

# Policies and Procedures for Online Course Development

*SUNY Potsdam*

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## I. Rationale

The design, development, and delivery of online courses involve pedagogy, strategies, and technologies that may vary considerably from traditional classrooms. Therefore, all online courses must adhere to the guidelines and standards herein.

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish a foundation of minimum standards and best practices on which to build quality online courses and programs. Avenues for enforcement and remediation are clearly defined to ensure all SUNY Potsdam online courses adhere to high standards of quality.

## II. Definitions

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education defines Distance Learning as follows:

Distance education means education that uses one or more of the following technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously: (i) the internet; (ii) one-way or two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; (iii) audio conferencing; or (iv) video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs used in a course in conjunction with the previous technologies. (34 CFR §600.3)

Please note: If your department is considering offering 50% or more of any program through Distance education modalities, there are accreditation and approval processes that must be followed. Please contact the Provost's Office for additional information.

Online and hybrid courses, one type of Distance Learning, can be further categorized as follows:

Asynchronous Online	The course is 100% online and all direct instruction occurs under time delay; that is, direct instruction is recorded/stored and accessed later. These courses include NO requirements for face-to-face contact, on-site instruction, or for the student to be online at specified times (excepting proctored exams).
Synchronous Online	The course is 100% online and all direct instruction occurs in real time without time delay.
Combined Online	The course is 100% online and direct instruction combines both Synchronous and Asynchronous types in any proportion. Faculty must clearly outline the schedule requirements for the synchronous component(s) so students can determine their ability to meet those requirements.
Hybrid	A portion (0.01% - 99.9%) of the direct instruction for the course's curricular content is delivered to the student via online. Communication method and the remaining portion of the direct instruction are required to be delivered face to face.

Other Distance Learning models, such as courses using web-based technologies to extend classroom lectures and other activities to students at remote sites in real time, do not need to be approved through the Online Course Approval Process. However, these are considered Distance Learning Format courses by the New York State Education Department and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) and can affect the classification of a program using the Distance Learning format.

Web-Enhanced Courses are traditional, onsite courses that utilize a web-based technology (such as Moodle) to serve as a repository for content and resources that supplement the onsite component.

These courses have no reduction in the onsite seat time. Because the primary modality is still on campus, in-person instruction, these are not considered Distance Learning courses and no formal review required.

### III. Quality in Online Course Development and Delivery

Research<sup>1</sup> has provided several essential elements and recommended practices with regard to online courses. To ensure SUNY Potsdam offers high-quality online courses that address the needs of today's students, faculty utilize the following quality control resources and processes, each of which is outlined in greater detail below:

- Open SUNY Course Quality Review (OSCQR) Rubric and Process
- Online Course Approval Process
- Course Evaluations

#### A. *The Open SUNY Course Quality Review (OSCQR) Model*<sup>2</sup>

SUNY Potsdam has adopted the OSCQR model for development and review of online and hybrid courses. "There are two components of the model: the customizable OSCQR Rubric, which has 50 standards addressing design and accessibility, and the OSCQR Process, which is a collaborative, flexible approach to improving the instructional design of an online or blended course. It is campus driven and focused on continuous improvement, and is not intended to be an instructor or course evaluation."<sup>3</sup> Each course is reviewed using the **OSCQR Rubric** by the OSCQR Team, including:

- The *online faculty member*, also known as the course author or Subject Matter Expert (SME)
- The *online instructional design*
- The *external reviewer* – someone unfamiliar with the course, preferably a librarian, instructional technologist, or other faculty member trained to complete OSCQR reviews.

These perspectives offered by the Team combine to provide rich feedback on the design of the online course and inform a plan to improve specific design elements, such as content presentation, facilitation of interaction or collaboration, and providing feedback and assessment. Incorporated in this are additional opportunities for specific insights from the librarian and/or technologist perspectives.

All online/hybrid courses must complete this process prior to delivery. To ensure quality, it is important that these courses go through a process of review and refresh on a regular basis. Therefore, it is required that every online/hybrid course complete the OSCQR process on a recurring three-year cycle.

