

The University of Lynchburg offers online courses and degree programs as a supplement to on-campus courses for residential undergraduates and as an alternative to face-to-face courses for some graduate degree programs. This policy statement defines online education and establishes policies related to the development, delivery, administration, and technological support of online courses at the University of Lynchburg.

Objective

The objective of the University of Lynchburg's online course offerings is to provide more academic flexibility for on-campus and local students and to provide students around the globe with access to the exceptional education and high level of student-faculty interaction that have become the hallmark of a University of Lynchburg education.

Definitions

1. Online courses are taught completely online. Learners access primary content and instruction from an online environment using a variety of tools including, but not limited to, email, chat, discussion boards, web pages, telephone, and multimedia technologies. Specific technologies employed shall vary by course and instructor. Depending on the teaching style of the instructor and the course content, instruction can take place synchronously (all participants in the course log in at the same time) or asynchronously (participants log in and participate as their schedule permits), or some combination of the above.
2. Hybrid courses are taught with a mix of classroom and online faculty engagement with students. Students must attend face-to-face class instruction and log in to their online hybrid course on a regular basis for the duration of the semester. In both online and hybrid courses, specific technologies employed shall vary by course and instructor.
3. Web-enhanced courses are taught as face-to-face courses that use an online environment to expand student learning beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles provide a foundation for all online courses offered by the University of Lynchburg and for the development of policies for online courses. These guidelines apply to online and hybrid courses in which less than 50% of the course is delivered in a face-to-face setting.

1. The course content provided to students should not be technology dependent. While the ways that courses are structured and content is delivered may differ between online and on-campus courses, the learning objectives, subject mastery expectations, and overall course content coverage for a specific course must be the same, whether the course is offered online or on campus in a face-to-face setting.
2. The University of Lynchburg is known for providing outstanding education in a relational learning environment. Education at the University of Lynchburg is not a strictly individualistic effort but is practiced within the context of an academically engaged and humanistic community. Online instruction should thus reflect the same kind of quality environment as that created in a face-to-face course setting. As such, online courses should strive to create and maintain a relational and cooperative learning environment through a commitment to quality instructor presence, civil discourse in all online discussions and interactions, and interactive learning.
3. The quality of student learning, whether it takes place online or in a face-to-face course, must be indistinguishable. This implies that student learning outcomes must be independent of the course delivery technology employed.
4. To monitor and ensure learning quality, it is imperative that online courses be assessed using instruments that are substantially similar to those used in the same on-campus course to facilitate the between-delivery-method comparisons of learning outcomes.

5. One of the objectives of online course delivery is to improve the availability (both time and location) of courses for on-campus and local students and to provide students around the globe with access to courses offered by the University of Lynchburg.
6. The University of Lynchburg's ethical commitment to ensuring equivalent access is reinforced by our legal responsibility to do so. Our goal is to provide equal access to electronic and information technology for all students. Individuals with disabilities will be able to independently acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services within the same timeframe as individuals without disabilities, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

Guidelines

1. Developing an Online Course

- 1.1. **Best Practice** Faculty members teaching online are committed to providing the highest quality distance education courses to our students. Consequently, online courses are modeled to follow the Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs developed by the Southern Association of College and Schools (SACS) as published at <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/commadap.pdf>.
- 1.2. **Ensuring Equal Access to Online Education Materials and Programming for Students with Disabilities.** The procurement, development, implementation and/or maintenance of University of Lynchburg online courses, course materials, and course management systems will conform to the accessibility standards specified in [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#) and [WCAG 2.0, Level AA](#).
- 1.3. **Contact Hours** Contact hours for an online course, as provided by pre-recorded lectures, faculty-student interaction, synchronous class session, and etc. shall be consistent with that of the same course when offered in a face-to-face course.
- 1.4. **Course Approval** Online courses offered by University of Lynchburg faculty members shall be approved through the Lynchburg College Faculty Policy 4.1.5. Unapproved courses shall not be offered.
- 1.5. **Development Stipend** Faculty members at the University of Lynchburg will receive a one-time compensation for the development of a course to be taught in an Online format.
 - An individual developing an online course must be approved by the school dean.
 - Compensation for the development of the course will occur after completion, approval, and listing (in course offerings) of the developed online course. The course must be offered by the instructor being compensated for the development of the online course.
 - Stipends will not be paid to faculty members whose only responsibility is the development of online courses.
 - In the case of multiple faculty members working together to develop a single online course, the stipend will be equally divided between faculty members.
 - A course cannot be developed and taught in the same semester.
 - Faculty will only be compensated for the first-time development of the course with a designated number. Any faculty making subsequent modifications or revisions to the course will not receive any additional compensation.
- 1.6. **Instructional Development Training and Training Opportunities** The University of Lynchburg shall provide the necessary instructional development training related to online education as well as opportunities for training. University of Lynchburg faculty shall make effective use of the training resources presented.
- 1.7. **Copyrighted Materials** Faculty members must comply with University of Lynchburg copyright policies and federal law when duplicating print materials and periodical publications, and when including video or



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broadcasting programming, software materials, digital materials, music, or web-based materials in their courses.

