c. Required resources/texts
 - d. Course expectations and policies
 - e. Grading standards and practices
 - f. Schedule of dates for online activities
 - g. College policies and resources, including:
 - i. Academic honesty policy
 - ii. Disability resources
 - iii. Technology support resources
5. Sustaining effective online presence and responsiveness.

C. Since technologies change rapidly, in order to ensure that students receive instruction based on current best practices, each successful training or proficiency test will be valid for no longer than 3 calendar years from its date of completion.

1. Once a faculty member has successfully completed a training or proficiency test, they may renew their certification by completing "refresher" training of no more than 5 total hours with the Center for Academic Technology, prior to the end-date of the previous period. Such training may take the form of in-person or online workshop(s), seminar(s), or other professional development, and will address current best practices, LMS tools, and governing technology standards regarding:
 - a. Accessibility;
 - b. FERPA and student privacy;
 - c. Copyright and intellectual property;
 - d. Multimedia.
2. If a certification has lapsed, a faculty member may, with the agreement of their Chair and the Director of Academic Technology, apply to renew certification by completing "refresher" training within 1 calendar year of the end-date of the lapsed certification.
3. If a certification has lapsed for more than 1 calendar year, a faculty member will re-take the initial training as detailed in II.B before teaching an online or hybrid course.
4. The "date of completion" for faculty who completed certification prior to adoption of this policy will be the date of implementation of the policy. Thenceforward such faculty will renew their certification in accordance with all regular scheduling provisions as articulated in this policy.
5. In the event of replacement or substantial redesign of the LMS, Academic Technology will offer updated training to all faculty within one year of College-wide implementation. Online and hybrid faculty will complete that training within 2 years of College-wide implementation, or by the expiration of their current certification, whichever is earlier. In such an event the Director of Academic Technology will determine and articulate the standards for identifying a redesign as "substantial".

III. Requirements of the Online and Hybrid Formats

A. MCLA has an obligation to ensure that an online or hybrid course equals the educational quality of an on-ground course, in standard and measurable ways. An online or hybrid course will meet at least the following standards:

1. Instructor-posted online content of the course meets federal accessibility standards as articulated in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In online contexts, these standards are met by adherence to the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 level AA, or any successor policy version duly approved by the W3C.
2. Course uses LMS tools and features to support and enhance student learning in the online or hybrid format.
3. Students receive regular and timely contact with instructor, as articulated by the faculty in the syllabus.
4. Graded activities explicitly support course and program outcomes.
5. Students have opportunities and adequate support for substantive and meaningful interactions with instructor and peers online (and, for hybrid courses, on-ground).
6. Course design choices, as far as possible, do not privilege students on the basis of access to specific technology infrastructure (e.g. connectivity, software, or device).

B. An online or hybrid course will be designed, in advance, to do all of the following:

1. Provide online space and content which are equally accessible, coherent, and navigable across devices;
2. Provide space for sustained and consistent student-student and student-instructor engagement;
3. Minimize, as much as possible, technological roadblocks to, or distractions from, curricular engagement;
4. Leverage available and appropriate features of the LMS to support instructor judgment and assessment of student participation with the best and fullest available information;
5. Support structurally MCLA's commitment to access, especially as related to student access to digital infrastructure and connectivity.

C. In addition, a hybrid course will be designed, in advance, to do all of the following:

1. Articulate the proportional weight of both online and on-ground components, and the expectations for student engagement in each component relative to the total course time and grade;
2. Provide the student an expected schedule of all in-person and/or synchronous requirements;
3. Be a functional whole, integrating both components into a coherent educational experience;
4. Articulate how each component addresses the course and/or program outcomes;
5. Give adequate emphasis to both components, taking care that, in practice, neither component is ancillary to the other, and that neither component alone suffices to meet all required course and/or program outcomes.

D. Evaluation of faculty who teach online and hybrid courses is conducted in accordance with the terms of the applicable faculty collective bargaining agreement.

