**SEBS Online and Hybrid Course Guidelines**

Curriculum and Education Policy Committee

February 2025

To build a culture of excellence in online and hybrid undergraduate instruction that will reach our diverse student population, this document serves to provide guidance to faculty and undergraduate program directors (UPDs) who wish to develop and/or implement online and hybrid teaching.

**Course Format Options**

In alignment with Rutgers Scheduling, the Curriculum and Education Policy Committee (CEP) defines online instruction as courses offered:

* Asynchronous online (no fixed meeting time)
* Synchronous online (a fixed meeting time via an online platform)
* Hybrid instruction (face-to-face with fixed meeting time as well as an online component)

When selecting an online and/or hybrid option, choose the course format that best meets the pedagogical needs and learning goals of your course material, activities, and programs. Many courses can work in multiple formats when adapted appropriately.

**Asynchronous Online**

* Class instruction is completely online with no fixed meeting times
* The course in its entirety should be posted no later than the first week of classes on the course LMS
* Deadlines should be provided to help students work through the material at an appropriate pace

**Synchronous Online**

* Class instruction is online (via video conferencing platforms) with fixed meeting times that are scheduled and consistent throughout the semester
* No in-person exams may be scheduled for this format

**Hybrid**

* Courses are taught with a portion of meetings in-person and the balance completed asynchronously or synchronously online via the course LMS
* Most frequently, courses meet for one class period in-person once a week (e.g., for a 3-credit course, 80 minutes) and the remaining material is presented asynchronously online
* As best practice, courses should meet at least 50% of the semester in-person
* In-person components must be scheduled through the scheduling office and online content must be coordinated and posted in advance on the course LMS to allow adequate planning for students

**Guidelines for Online and Hybrid Courses and Programs**

All proposals for **new** undergraduate courses offering online and/or hybrid instruction must first be reviewed and approved by the department or program offering the curriculum using the same process designed for in-person courses. Once all requested documentation is submitted online [<https://shorturl.at/QopvM>] the course is approved by the CEP and the SEBS faculty, a course number is assigned, and the new course is scheduled by Rutgers Scheduling.

It is highly recommended that the instructor/UPD consult with the CEP chair and/or vice-chair prior to submission for suggestions and feedback.

**Guidelines for Fully Online Undergraduate Programs**

Proposals to add new fully online undergraduate programs must be developed in accordance with university policies [<https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/develop-a-new-degree-program>] in consultation with the Dean of Academic Programs and must be reviewed and approved by their department/program and the CEP. The University’s Online Program Support (<https://uoes.rutgers.edu/services-we-provide>) provides comprehensive services to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and reach of fully online degree programs.

**CEP Approval**

Proposals with online or hybrid components will be reviewed by the CEP. The proposal must include:

* Syllabus
* Assessment plan
* Rationale for online instruction
* Mode(s) of instruction and student engagement
* Anticipated course size and section size (a class size of 25 to 35 per section is recommended)
* Mode(s) of student assessment

Instructor expertise in these modalities is beneficial, and training is recommended for those unfamiliar with online instruction.

To facilitate the review process, the instructors who intend to teach in online or hybrid modalities are required to attend the CEP meeting during which their course proposal is discussed for approval.

**Available Training and Resources for Online and Hybrid Instruction**

Mentoring and training for online and/or hybrid instruction and course design are highly recommended before submitting a course proposal. For example, the [Office of University Online Education Services](https://uoes.rutgers.edu/) provides training and faculty resources. UPDs are encouraged to request that program instructors who plan to engage in online pedagogy receive training prior to teaching the course, or prior to developing and offering a fully online program.

**Recommended Best Practices for Online and Hybrid Instruction in Canvas**

[All online and hybrid courses must use the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS)](https://canvas.rutgers.edu/) and other technology that is supported and adopted by Rutgers University. A list of external apps that instructors may wish to include in their Canvas course shell (e.g., Playposit, Kahoot, Kaltura, Media Gallery, Padlet, among others) are found here: <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/external-apps/>.

Points to consider when building a course in Canvas:

* Provide students with clear guidelines about the technology needed to participate in the online and/or hybrid course in Canvas. For example, if microphones and video cameras are needed, say so explicitly within the course syllabus and through the LMS. Keep in mind that your students may use different technology to access your course (e.g., smart phones, computers, or tablets)
* Browser recommendations should be included if you know of issues
* To help students keep track of coursework, include specific due dates rather than week number in modules and in the course syllabus, and update the LMS consistent to reflect any course changes as the semester progresses
* Use the Modules tool in Canvas to post course materials (the entire syllabus, all due dates, readings, videos, assignments, discussion forums, etc.) sequentially or by due date
* Post grades regularly: students can better evaluate their learning throughout the semester if grades are posted to Canvas as soon as possible after an assignment or assessment is due
* Recommended student tasks in an online/hybrid course may include discussions, quizzes/exams, simulations, games, portfolios, readings (books/articles), podcasts, YouTube videos, recorded mini lectures (suggested length around 20 minutes), peer reviewed assignments, poster submissions, and writing assignments.
* Instructors should be “present” and “actively engage” their students throughout the semester (for example by participating in discussions, giving timely feedback, sharing course announcements, etc.)

