GUIDELINES FOR REMOTE LEARNING COURSES
(Updated February 23, 2016)

Preamble

It is the Committee on Educational Policy's interest to insure that courses with a significant remote learning (RL) component are reviewed fairly and consistently by the Senate; accordingly the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) developed the guidelines below in collaboration with the Committee on Courses and Graduate Council. Either CEP or the Committee on Courses may modify or eliminate some of these guidelines as familiarity with remote learning (RL) courses develops and as best practices in the structure and delivery of RL courses are determined and generally adopted; it is to be expected that such modifications will be adopted after a consultation between these two committees in order to insure consistency. These guidelines are not offered as possible changes in the regulations or committee charges.

In considering RL courses the CEP has assumed that once the Senate through the Committee on Courses has approved a course, it has passed the necessary scrutiny to insure that the expected quality of instruction will be delivered. For the same reason, any instructor approved to give such a course is assumed to have the necessary expertise and should be given all the freedom to modify his/her methods of instruction. Based on this the CEP believes that RL courses should not be associated with a particular instructor, nor with particular choices of software or hardware. In addition, the Committee considers that the repeat policy should apply to courses with equivalent syllabi independently of their being traditional or RL.

This document does not deal with some thorny issues surrounding RL courses, such as revenue sharing and intellectual property. This is not done with the intention to minimize these important concerns, but because they lie well outside the scope of both the Committee on Courses and the CEP.

Guidelines for the approval of Remote Learning courses

Definition

A course shall be labeled remote-learning (RL) if face-to-face contact with an instructor represents less than 1/3 of the total hours of required work per week[1].

Though this will be the general definition of RL courses, both CEP and the Committee on Courses recognize that there may be cases where this will be inappropriate; the ultimate determination of whether a course is to be considered RL will be made by the Committee on Courses, and may be at variance with the above definition..

SR 760 associates one unit for 3 hours of work per week per term. It is understood, however, that a minimum of two hours of outside reading or other preparation is expected each week for each hour of lecture, seminar, consultation, or discussion. The general definition implies that a course with N units will be an RL course if it has fewer than N face-to-face contact hours/week. For example, a 4-unit course for which the total amount of face-to-face lecture plus discussion plus seminar plus workshop plus laboratory time is less than 4 hours/week, *would* be an RL course. It is presumed (and verified in the course proposal during the Committee on Courses review) that all additional required contacts between students and instructor(s) occur remotely. The guidelines below are intended, in part, to insure that this type of contacts will allow students to interact with the instructors.

Catalog Description

Courses with standard and RL offerings are considered equivalent. Courses proposals with RL as a possibly delivery mode should include a sample course syllabus for RL delivery in lieu of or in addition to a syllabus for traditional delivery and should include the appropriate requests for repeatability. Courses, such as many lab courses, where physical interaction is an important aspect of the course, are presumptively not equivalent if offered in a RL format. Departments wishing treat RL and traditional delivery courses as non-equivalent are advised to number the courses uniquely and to use the overlap statement to prevent credit being given for both delivery formats

All RL catalog course entries should include

- A broad description of the blend of traditional and online activities for the course
- Whenever pertinent, a note indicating that some specialized hardware and/or software might be required, referring the students to the course syllabus for specific descriptions

Approval

All RL courses require separate approval **of the RL syllabus** by the Committee on Courses even if there is an approved traditional course with the same **course content**.

In considering approval of RL course proposals, the Committee on Courses shall be primarily focused on whether or not the RL course will provide quality of education at the level required by UC. The Committee shall be mindful that the goal of such courses is to provide access to more qualified students; neither possible reduction of graduation time, nor revenue advantages, shall be of relevance in the approval process.

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[1] This definition parallels the one used at UC Berkeley.

Given the absence of generally-accepted best practices for remote instruction, the Committee on Courses may opt to initially approve a course **or syllabus with the RL format** only for a defined period of time, with a favorable review required before granting unrestricted approval. The Committee on Courses may require RL course proposals to provide details not required of traditional courses.

Any substantial modification in the delivery or evaluation methods in an RL course should require separate approval by the Committee on Courses even if the content matter is left unaltered.

When RL courses are proposed in degree programs that are subject to accreditation by external agencies (such as the ABET accreditation for Engineering programs), it is the responsibility of the department/program to insure that the external agency will accept the RL courses in the accreditation process

Evaluation

In consultation with the college executive committees, the CEP and Committee on Courses will modify the course evaluation form to include items specific to RL courses. These committees will review and update this form every 5 years or earlier if needed.

No RL course is to be associated with a specific instructor. Nor will they be associated with particular software and hardware needed for their implementation; instructors should be free to replace one type of software/hardware with another form offering to offering as they see fit. Any substantial revision of the evaluation method, however, will require a separate approval by the Committee on Courses

Suggested Guidelines to the Committee on Courses

The following provide a list of points that the Committee on Courses may want to consider when evaluating RL course proposals. Not all points are relevant in all cases and additional ones might be raised for specific instances.

All RL course proposals should

- Conform to the standard schedules of 10-week offerings during the academic year, or 10/5/3/ week for the Summer session; the Committee on Courses can consider alternative scenarios under exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Any proposal to allow students to take evaluations at different times during the term must also include workable plans to maintain the integrity of the evaluations (see also next bullet).
- Provide a clear description of the evaluation methods including the measures aimed at preventing student dishonesty (especially if online examinations are proposed). In addition, electronic assessment tools must be designed/chosen to insure sufficient variation in the evaluation instruments from offering-to-offering so that the availability of tests from previous offering does not compromise future evaluations.
- Guarantee student access to the instructor in charge of the course. Access to the instructor cannot be delegated to any sort of assistant. The course description should include the frequency, duration and manner of such contact hours. Similarly the number and manner of TA contact hours should be included in the course description.
- Make all reasonable accommodations to insure course access for students with disabilities.
- Rely on generally available hardware since requiring cutting-edge technology will disadvantage some students.

- Insure that all relevant material available to students residing at or near UCR is also available to all RL students; this includes library material available electronically.
- Insure that all software issues (availability, licensing, etc.) should be resolved prior to the beginning of the term.
- Specify all software and hardware requirements, and the manner in which course-specific items can be obtained. This information should be included in the syllabus
- Describe the technical support available to students on and off campus. This should include the option of dial-in support and not be restricted to online support (so as not to disadvantage students whose computer is non functional). This information should be included in the syllabus.
- Insure that all TAs are trained in the software and hardware to be used in the course.
- Have a built-in mechanism for assessing learning outcomes. Assessment should measure the effectiveness of learning in a course, should be used to guide improvement in the course, and, when a comparable regular course is taught in parallel, may enable comparison of the relative effectiveness of the RL and the regular course.

In addition:

Courses with a laboratory component require special attention. If the laboratory requires physical components[2], the simplest solution is to decouple the laboratory into a separate course that is taught on-site. Budget constraints, however, might force a choice between an on-line laboratory and no laboratory at all; such situations must be treated on a case- by-case basis weighing the advantages and problems of the proposal.

Teaching assistants should not be limited to RL courses but should also gain experience by serving in regular courses. A TA must alternate serving in an RL course with serving in two regular offerings *except* in cases where the TA requests to be assigned to RL courses more frequently.