1. This policy recognizes that the Center for Academic Technology has a role to support, facilitate and inform Chairs, or any parties with a responsibility to evaluate, by providing information relevant to the technologies used to deliver online and hybrid format teaching, which information can assist the parties in the effective performance of their responsibilities, but which may fall outside the parties' professional expertise.
2. This policy expects that Chairs, or any parties with a responsibility to evaluate, will seek informational support from the Center for Academic Technology when conducting evaluations in online and hybrid courses, to ensure they have sufficient factual knowledge of the relevant technologies to complete these responsibilities. Such informational support may include fact sheets or similar documentation of the functionality of a technology.
3. Evaluation of individual faculty members is not the responsibility of the Center for Academic Technology.
4. Notwithstanding the aforesaid, nothing in this policy shall be understood to contravene any terms of the applicable faculty collective bargaining agreement.

IV. Attendance in the Online and Hybrid Formats

A. MCLA uses the federal guidelines below to determine student attendance in online and hybrid courses:

In a distance education context, documenting that a student has logged into an online class is not sufficient, by itself, to demonstrate academic attendance by the student. A school must demonstrate that a student participated in class or was otherwise engaged in an academically related activity. Examples of acceptable evidence of academic attendance and attendance at an academically related activity in a distance education program include:

- student submission of an academic assignment,
- student submission of an exam,
- documented student participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction,
- a posting by the student showing the student's participation in an online study group that is assigned by the institution,
- a posting by the student in a discussion forum showing the student's participation in an online discussion about academic matters, and
- an email from the student or other documentation showing that the student initiated contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course. (*source: FSA Handbook 2019-2020, Volume 5, 5-65,66*)

B. Attendance in a hybrid course is measured proportionally to the stated percentage weight of both course components. For example, in a course which is 65% online and 35% on-ground, a student with full on-ground attendance but no online attendance would have an overall attendance record of 35%.

V. Scheduling Online and Hybrid Format Courses

A. All materials listing or advertising online or hybrid course offerings will:

1. Label each course offered in the online or hybrid format as such;
2. Provide the College definition of the online or hybrid format, and a hyperlink to this Policy;
3. For hybrid courses, specify the percentages of online and on-ground components in each course;
4. For hybrid courses, specify the schedule of all in-person meeting requirements for each course;
5. For hybrid courses, specify the schedule of all synchronous online requirements, if any, for each course.

B. Recommendations regarding the scheduling of online and hybrid courses falls within the responsibilities of Chairs (or their designees) as per the relevant faculty collective bargaining agreement. To assist the Chair in performing these duties, a faculty member wishing to teach a course in the online or hybrid format will provide to the Chair, at least 14 days in advance of the deadline for submitting courses for scheduling in a term, the following:

1. Evidence of successful completion of training, as detailed in II.B;
2. A rationale for offering the course in the online or hybrid format, which refers to pedagogical, disciplinary, programmatic, or other reasons which align with the mission of the College.

VI. Online and Hybrid Course Design and Intellectual Property

A. MCLA recognizes its obligation to provide students with reliable, accessible, well-designed online course environments.

B. MCLA recognizes that online and hybrid format courses frequently involve the expertise of College staff in designing and creating online resources in collaboration with faculty.

C. To protect both faculty's intellectual property rights and the College's ability to develop and sustain high-quality online and hybrid courses and programs:

1. Chairs should encourage faculty intending to teach online and hybrid courses to investigate whether, and to what degree, any development work necessary to meet the requirements of this policy could be considered "joint work" between faculty and College staff: e.g., "template" content or LMS design structure or metadata.
2. Chairs should articulate any program requirements or expectations relevant to re-use of course structure or content: e.g., future programmatic or departmental re-use of course structure or content.
3. Any arrangements for co-ownership or "joint work" arrangements between faculty and the College should be agreed upon in advance and documented in written form.
4. The College shall not use faculty intellectual property without the express written consent of the faculty member. The written consent should include the scope and duration of the agreed-upon use.

NOTE: Due to the scope of this policy exceeding the charge of the Academic Policies Committee, this policy was drafted by a special committee based on a previous version approved by the Academic Policies Committee.