**Commonly asked questions:**

*How will my students interact with other students?* (Student to Student Engagement)

Structure the learning community and make it clear to students how they should interact with others in the class. This is often done using the Discussions tools and other tools within Canvas.

*How will my students interact with me, their instructor?* (Student to Instructor Engagement)

Examples of regular and substantive interaction include direct, synchronous instruction; providing timely feedback on coursework; using expanded commenting and feedback on assignments, discussions, reports, quizzes, and exams; responding to student questions; posting regular weekly announcements; and providing opportunity for virtual or in-person office hours.

*How will my students interact with the course content?* (Student to Content Engagement)

Provide active learning experiences for students. What will the students do with the course content? These types of interaction and engagement can be achieved in a variety of ways. Examples include discussions, peer-review of a submission, annotations of published articles (Hypothesis App), and threaded chat (Lucid, Piazza Apps).

**Recommended Grading Scheme:**

Best practices for grading online course components include:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Component** | **Assessment** | **Examples** | **Recommended % of grade:** |
| Core facts (checking for factual knowledge) | Exams (mid-terms and final) | * 2 to 3 exams for regular term * 2 exams for summer session * Multiple-choice, short answer | Variable  (25% to 40% of grade) |
| Application of knowledge or situations, or concepts learned | Assignments | * Discussions * Written assignments/essays * Readings * Submission of class notes * Group projects * Research poster with virtual gallery walk | Variable  (10 to 15% or 35 to 55% of grade, depending on assignment) |
| “Check-ins”/Attendance | Quizzes/mini quizzes |  | Variable  (10 to 25% of the grade) |
| Interactive content | Participation (hybrid) and engagement (hybrid and online) | * Mini lectures with questions * Discussions * Group projects * Meeting session notes | Variable  (10 to 15% or 35 to 55% of the grade, depending on the assignment) |

**Approximate Course Hours**

Under federal, state, and [university regulations](https://policies.rutgers.edu/B.aspx?BookId=11905&PageId=459222), one college credit requires one hour of classroom time and approximately two additional hours of work outside the classroom per week for a 15-week semester (e.g., for the standard 3-credit course, two 80-minute lectures per week = 160 minutes per week). Since hybrid and online course formats vary widely, the focus should be on total time-on-task for the average student while ensuring adequate instructor-student interaction.

These resources will help you estimate your course hours:

* [Workload Estimator 2.0](https://cat.wfu.edu/resources/tools/estimator2/) (Center for the Advancement of Teaching, Wake Forest University)
* [Time on Task](https://www.rit.edu/teaching/time-task-online-courses) (Time on Task in Online Courses, Center for Teaching & Learning Services, Rochester Institute of Technology

Recommended minutes per week allotted to activities for synchronous and asynchronous online courses:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Synchronous online** | | **Asynchronous online** | |
| (recommended minutes per week) | | | |
| Lectures | 45 to 80 | Reading PowerPoints or listening to recorded lectures | 20 to 45 |
| Quizzes | 20 to 30 | Discussions | 30 to 45 |
| Group activities | 30 to 45 | Quizzes | 20 to 30 |
| Review essay/ comprehension assignment/ Q & A/discussion in group activities | 10 to 20 | Lecture notes | 30 to 45 |
| Comprehension assignments | 25 to 60 |
| Review/reflections/ expectations essays | 15 to 45 |

Please note:

* Student workload should be regularly assessed and course expectations modified accordingly.
* To help promote transparency and to help students gauge the amount of time they should devote to your course, include time-on-task estimates in the information you provide them in Canvas (for example, when posting a reading or graded assignment).

**Evaluation and Academic Integrity**

Ensuring academic integrity in online courses includes both pedagogical strategies and/or technological tools. Some suggestions include developing assignments and exams in an open book/notes format and developing multiple lower-stakes assessments throughout the course that will help students retain what they are learning. Technological and privacy consideration must be considered when online exams are included in courses.

**Additional Guidance**

Technology, privacy issues, and scholarship contributing to best practices continues to evolve in online and hybrid education. Faculty and instructors are encouraged to pursue scholarly and professional development opportunities in this area. [University Online Education Services](https://uoes.rutgers.edu/online-teaching-essentials) offers a certificate in Online Teaching and several digital badges to enhance online pedagogy.

**Questions?**

Direct questions regarding the guidelines to the current chair or vice-chair of the CEP.