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<sup>1</sup> Selected research: <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2006/1/establishing-a-quality-review-for-online-courses>  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/higher-ed-beta/meaningful-interaction-online-courses>  
<https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf>  
<https://www.inacol.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/national-standards-for-quality-online-courses-v2.pdf>  
<https://elearningindustry.com/designing-effective-online-courses-10-considerations>  
<https://www.facultyfocus.com/free-reports/principles-of-effective-online-teaching-best-practices-in-distance-education/>  
<http://elearnmag.acm.org/featured.cfm?aid=1609990>  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/7-strategies-make-your-online-teaching-better>

<sup>2</sup> This section adapted from *Open SUNY COTE Course Supports*

<sup>3</sup> <http://commons.suny.edu/cote/course-supports/>

## **B. Online Course Approval Process**

**Note:** Courses that are new (those not yet approved for campus delivery regardless of format) must first go through normal curricular approval process prior to being submitted for distance learning course development.

Full and part-time faculty members who wish to develop and/or teach an online or hybrid course must follow these procedures.

### **1. Submit the *Intent to Develop & Deliver* packet**

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Complete and submit the *Intent to Develop & Deliver* packet to: [DLproposal@potsgdam.edu](mailto:DLproposal@potsgdam.edu)

Packet includes:

- *Intent to Develop & Deliver* form
- Course Syllabus, including the course outline/schedule (see minimum syllabus requirements, p. 10)
- If a new course with permanent numbering, a Banner Catalog Entry Form
- If a new course with 95 numbering, a Banner Special Topics Form

Deadline for submission:

- **Credentialed DL Faculty**<sup>4</sup>: On or before 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration of the Master Schedule for the target date of delivery.
- **Non-credentialed DL Faculty**: At least 30 weeks prior to the target date of delivery.

The following people review the packet:

- **Department Chair**: Verifies course is approved for the faculty member's load in the indicated semester.
- **Dean**: Verifies the course is approved through required curricular approval processes; Indicates whether the course will be included in faculty member's course load or considered extra service from school's budget.
- **Distance Learning Coordinator**: Determines availability of Instructional Designer (ID) to compete development; assigns ID as appropriate.
- **Provost or Designee**: Verifies budget is available in the appropriate fiscal year(s) to cover required stipend(s) and other development costs.

### **2. Course Development**

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Based on the target date of delivery, the Subject Matter Expert (SME) and ID together determine a timeline for course development, establishing milestones to ensure timely progress and alignment with the OSCQR rubric. Included are:

- Completion of syllabus/course outline
- Identification of course materials and resources
- Identification of learning activities that align with Learning Outcomes

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<sup>4</sup> To be credentialed, the faculty member must have completed the campus's PTOL seminar (or equivalent) and taught at least one semester online with no substantive complaints. Credentialed faculty follow a shorter development timeframe, providing additional scheduling flexibility.

- Development of course shell within the LMS (Learning Management System)

**Note:** If this is the first online course proposed by the faculty member, he or she must successfully complete the *Pedagogy & Technology of Online Learning* (PTOL) seminar (or equivalent) before the course is delivered. Other instructors may also find it beneficial to update their skills with the seminar or similar training.

Depending upon your status as an online instructor, you are entitled to a stipend for development\* as follows:

- **Non-Credentialed:** \$1,500.00 for first-time DL course development at SUNY Potsdam (includes funding for training, as necessary)
- **Credentialed:** \$500.00 per new DL course development

\**Publisher-developed content, course packs/cartridges, etc. may not qualify for compensation.*

### 3. OSCQR Process

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The OSCQR Team – the ID, SME, and a third reviewer – each will conduct an independent evaluation using the OSCQR rubric. They will then discuss the results to determine the *action plan* and *next steps*.

