

Resolution Revising Handbook Policy on Online Courses

WHEREAS, the University of Delaware is committed to the use of innovative and online technologies to enhance and extend learning in undergraduate and graduate programs, both on and off campus; and

WHEREAS, it is increasingly clear that such innovative online techniques and courses can enhance learning for students on campus and extend learning to students at a distance; and

WHEREAS, the current policy in the Faculty Handbook on “distance learning,” which was drafted and recommended by the Faculty Senate Coordinating Committee on Education in 1993, clearly is outdated; and

WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate Coordinating Committee on Education has held two separate open hearings this academic year to consider potential changes to the existing Faculty Handbook policy; be it, therefore,

RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate approves the following new policy on the use of innovative technology and online course formats to replace the existing Faculty Handbook policy on the use of distance learning course formats.

Use of Innovative Technology and Online Course Formats

The University of Delaware is committed to the use of innovative and online technologies to enhance and extend learning in undergraduate and graduate programs, both on and off campus. The University has a long history of academic excellence founded on traditional classroom instruction, which should remain the educational standard on the Newark campus. It is increasingly clear, however, that innovative online techniques and courses can enhance learning for students on campus and extend learning to students at a distance. Therefore, online and other technologically enhanced and innovative methods of instruction are encouraged when appropriate for increasing educational effectiveness.

For purposes that require it, the University defines “online” course sections or programs as having 80% or more of their content delivered online, which follows an industry standard definition. It is recognized that most courses currently incorporate some lesser amount of content delivered online, either as an integral part or as supplementary, and are thus considered to be “web-facilitated,” blended,” or “hybrid.” As with more traditional in-person courses and programs, the development of online courses and programs must be based on sound educational principles. It is up to the

faculty member and their academic unit (e.g. department and/or college curriculum committees) to ensure the appropriate incorporation of effective online techniques. As are all courses and programs, online and hybrid courses and programs shall be reviewed and approved by the Faculty Senate if they have not been approved previously as in-person versions. Additionally, online course sections and programs shall be subject to the same periodic review and assessment by academic units as are in-person versions.

Student enrollment limits in online course sections shall be determined by the academic unit, as they are for in-person courses. Online course sections preferably will be taught by full-time University faculty to maintain educational quality and consistency. Online course sections shall not be used to replace faculty, and faculty shall not be required to teach online course sections. On occasion, it may be desirable to employ entities outside of the university (i.e. third party contractors) to assist in facilitation of online programs. Faculty must maintain responsibility and control over online course content and assessment. The use of third party contractors shall be restricted to student recruitment and retention, program marketing, design and technology support, and similar activities. Third party contractors shall not be used for primary instruction or final assessment of student learning.