

## DRAFT

### Proposed Undergraduate Distance Education Policy (8/29/22 version - ANNOTATED)

This document proposes an updated policy to replace the [UCLA Fully Online Undergraduate Course Policy](#) (last amended Spring 2021). Proposed policy language is displayed with blue background, followed by notes on the reasoning behind each section. *Italicized notes in red indicate questions or comments for consideration.*

#### PREAMBLE

UCLA has a long tradition of teaching excellence, cultivated through decades of experience with in-person education. As changing technology creates new forms of virtual interaction, online instruction methods offer new possibilities for making learning more effective, more meaningful and more broadly accessible. Inappropriately deployed, however, distance education methods can fail to deliver the instructor-student interaction that has long been the cornerstone of teaching excellence. The goal of this policy is to support the use of virtual methods to improve learning and to fortify UCLA's long-standing commitment to teaching excellence.

While UCLA remains a primarily in-person institution, courses may be approved to be offered in online or hybrid form when doing so will enhance the quality of education. Hallmarks of UCLA's teaching excellence include (a) active, engaged leadership by a qualified instructor with requisite subject expertise; (b) regularly, pedagogically meaningful interaction between that instructor and students; and (c) means for students to periodically assess their progress toward achieving the course's learning goals. Online and hybrid courses should be superior (or at least equivalent) in pedagogical effectiveness to the same subject matter being taught in person.

*This preamble is intended to clarify the goals of the policy. Consistent with the Academic Senate's [Principles for the Future of Instruction](#), it affirms UCLA's identity as an institution centered around in-person learning but open to virtual methods that will enhance learning. The language of the preamble is intended to be aspirational, clarifying the goals motivating policy details that follow.*

#### A. DEFINITIONS

These definitions are intended to clarify where special approval is needed, and to facilitate student understanding of course expectations at the time they enroll. We first define terms related to forms of instruction of individual class meetings, then separately define terms related to types of course.

##### Forms of instruction

- **IN-PERSON** instruction is defined as a lecture, laboratory, seminar or other learning activity in which the primary instructor is physically present. Students are also expected to be physically present, even if the session is simultaneously presented online (e.g. via Zoom) or recorded for viewing later (e.g. BruinCast or Zoom). In-person courses require a physical classroom.
- **ONLINE** instruction is intentionally designed for digital delivery, and encompasses instruction, assignments, and interactions that promote successful learning in an environment where

students and instructor are not in the same physical location. Online instruction reflects intentional consideration of how student engagement, academic integrity and other aspects of learning may be different in an online environment.

- **REMOTE** instruction occurs when learning activities designed to take place in-person are transferred online in response to situational needs. In contrast to online instruction, remote instruction is not intentionally designed for digital delivery.
- **DISTANCE** instruction encompasses both online and remote, and refers to any form of instruction that is not in-person.
- **SYNCHRONOUS** instruction refers to simultaneous, real-time interaction between instructor and students with learning activities delivered via Zoom or another videoconferencing platform. Synchronous instruction necessarily involves set meeting times.
- **ASYNCHRONOUS** instruction includes lectures, engagement activities, assessments, or other course materials that take place without real-time interaction. Students may engage in course content at different times of their own choosing, but subject to an overall schedule and set of deadlines specified by the instructor.

One of the Committee's main charges was to clarify definitions and categories. The first set of definitions is intended to be broadly consistent with those in the [Graduate Course Policy](#) (p. 19). We added the category of "Distance Education" to encompass both Remote and Online – it is useful to have an umbrella term that includes both circumstantial Remote and intentionally-designed Online. The term "distance" is used as an umbrella term in the Graduate policy and by WSCUC.

### Types of courses

While recognizing a given course may involve multiple forms of instruction, it is nonetheless useful to categorize courses in ways that reflect the amount of distance instruction.

- **IN-PERSON COURSE.** In-person course meetings will occur at the times and places specified in the Schedule of Classes, with the instructor physically present. When enrolling in the course, students should expect to be physically present at the indicated times and physically present for an in-person final exam at the assigned time. In-person courses may involve some distance instruction, but in-person instruction accounts for more than 50% of the total (see "Calculating the 50% Threshold" below.)
- **ONLINE COURSE.** Lectures, discussions, and learning activities take place virtually and do not require students to be physically present on campus for instruction. Examinations may be virtual or in-person. Online courses may be synchronous or asynchronous or a mixture. Synchronous meeting times must be indicated in the Schedule of Classes.
- **HYBRID COURSE.** In-person instruction accounts for 50% or less of the total, but students will be expected to be physically present for examinations as well as some additional class activities.

