

TO: Prof. John J. Manning, Chair
CLAS Committee on Curricula and Courses

FROM: Jocelyn Linnekin, Chair
CC&C Task Force on Online Courses

RE: Transmittal, Draft Review Procedure and Proposal Form
for Online and Blended Courses

On behalf of the CC&C Task Force on Online Courses, I herewith submit a proposed review procedure as well as a draft proposal form. I believe that some context and background will assist members of the CC&C in evaluating these submissions, hence this cover memo.

The Online Courses Task Force was formed over a year and a half ago at the request of the CLAS Dean's office, principally because of concerns over the quality of CLAS (and other) online courses that were being offered through the College of Continuing Studies. With the restructuring of Continuing Studies, jurisdiction over CLAS courses has been returned definitively to the departments. However, there is widespread agreement among CLAS administrators and faculty that "online" courses—even those approved previously in "face-to-face" format by the CC&C--merit a separate level of curricular review. Initial meetings of the Task Force were dedicated primarily to identifying the problems, deficiencies, and potential abuses of asynchronous delivery. "Horror stories" of uploaded PowerPoint slides and cautionary comparisons with "diploma mills" were exchanged. Members of the CC&C should be assured that the members of this Task Force were, from the outset, highly skeptical of online instruction and even inclined to be hyper-critical. However, after examining a great deal of comparative data we recognized that most of our peer and peer-aspiring institutions are ahead of this university in offering asynchronous instruction to students. Even since this Task Force began its work, moreover, online and blended instructional initiatives have sprung up across the curriculum. Accepting the development of online instructional designs as a growing trend, we focused our efforts on crafting an appropriate procedure for assuring the academic rigor and integrity of such offerings.

The most important distinction to keep in mind as we discuss these submissions is that "online" refers, in practical terms, VERY RARELY to courses that are virtually 100% asynchronous. If the recent past is any guide, these will most likely be summer-only courses. We can, however, foresee a course offered during the regular semester in which "face-to-face" interaction is limited to the first class and to scheduled examinations. Our evaluation procedure is designed for any course *in which a portion of instructional material is delivered asynchronously on a regular basis*. The vast majority of course proposals encountered will be for 'BLENDED' courses, in which there is a mix of face-to-face classroom teaching and online presentation of course content. For this reason, our discussions led to the conclusion that we should not, for example, impose an outright ban on courses having a laboratory component; it is possible to envision a lab science course in which one teaching hour, or even two hours, might be replaced by Internet presentations and/or student exercises completed online. Similarly, we decided not to mandate very specific instructional requirements based on our *predictions* of the kinds of course designs that CLAS faculty members will develop. I believe that the questions we have formulated will elicit the kind of information needed to evaluate the rigor, quality, and appropriateness of the course content and instructional format. In brief, let's get a procedure in place and see how it works. Once the procedure is implemented, experience will tell us (rather quickly, I think) how phrasings can be improved and whether other questions should be added.

ver. 21-Mar-07

REPORT OF THE CLAS CC&C ONLINE COURSE TASK FORCE

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION OF ONLINE COURSES [PROPOSED]

I. DEFINITIONS.

An "online" course is one in which instructional delivery is conducted purely electronically. Quizzes and examinations may be administered "live," i.e., on campus.

A "blended" course is one in which, on a regular basis, a portion of the primary instructional activity is conducted electronically, and the remainder is conducted with face-to-face interaction.

II. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

1. The CLAS CC&C will appoint a standing Online Course Review Subcommittee, which will evaluate proposals submitted for online and blended courses. This subcommittee will bring recommendations to the full CC&C, which has the final vote.
2. All new *and existing* online and blended courses must be submitted for evaluation and approved for online delivery by the CLAS CC&C .
3. Every online course must be overseen by a regular CLAS faculty member.
4. Faculty members intending to develop new online and blended courses are strongly recommended to consult the Instructional Design and Development (IDD) group of the Institute for Teaching and Learning.
5. Laboratory course may be proposed for online or blended delivery, but such proposals will require additional justification.
6. Online courses may *not* be proposed for "intensive" sessions (specifically, Intersession and the May term).
7. Online and blended courses proposed for fulfillment of General Education requirements will first be approved by the CLAS CC&C, in line with existing procedures, and then will be submitted to the Senate GEOC. The GEOC will decide independently whether to develop additional evaluative criteria for online and blended courses.
8. The CLAS CC&C reserves the right to set an enrollment cap on an online or blended course after reviewing the course proposal.

III. IMPLEMENTATION—NEW PROCEDURES:

1. Add to the CC&C form, "Proposal to Add a New Undergraduate Course," a new question, "17. Will this course be delivered in an online or blended format? If yes, complete the form, 'Proposal for Online/Blended Course Delivery.'" The 'Definitions' in Section I above will be added to the "Instructions for completing CLAS CC&C forms."
2. Introduce a new form, "Proposal for Online/Blended Course Delivery." [ATTACHED] This form will be used to evaluate existing online courses, new online/blended versions of existing courses, and wholly new courses that are proposing an online or blended format.