The OSCQR rubric contains fifty quality and accessibility standards in six categories:

1. Course Overview and Information
2. Course Technology and Tools
3. Design and Layout
4. Content and Activities
5. Interaction
6. Assessment and Feedback

For each standard, the following indicators are used to determine the action plan (estimate of time to address in parentheses):

- Sufficiently Present
- Minor Revision (1/2 hour or less)
- Moderate Revision (1/2 – 2 hours)
- Major Revision (2+ hours)
- Not Applicable

If any category contains an indicator of *revision*, the SME/faculty member must bring the standard into compliance, verified by the ID. Otherwise, delivery of the course will be deferred until compliance is achieved (i.e. there are no standards in need of revision).

Deadline for the initial review:

- **Credentialed DL Faculty:** No later than 4 weeks prior to the beginning of the target date for delivery.
- **Non-credentialed DL Faculty:** Recommended at least 10 weeks, but required no later than 8 weeks prior to course delivery.

If revisions are required, they must be completed as follows:

- **Credentialed DL Faculty:** No later than 2 weeks prior to the beginning of the target date for delivery.
- **Non-credentialed DL Faculty:** Recommended at least 8 weeks, but required no later than 4 weeks prior to course delivery.

#### 4. Deliver (or defer)

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**OSCQR-compliant DL courses** will be considered “approved for delivery” for three years subsequent to the term it was originally reviewed, or the last time it was officially refreshed (see below) using the OSCQR Process.

**Non-compliant courses** will be removed from the schedule and deferred until no categories include an indication of *revision* according to the OSCQR rubric.

**Note:** If a credentialed SME/developer fails to bring the course into compliance, they will lose their credentialed status.

#### 5. OSCQR Refresh

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All DL courses will undergo a “refresh” following the OSCQR Process every three years from the first (or previous) compliance review. The faculty member, ID, and an external reviewer will comprise the OSCQR Refresh team.

As in step three of the OSCQR process (above), if any category contains an indicator of *revision*, the SME/faculty member must bring the standard into compliance, verified by the ID. Otherwise, delivery of the course will be deferred until compliance is achieved.

### C. Course Evaluations

Administration of anonymous student evaluations for each course and instructor will follow the current campus policy for evaluations. As with on-campus courses, faculty are encouraged to conduct a formative evaluation before midterm and a summative evaluation following each delivery of their DL course.

The Distance Learning Coordinator may administer a student survey to determine whether the technical and design aspects of the course were satisfactory; e.g., *Were there issues logging in? Did LMS Support respond in a timely manner to questions or request for assistance? What other support services would you like to see available online? Did you find the design user-friendly? If not, suggestions for improvement are encouraged.*

### D. Teaching and Learning

The characteristics of the instructor that contribute to the atmosphere and community in the online environment are Integral to the perceived quality of an online course. Therefore, faculty must:

- Anticipate and address student questions in the design of the course (Where do I get the textbook? Where/how do I start? When are the exams? How do I get help? ...)
- Be *responsive* and *present* in the online course environment.
- Use directives, first person voice, and conversational tone throughout the course.
- Be sensitive to the student perspective.

- Create well-explained online and off-line activities relevant to the course and avoid “busy work.”
- Create a sense of community by providing community-building opportunities and venues for interaction (ice-breaker activities, team work, discussion forums, etc.).

To ensure quality and consistency among online courses delivered by SUNY Potsdam, the instructional quality guidelines for instructors who develop and/or teach online courses are as follows:

- Interaction between faculty and students is an essential characteristic in the online environment that increases student success. The most common and efficient method of instructor/student interaction is through the use of discussion forums.
- Where privacy is required (i.e. information is not publicly disseminated to the class as a whole), phone or email are should be used.
- Feedback on assignments should be conducted individually and in a timely manner. Questions of a general nature (those one would ask openly in a classroom setting) are better addressed in a *discussion forum* – all students have access to the initial question, all have access to the answer provided. As in a classroom setting, this exchange may benefit the whole class.
- Expectations of learner activities should be understandable to the average student.
- Assessment methods used should be appropriate to the course and the stated learning outcomes.
- Flexibility should be inherent in the course design to increase the learner's control over the *time*, *place*, and *pace* of instruction within acceptable parameters. For example, courses should allow for a varied pace within a week, module, or unit, but the course overall should not be self-paced.
- Students should have access to current and accurate grade information, such as an online grade book.
- Instructor should send a *welcome message* to all enrolled students containing information about logging in to the LMS and a list of the required course materials at least **one week prior to the start of the course**.

