

POLICY ON ONLINE EDUCATION

Ave Maria University offers online courses as a complement to a fundamentally and largely residential educational program.

I. GOVERNANCE

Online academic offerings are a component of the academic offerings of Ave Maria University. As such, online academic offerings are administered by the Vice President for Academic Affairs through the standard departmental structure. Faculty, students, and departments receive the assistance of the Director of Online Education, who reports directly to the VPAA. The role of the Director of Online Education is limited to assisting faculty with technology training, acquisition of technological resources, and general concerns.

II. ADMINISTRATION

1. Scheduling an Online Course:

The procedure for adding an online course to the schedule is identical to the procedure for adding an on-campus course to the schedule. The planning, development, and oversight of online courses are the responsibility of the faculty member, the department, and the VPAA. The Office of Online Education may be called upon to give advice and training on the methodology or tools to be used in a given course, including the course management system, online-teaching pedagogy, or troubleshooting specific problems.

2. Assigning a Faculty Member to Teach an Online Course:

The procedure for the assignment of an individual faculty member to teach an online course is identical to the procedure for the assignment of an individual faculty member to teach an on-campus course. The standards for qualification of online faculty are the same as those for on-campus faculty. Ordinarily, the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty, and the proportion of faculty who hold terminal degrees will be the same for online courses as for on-campus courses. The Office of Online Education may make recommendations regarding specific course assignments based on

a) evaluations of the faculty member's preparedness for teaching online. Preparedness is ordinarily demonstrated by previous online teaching and/or by successful completion of training workshops on the necessary software, tools, or online-teaching pedagogy.

b) evaluation of the faculty member's past performance with online teaching at AMU. Past performance is evaluated in terms of adherence to best practices that contribute to assurance of integrity and to student engagement and motivation, through direct observation and through student evaluations. Evaluation of the academic components of the course (content, outcomes, etc.) is the responsibility of the department and the VPAA.

3. Assigning Credit-Hour Value to an Online Course:

Ordinarily, an online course will be directly comparable to a specific on-campus course. The appropriate academic authority (normally, the department chair) will verify the level of parity between the online and the on-campus course and will assign to the online course the same credit-hour value as held by the corresponding on-campus course. In the case of a substantially new course, the credit-hour value will be established by close examination of the course syllabus according to the following criteria.

According to the Higher Education Act, a credit hour is

a unit of measurement of the quantity of work performed by a student over a defined period of time that consists of one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out of class student work for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or at least a comparable amount of work for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. (HEA Section 600.2 Definitions)

(When the term credit hour is used, it refers to a semester hour of credit.) Following the HEA definition, online courses will be assigned credit hours based on time spent in asynchronous or synchronous means of instructional interaction such as

- a) Participating in a video-chat with the instructor individually or with other students;
- b) Discussions through text chat-rooms, discussion boards, or email with the instructor and/or other students;
- c) Working through modules or lessons written or procured by the instructor;
- d) Watching videos or listening to audio recordings provided by the instructor;
- e) Other activities that include instructor interaction and involvement.

As a general guideline, for every hour of instructional time, students should spend an average of two hours of non-instructional time in activities such as,

- i. Reading books or essays assigned by the instructor;
- ii. Preparing or delivering presentations or completing homework assignments;
- iii. Taking or studying for tests or working on writing assignments;
- iv. During research online or in a library;
- v. Small-group work or similar activities.

Expected student activities outside of instructional time should be included in the syllabus.

III. COURSE MANAGEMENT

1. Enrollment and Withdrawal from an Online Course:

The procedures and due dates for enrollment into or withdrawal from an online course are the same as that for on-campus courses. Students wishing to drop online courses follow the same procedures as for any other Ave Maria University course, and the same withdrawal and refund dates apply.

2. Communication in an Online Course:

Students in online classes will be required to use their Ave Maria University email accounts for the course. Faculty will use Ave Maria University email addresses to communicate with students. Students enrolling into online classes will be required to provide additional contact information, such as a cell-phone number or a home phone number. Upon registering, students will be given specific instructions regarding course access and participation policies.