The definitions regarding types of courses are primarily intended to let students know the extent to which they will be expected to be physically present. By reserving the “online” label for fully online courses, we avoid giving the wrong impression to a student who assumes that a virtual online course does not require physical presence. (In contrast, the 2021 policy refers to a class as “fully online” if it offers less than one hour of in-person instruction each week.) The provision allowing in-person exams in online courses reflects the advantages of in-person for promoting academic integrity.

The 50% threshold in these definitions is adopted to be consistent with [WSCUC standards](#) (p. 17) which are structuring policy decisions throughout the UC system. WSCUC would consider both Online and Hybrid courses to be “distance courses” and requires a substantive change review for any program in which 50% or more of classes fall into the distance category.

### **When is Special Approval Required?**

Courses may be offered in Online or Hybrid form (as defined above) only if they have been granted Approved-for-Distance status through the process detailed below in Section C. That is, courses in which 50% or less of instruction is in-person must be Approved-for-Distance before being scheduled. Courses with Approved-for-Distance status may also continue to be offered In-Person. Special Studies courses (numbers 195-199) and courses focusing on off-campus fieldwork are automatically granted Approved-for-Distance status; they do not need to apply for it.

The exception for independent studies classes is part of the 2021 policy. “Approved-for-Distance” is somewhat awkward wording, intended to communicate that the courses approved for online may still be offered in-person. *Suggestions for better wording welcome!*

### **Calculating the 50% Threshold**

For departments to determine whether instruction is more than 50% in-person, the denominator for “instruction” is the instructional contact time that would be scheduled for an in-person version in a typical week. Instructional contact time does not include secondary sections or other related activities such as office hours or final examinations. For example, consider a course that if offered fully in-person would meet for 150 minutes of lecture each week. A version of this class that substituted distance instruction for one of three 50-minute sessions would not require special approval under this policy. But a version that substituted distance instruction for one of two 75-minute sessions would be considered a Hybrid and would require approval.

Our usage of the 50% threshold is intended to be consistent with [WASC/WSCUC definitions](#).

Defining “instruction” in terms of a typical week is intended to be consistent with the way most instructors think about their courses.

## **B. POLICIES REGARDING DISTANCE INSTRUCTION**

1. Course modality (In-Person, Hybrid, Online) should be accurately indicated and visible to students when they register for courses. It is the department’s responsibility to ensure that course modalities are listed accurately in the Schedule of Classes.

2. Any course listed as Online or Hybrid (or any course in which 50% or less of instruction is in-person as outlined in Part A above) must have received Approved-for-Distance status through the process specified in Part C below.
3. The In-Person version of an existing course which is also Approved-for-Distance may continue to be offered. A course that has been approved as Online may be offered as Hybrid without additional approval. A course that has been approved as a Hybrid must be reapproved to be offered in fully Online format.
4. Instructors do not need Approved-for-Distance status to *add* distance options to an in-person class. Approval is only required when in-person instruction is *replaced* with distance learning.
5. Approved-for-Distance status must be reauthorized if more than 20% of synchronous (virtual or in-person) instruction is replaced with asynchronous, relative to the version of the course for which approval was previously granted.

*At several points in the Ad Hoc Committee's deliberations, we noted the potential loophole created when approval happens at the course level – courses can vary significantly across offerings, especially when taught by different instructors. The intention of #5 is to set a workable limit on this, by focusing on a particularly problematic change – switching synchronous activities to asynchronous. This is not to say that asynchronous instruction can't be done well. But it poses engagement challenges that merit close review.*

*The concern about post-approval courses changing drastically looms particularly large for UNEX, which has a history of weak instructor oversight.*

6. All courses, regardless of modality, must provide appropriate accommodations for students who are approved by the Center for Accessible Education. Approved-for-Distance status is not required for instructors to provide virtual components as part of individual student accommodations.
7. Courses required for undergraduate majors and minors, or for concentrations within majors, may not be offered exclusively in Online or Hybrid format. Required courses must be taught In-Person at least one time during any academic year in which they are offered. Over the academic year (excluding Summer Session), no more than half of the total seats in a required course can be offered in Online or Hybrid form.