## IV. Copyright Policies and Laws

### A. *Intellectual Property and Ownership*

The original material contained in the online or hybrid course, regardless of third-party technologies or course/learning management system used, will be considered the property of the faculty member (that is, despite the use of software licensed by, or hardware owned by the College to deliver, display, create, store, or otherwise affect material developed/used by the faculty member, the ownership of such original, intellectual material remains with the author.) Thus, faculty developers maintain ownership of their intellectual property incorporated into their DL course(s) offered by SUNY Potsdam, unless alternate arrangements are made through a “Work Made for Hire” contract.

## **B. The use of other Copyrighted Materials – the TEACH Act**

Course development must be the original work of *the* faculty member. Whenever or wherever copyrighted material is incorporated, it is the faculty member's responsibility to secure permission to use the copyrighted work and to abide by the copyright policies set forth by the College.

### **Introduction**

Copyright law provides educators with **a separate set of rights in addition to fair use, to display (show) and perform (show or play) others' works in the classroom**. These rights are in Section 110(1) of the Copyright Act and apply to any work, regardless of the medium. However, these laws are greatly restricted *in online courses*.

The TEACH Act (2002) expanded the scope of educators' rights to perform and display works and to make the copies integral to such performances and displays for digital distance education, making the rights closer to those we have in face-to-face teaching. But there is still a considerable gap between what the statute authorizes for face-to-face teaching and for distance education.

**The TEACH Act authorizes us to digitize works for use in digital distance education, but only to the extent we are authorized to use those works in Section 110(2)**, and so long as they are **not available digitally in a format free from technological protection**. So, for example, where 110(2) authorizes the use of movie clips and the available DVDs don't permit ripping (a prerequisite to creating a digital "clip"), you can digitize those parts using an analog tape; but you are not authorized by the TEACH Act to digitize the whole movie.

**Fair use is almost always going to be the best source of authority for making copies in any context**, but especially in conjunction with statutes like 110(2) that give us specific authorization that may not be sufficient in a particular case.

Fair use also remains important because the activities the TEACH Act authorizes are a small subset of the uses of electronic resources educators may wish to make. It only covers **in class performances and displays, not, for example, digital delivery of supplemental reading materials**.

For those activities, as well as many others, we'll need to continue to rely on fair use. This means that, in general, where there is an established market for permissions, there will often be a narrower scope for fair use. In practical terms, this means that where it's easy to get permission, for example, to put text materials on reserve, our reliance on fair use should be limited; on the other hand, where it's near impossible to get permission, for example, for music and movies where those industries are not yet very responsive to the needs of distance educators, the scope of fair use expands to permit reasonable uses of such materials for both local and remote students. So, fair use will likely be very helpful for using music and movies in the classroom and as supplementary materials.

### **Section 110(2)'s expanded rights include the following:**

#### **1. Transmitting performances of all of a non-dramatic literary or musical work**

Non-dramatic literary works as defined in the Act exclude audiovisual works; thus, examples of permitted performances in this category in which entire works may be displayed and performed might include a poetry or short story reading. Non-dramatic musical works would include all music other than opera, music videos (because they are audiovisual), and musicals.

#### **2. Transmitting reasonable and limited portions of any other performance**

This category includes all audiovisual works such as films and videos of all types, and any dramatic musical works excluded above.

### 3. Transmitting displays of any work in amounts comparable to typical face-to-face displays

This category would include still images of all kinds.