- 1.8. **Intellectual Property** Online course material developed by faculty members is the intellectual property of the University of Lynchburg. The faculty member who initially develops an online course has the right of first refusal for each of the first three times the college offers that online course. Faculty members and department chairs should work together to alleviate course scheduling issues.
- 1.9. **Putting an Online Course on the Schedule** The department chair in consultation with faculty members recommends online courses for scheduling to the appropriate Dean as part of the annual course offerings planning cycle.
- 1.10. **Course Revision** A member teaching an online course, whether or not the faculty member was the original developer of the online course materials, shall review all course materials prior to the first day of class and ensure that all materials are current. Faculty members teaching courses they have not developed should review and master the course design and technologies prior to teaching faculty an online course. Following the initial offering of a course in an online format, course review will take place in accordance with the University of Lynchburg Faculty Policy 4.1.5.

2. Delivering an Online Course

- 2.1. **Online Course Orientation** Faculty shall provide students with an orientation for each online course no later than in the first learning module for the online course.
- 2.2. **Communication with Online Students** The course orientation is only the first point of contact; faculty teaching online courses ensure that quality interaction—between the faculty member and students—occurs regularly throughout the semester.
- 2.3. **Online Support for Course Development and Delivery** Faculty shall complete an appropriate instructor certification program for online education before they instruct an online course.
- 2.4. **Final Examinations** In accordance with the University of Lynchburg Faculty Policy (§ 4.4.4) a final examination, or an alternate exercise or assignment appropriate to the nature of the course must be utilized. In either event, the relative importance of the examination, exercise, or assignment in determining the total course grade lies with the instructor.
- 2.5. **Exam Proctoring** In the event the final examination is to be proctored, students are responsible for all related expenses.
- 2.6. **Course Schedule** Online and hybrid courses will be so identified in the published course schedule with the portion of online delivery specified.

3. Administrative Policies for Online Courses

- 3.1. **Faculty Teaching Load** Online courses taught during the fall and spring semesters count as part of a faculty member's regular teaching load. Normally, a faculty member may teach no more than one online course during the fall and spring academic term. In extenuating circumstances, online courses taught during J-Term may, in consultation with the faculty member's Dean, be counted as part of the faculty member's regular teaching load. Assignment by a faculty member's Dean, of an online course as a course overload, may be made as necessary.
- 3.2. **Faculty Availability** It is expected that each faculty member shall be available for student consultation at regular hours in accordance with the policies in the University of Lynchburg Faculty Handbook (§ 1.11.2.6) which requires that, "Faculty members inform students via syllabi of when and where they are available. Consultation with students may be executed through office hours, by phone, email, voicemail, or other

electronic means. All faculty members are expected to be available for student consultation at minimum one hour per semester hour of teaching up to ten hours each week.”

- 3.3. **Faculty Evaluation** All Faculty teaching online courses shall be evaluated in accordance with University of Lynchburg policies.
- 3.4. **Minimum Enrollments Per Section** In accordance with the University of Lynchburg Faculty Handbook (§ 4.4.1), classes in the regular program are ordinarily not offered for fewer than ten students in undergraduate (100 - 400 level) courses, nor for fewer than seven students in dual-level (500) or graduate (600) courses. With the consent of the Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs, exceptions may be made for good reason.
- 3.5. **Cancellation of Online Classes** The University of Lynchburg has the right to cancel online course sections with insufficient enrollments.
- 3.6. **Communication** The University of Lynchburg shall maintain an effective communication protocol to facilitate communication-related to online course design, development, and presentation between instructional faculty, the Teaching and Learning Resource Committee, the Director of Online Instructional Design, the Instructional Technology Specialist and the Disability Services Office.

4. Faculty Support Resources

- 4.1. **New Faculty Online Environment Orientation** The University of Lynchburg shall provide appropriate resources and training so that faculty members who have been assigned to teach their first online course are prepared to offer the highest quality course.
- 4.2. **Technology Support** The University of Lynchburg shall provide all necessary infrastructures to support high quality and ADA compliant online course offerings. This includes but is not limited to: (1) hardware, (2) bandwidth, (3) software, and (4) technical support of the same.