

**Report to the FSU Faculty Senate  
From the  
FSU Distance Learning Committee  
For the Academic Year 2017-2018**

**The University Distance Learning Committee (DLC) consists of the following members (with their terms):**

2013-2018: G. Stacy Sirmans, Business, Chair  
2014-2020: Charles Hinnant, College of Information  
2015-2018: Chris Lacher, Arts and Sciences

**Other Members:**

Eric Chicken, Arts and Sciences, UPC Chair  
Liz Jakubowski, Education, UCC Chair  
David Johnson, Arts & Sciences, GPC Co-Chair  
Ulla Sypher, Communication and Information, GPC Co-Chair

**Ex officio Members:**

Vice President for Academic Affairs or designee (TBA, Associate VP for Academic Affairs)  
Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement or designee  
Director, Office of Distance Learning

**The Charge of the Distance Learning Committee:**

The Distance Learning Committee shall provide policy development, oversight, and academic advice specific to the design and implementation of Distance Learning courses and degree programs. In particular, the committee will have the following responsibilities.

- i. To propose to the Senate procedures and standards for authorization to offer courses and programs by delivery methods other than standard classroom delivery, and for enduring quality control of such course and program offerings.
- ii. To monitor the effectiveness with which the procedures and standards and standards adopted are being implemented.
- iii. To propose to the Senate modifications to existing standards and procedures as appropriate. This committee will supplement, not supplant, the functions of other existing committees.

The Distance Learning Committee met on March 30, 2018. Three items were discussed.

- (1) The committee discussed the renewal rate for the distance learning delivery method. The policy currently states that distance learning courses must be renewed every three years by the UCC (DL policy pgs. 7 & 14):

*"The faculty, through ongoing assessment and evaluation, regularly updates courses and programs. Online courses are subject to the same institutional effectiveness practices as traditional offerings. In addition, online courses will be assessed at least every three years by the appropriate committee of the Faculty Senate to ensure they meet the requisite level of quality and provide comparable quality and effectiveness to on-campus versions."*

The DL committee discussed the three-year assessment cycle and its overwhelming nature for faculty and its administrative burden. The committee discussed switching to a 5-year rotation (which seems to be preferred practice for traditional delivery) but ultimately decided to recommend a 7-year renewal period and have the renewal correspond with the program's Quality Enhancement Review (QER). The committee proposed the following changes in DL policy:

*"The faculty, through ongoing assessment and evaluation, regularly updates courses and programs. Online courses are subject to the same institutional effectiveness practices as traditional offerings. In addition, online courses will be assessed ~~at least every three years by the appropriate committee of the Faculty Senate~~ to ensure they meet the requisite level of quality and provide comparable quality and effectiveness to on-campus versions."*

*"The faculty, through ongoing assessment and evaluation, regularly updates courses and programs. Online courses are subject to the same institutional effectiveness practices as traditional offerings. In addition, online courses will be assessed with the review completed by the unit's next Quality Enhancement Review to ensure they meet the requisite level of quality and provide comparable quality and effectiveness to on-campus versions."*

- (2) The second topic related to updating references of Blackboard Learn to Instructure Canvas for the LMS. Other than a straightforward name swap, the committee also decided to remove the references to Secure App and Organizations (pgs. 8 & 13), which are not a component of Canvas. Finally, the committee agreed that the line indicating that student completion rates will be tracked through the LMS was to be removed (pg. 13):

~~*III. "ODL is responsible for tracking student completion rates through Bb™."*~~

ODL clarified that the Use of the LMS is not mandatory at the university nor are there standards for reporting completion rates through Bb/Canvas. ODL would not be able to produce this information if requested; it should come from Campus Solutions via Institutional Research.

- (3) The committee's third topic of discussion centered on defining guidelines for determining appropriate student contact hours in distance learning courses. The section within the DL Process & Policy document (pg. 4-5) is written as:

*"When a class does not meet face-to-face with the instructor, alternative modes of instruction may substitute for standard classroom contact hours provided that the substitution has been approved by the university Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee (FSCC) and the authorization is on file with the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. For example, the Faculty Senate has determined that an asynchronous discussion board on the web might substitute for some standard classroom contact hours, just as some standard class time might be used by the instructor for class discussion. It is the responsibility of the peer review curriculum committees at Department/School/College level to determine the appropriate and academically justified number of contact hour equivalents assigned to each element of the proposed alternate delivery variant of a class. Notably, it is the policy of the Faculty Senate that "Unplanned contact between instructor and student(s) that does not directly relate to planned delivery of course content or achievement of course objectives should be regarded as the equivalent of office hours, and should NOT be assigned equivalents to standard classroom contact hours."*

The committee discussed various ways that contact hours might be achieved in online courses and reviewed several policies from other institutions. The committee ultimately compiled a list of appropriate activities that the UCC could consider when assessing whether a DL course is meeting its contact hour requirements. The committee's discussion did not result in a change in the language of the policy and focused primarily on options for instructor-student or student-student interactions in fully-online courses. The committee concluded that online courses should provide regular and substantive opportunities for students to engage with the instructor and other students enrolled in the course. Examples of these opportunities would include (but not limited to):

- Synchronous class session held at a scheduled time
- Instructor prepared online lectures presented in an appropriate format (e.g., written documents, audio and/or video files, and/or introductions and explanations for any publisher created materials)
- Instructor's commentary on the readings, with links to illustrative images, media, or text
- Participation in discussion boards (e.g., post, read and respond to peers)
- Weekly asynchronous forum where the instructor expands upon the lecture, answers questions, and/or facilitates post-lecture Q&A and general student interaction
- Online discussion of course materials (e.g., recorded lectures/videos or reading material) moderated by an instructor
- Detailed, personalized responses to tests/quizzes
- Weekly announcements
- Peer grading/feedback (feature available in Canvas) on work products
- Virtual office hours-in real time during announced periods of time or asynchronously during announced days and hours.
- Test review (e.g., discussion board Q&A, study group,
- Assignments or projects that promote collaboration among students
- Introductory biography activity

The class syllabus should document how regular contact between the students and the instructor will be achieved, including frequency of contact, how instructor will have an active presence in the class, and what constitutes student-initiated contact (e.g., where to post questions, and examples of types of questions).

As usual, the Distance Learning Committee stands ready to meet if the need arises and we will be working with the faculty senate president to determine discussion items for the future. If the Faculty Senate Steering Committee, faculty senators, faculty members at large, or others have issues that they feel should be brought before the DLC, please pass them along.

Thanks to all the members of this committee for their willingness to serve.

Respectfully Submitted,

G. Stacy Sirmans

J. Harold and Barbara M. Chastain Eminent Scholar in Real Estate