#### Exclusions from coverage:

**Not everyone, nor every work, is covered.** Section 110(2) **applies only to accredited, nonprofit educational institutions.** The rights granted do *not* extend to the use of works **primarily produced or marketed for in-class use in the digital distance education market;** works the instructor knows or has reason to believe **were not lawfully made or acquired;** or **textbooks**, course-packs and other materials typically purchased by students individually.

This last exclusion results from the definition of "**mediated instructional activities**," a key concept within the expanded Section 110(2) meant to limit it to the kinds of materials an instructor would actually incorporate into a class-time lecture. In other words, the **TEACH Act covers works an instructor would show or play during class**, such as movie or music clips, images of artworks in an art history class, or a poetry reading. **It does not cover materials an instructor may want students to study, read, listen to or watch on their own time outside of class.** Instructors will have to rely on other rights they may have to post those materials, such as the fair use statute.

#### Conditions:

In addition, the statute specifies a **formidable list of circumstances** under which the permitted uses may be made:

##### 1. The performance or display must be:

- a. A regular part of systematic **mediated instructional activity;**
- b. Made **by, at the direction of, or under** the supervision of the **instructor;**
- c. **Directly related** and **of material assistance to the teaching content;** and
- d. **For** and technologically **limited to students** enrolled in the class.

##### 2. The institution must:

- a. Have **policies** and provide **information about**, and give **notice** that the materials used may be protected by, **copyright;**
- b. Apply technological measures that **reasonably prevent recipients** from **retaining** the works beyond the class session and **further distributing** them; and
- c. **Not interfere with technological measures** taken by copyright owners that prevent retention and distribution.

#### Authority to make copies:

Finally, a new section was added to the Copyright Act to authorize educators to make the copies necessary to display and perform works in a digital environment. New Section 112(f) (ephemeral recordings) works with Section 110 to permit those authorized to perform and display works under 110

**to copy digital works and digitize analog works** in order to make authorized displays and performances as long as:

- 1. Such copies are retained only by the institution and used only for the activities authorized by Section 110; and**
- 2. For digitizing analog works, no digital version of the work is available free from technological protections that would prevent the uses authorized in Section 110.**

### C. TEACH Act Compliance Checklist

- My institution is a nonprofit accredited educational institution or a governmental agency
- It has a policy on the use of copyrighted materials
- It provides accurate information to faculty, students and staff about copyright
- Its systems will not interfere with technological controls within the materials I want to use
- The materials I want to use are specifically for students in my class
- Only those students will have access to the materials
- The materials will be provided at my direction during the relevant lesson
- The materials are directly related and of material assistance to my teaching content
- My class is part of the regular offerings of my institution
- I will include a notice that the materials are protected by copyright
- I will use technology that reasonably limits the students' ability to retain or further distribute the materials
- I will make the materials available to the students only for a period of time that is relevant to the context of a class session
- I will store the materials on a secure server and transmit them only as permitted by this law
- I will not make any copies other than the one I need to make the transmission
- The materials are of the proper type and amount the law authorizes:
  - Entire performances of non-dramatic literary and musical works
  - Reasonable and limited parts of a dramatic literary, musical, or audiovisual works
  - Displays of other works, such as images, in amounts similar to typical displays in face-to-face teaching
- The materials are not among those the law specifically excludes from its coverage:
  - Materials specifically marketed for classroom use for digital distance education
  - Copies I know or should know are illegal
- Textbooks, course-packs, electronic reserves and similar materials typically purchased individually by the students for independent review outside the classroom or class session
- If I am using an analog original, I checked before digitizing it to be sure:
  - I copied only the amount that I am authorized to transmit
  - There is no digital copy of the work available except with technological protections that prevent my using it for the class in the way the statute authorizes<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The content above, subsequent to and including the section labeled **The TEACH Act**, has been adapted from *The Copyright Crash Course*, © 2001 Georgia K. Harper, under a Creative Commons License.