3. Attendance and Participation in an Online Course:

Students are expected to participate and engage in every course, regardless of mode of delivery. In online courses, faculty will establish and announce attendance/participation policies for their courses and will monitor participation by checking for regular, substantial access to a University-licensed course management system, participation in discussion boards, submission of assignments, etc. Each online course will include an assignment within the first seven days of the beginning of an online class. If this assignment is not

submitted, the student will be considered a no-show and will be administratively dropped from the course. Attendance is tracked for online courses based on the dates the student accesses the online content in a University-licensed course management system. Should a last date of attendance need to be calculated for Financial Aid, refund, or other purposes, the last date of online access into the University-licensed course management system will be used.

4. Accessing Course Content:

All students enrolled in online courses must have active Ave Maria University email accounts. Issues with AMU email are handled by the Office of Information Technology. Courses will be delivered primarily through a University-licensed course management system.

IV. GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

The academic policies and expectations that govern Ave Maria University's on-campus offerings also apply to online offerings, for example:

- a. faculty, class sizes, organization, and content;
- b. performance in comparable tests or writing assignments;
- c. credit-hour value, pre-requisites, and place in the curriculum;
- d. administration and governance;
- e. student and academic support; and
- f. evaluation.

Online classes are equally subject to the university policies set out in the Academic Catalogue (including the Honor Code). Students in online classes have access to Library resources and receive support from the Writing Center, from Student Success and tutoring, from Career Services, from University Counseling and Health Services, and from Information Technology that is comparable to that available to on-campus students, as appropriate to the discipline and the circumstances. Evaluation of online courses aspects is the responsibility of the Department Chair and the VPAA. The appropriate academic authority, ordinarily the department chair, will exercise oversight through the usual channels such as review of syllabi, examination of course-evaluation data, and direct observation.

V. PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

Online academic offerings are fully included in the planning and evaluation processes at the institution. Evaluation and planning do not distinguish the mode of delivery of a class. The educational outcomes of online courses are identical to the outcomes of on-campus classes, as they contribute identically to the outcomes and goals of each major program and are embedded within the structure of on-campus major programs. Online courses are included in regular course planning and are expected to contribute to the students' timely completion of their degree. To the degree possible, assessment data will be disaggregated by modality (online versus on-campus) and student course performance in online courses will be compared against performance in on-campus courses.

VI. DEFINITIONS

1. A Fully Online Class is an online course offering in which all class sessions and exams are presented in an online environment. If a course meets at a specified time online, the course should list the day of the week and time in the Schedule of Classes. Fully online courses have no on-campus meetings.
2. A Partially Online Class is an online course offering in which most class sessions are presented in an online environment. Any face-to-face meetings are usually for activities

such as orientation, special in-class presentations, exams, or other in-class proofs of competency.

3. A Hybrid Class is a course offering in which students attend class sessions on campus and in an online environment. The class typically meets approximately half online and half on campus.
4. A Traditional Class is a course offering in which all or most of the class sessions take place on campus. Courses can make use of some web-based tools to supplement or enhance a course, so even a traditional class may include online components and activities (e.g., view a syllabus, take quizzes/exams, and participate in discussions).
5. Asynchronous refers to instruction in which the communication does not take place at the same time; examples include private mail and bulletin boards
6. Synchronous refers to instruction in which communication is simultaneous; examples include chat rooms, two-way interactive voice chat, interactive video.

Sources

http://www.thomasmore.edu/registrar/online_courses.cfm

<http://www.csun.edu/senate/policies/onlinehybridcourses.pdf>

<http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/courses/students/policies.asp>

<http://dmc122011.delmar.edu/math/policy.pdf>

<http://is.byu.edu/site/courses/coursepolicies.cfm>

<http://www.jfku.edu/Programs-and-Courses/Continuing-Extended-Education/Online-Course-Policies.html>

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