## V. Online Syllabus Requirements and Recommended Format

Here are the fundamentals of a syllabus and schedule as required:

1. Course subject and level (e.g. ANTH350) and full course title
2. Your name and contact information
  - Include primary email address, office location & office hours, and office phone number/voice mail.
3. Course objectives and Student Learning Outcomes
  - Objectives for the course, overall
  - Measurable student learning outcomes (SLOs) for the course, overall
  - Objectives specific to each week/module/unit
  - Measurable SLOs for each week/module/unit
4. Prerequisite(s) and/or Co-requisite(s)
5. Required Textbook(s), supplemental readers, and any other resources necessary for the completion of the course.
6. Technical requirements such as:
  - Internet access (Broadband recommended; required if site contains/uses rich media such as images, audio/video components)
  - Type of browser (Firefox is recommended)
  - Necessary plug-ins and/or third-party software for multimedia presentations
  - Specific computer capabilities and/or program/application required (Excel, Task Stream, Collaborate, Skype, Adobe Reader, and so on)
7. Expectations and Minimum requirements, such as:
  - Attendance for required onsite sessions (hybrid courses)
  - Online participation/collaboration (for students and instructor)
  - Written assignments (acceptable formats, naming conventions)
  - Examinations (whether online, on-campus, or proctored off-site)
8. Assessment and Grading Criteria
  - Include details regarding method(s) of assessing student achievement
  - Detail the basis for final grade determination (grading scale)
9. Detailed information regarding communication and how to contact the instructor
  - Forums, email, fax, telephone, instant messaging... including when to use your listed methods. For instance, *forums* should be used whenever a student can "raise their hand" as if in a classroom setting; *Email* is better reserved for communication that wouldn't usually be shared with the rest of the class.
  - Expected turnaround time for your response.
10. Course Schedule
  - Recommend using a weekly calendar that coincides with our academic calendar.

- Weeks run Monday through Sunday, not Monday-Friday. Take advantage of that span and flexibility. It doesn't mean you have to be available 24/7; you can and should spread your online participation time and "presence" throughout the week.
- Your time-commitment for active-participation (in collaborative learning experiences, not grading papers or answering email) should be equivalent to the time you'd spend in a classroom setting based on the credit-hours and ratio for your course.
- For instance, a three-credit 1:1 course requires 37.5 contact hours (instructional time in the classroom).
  - This equates to 2.5 hours each week, or three, 50-minutes class sessions.
  - When considering your participatory activities in your online course, this time (2.5 hours each week, in this example) is most often met through participation in the discussion forums.
  - Online courses are not self-paced, do-it-on-your-own type courses, they are highly engaging and collaborative and require full participation of instructors and students alike.
- Sample schedule below

### Sample schedule

Week w/dates	Topic(s) and SLOs	Tasks (participatory & homework)	Due date
Week One 8/28/17 – 9/03/17	List the topics intended to be covered for each week.  Include measurable SLOs for the material/lessons; these will inform the tasks/activities required of the students to meet the SLOs.	The <i>activities</i> and <i>assignments</i> listed should be aligned with the SLO presented for this given unit/module/weekly chunk of course material.	List the due dates for completion of all tasks in this period, including dates for quizzes or exams.
Week Two 9/04/17 – 9/10/17			
Week Three 9/11/17 – 9/17/17			
Week Four 9/18/17 – 9/24/17			
Week Five 9/25/17 – 10/01/17			
Week Six 10/02/17 – 10/08/17			
Week Seven 10/09/17 – 10/15/17			
Week Eight 10/16/17 – 10/22/17			
Week Nine 10/23/17 – 10/29/17			
Week Ten 10/30/17 – 11/05/17			
Week Eleven 11/06/17 – 11/12/17			
Week Twelve			

11/13/17 – 11/19/17			
Week Thirteen 11/20/17 – 11/26/17			
Week Fourteen 11/27/17 – 12/03/17			
Week Fifteen 12/04/17 – 12/10/17			
Week Sixteen 12/11/17 – 12/17/17	<b>Final Exam Week</b> Date of final exam TBD		