Number 7 (along with Number 8) establishes limits on the extent to which programs can use distance learning. Both reflect the sentiment that students who come to UCLA expecting in-person instruction should not find themselves with only virtual options.

8. In any academic quarter, no more than 10% of a Department's (or other unit's) undergraduate courses and no more than 10% of its undergraduate seats may be offered in Online or Hybrid formats. If a multi-listed course is offered in either of these formats, it counts towards the online limit for all departments involved. Courses offered in remote format due to emergency circumstances (see section D below) do not count toward this 10%.

The 10% threshold may warrant additional discussion – Ad Hoc Committee discussion focused

more on the desirability of some limit, less on whether 10% is the appropriate threshold.

WSCUC requires “substantive change approval for programs in which 50% or more of the program (units for completion of the program) will be offered through distance education). Proposal are being discussed to incorporate this 50% threshold into systemwide policy. The sense of the Ad Hoc Committee is that UCLA may want a more restrictive policy.

There is some concern that small departments or IDPs may find themselves out of compliance with number 8, if their roster is dominated by classes cross-listed with other programs. An alternative would be to only hold the department with the most seats responsible for multi-listed classes. Or to define the limit completely in terms of seats, not courses.

The committee also briefly discussed whether limits should be placed on the number of virtual courses that a student could apply to a degree. More work would be needed if this idea were to be pursued. Systemwide, there is a proposal currently under discussion to require all undergraduates to enroll in at least six units of in-person instruction for at least one year (proposed amendment to SR 630).

9. Secondary sections for courses listed as Hybrid or Online may be virtual or in-person, as long as the modality is accurately conveyed to students at the time of registration. The modality of Secondary sections may be set by course design, by the instructor, or by departmental policy.
10. Instructors are expected to list the modality of examinations and other instructional activities accurately on the syllabus on or before the first day of instruction. In particular, students should know from the outset when they are expected to be present in-person.
11. Instructors and teaching assistants assigned to distance sections are expected to be physically present in Los Angeles and available for in-person meetings with students.
12. Departments are encouraged to establish a standard petition and evaluation procedure concerning the use of Online or Hybrid secondary sections due to emergency circumstances, and limiting such switches to online to 20% of class meetings.

*What about allowing some fraction (say, 33%) of sections to be virtual in Hybrid In-Person/In Person Classes (if instructor requests and Department approves)? Requests of this form waxed and waned during 2021-22, continuing to trickle in even after it was formally discontinued as a COVID policy. Remote discussion sections have been mentioned by parenting students, and representatives of other vulnerable groups as something helpful.*

13. Approved online courses are subject to periodic audit and re-review as dictated by the Undergraduate Council.
14. Concurrent classes (“C” course numbers) must be approved through both the Undergraduate and Graduate processes in order to be offered in Online or Hybrid format.

### C. PROCESS FOR COURSE TO BE APPROVED-FOR-DISTANCE

In order to be scheduled as Online or Hybrid, a course must have Approved-for-Distance status, which is obtained through the process detailed here.

#### REQUIRED.

Proposal packets must include:

1. An approved or in progress Course Approval form
2. A course syllabus
3. A completed Virtual Course Information Sheet, with responses to supplemental questions

The “Course Approval Form” would currently be the CIMS form which is required for any new class, regardless of modality. CIMS will eventually be replaced by a new system. The Virtual Course Information Sheet appears at the end of this document.

#### OPTIONAL.

Proposal packets may also include:

1. For courses requiring technological resources not currently available to all UCLA instructors: A letter from the appropriate teaching or administrative unit confirming that these resources will be available.
2. A letter of support or a formal assessment from a campus instructional design unit (CAT, CEILS, OTL) may be submitted but is not required.

Previous policy required a formal assessment from an instructional design unit for permanent approval, which has yet to be granted for any course. The future of CAT, and the organization of instructional support campus wide is in flux; it seems imprudent to require input from units that may not be able to provide. If we do want to resurrect this requirement at a later stage, we might consider more guidance for what kind of assessment we have in mind.

#### Approval Process:

1. Instructor submits the complete proposal packet to the department’s curriculum committee or equivalent body. If the Department (or other responsible unit) does not have a curriculum committee, a committee of no less than three Senate faculty (excluding the instructor proposing the course) shall be appointed to review online course proposals. In the case of multiply listed courses (M numbers), all Departments must approve the proposal through this process.
2. Once the course is approved, the Department routes the proposal packet to the appropriate College or School FEC. The Department Chair should include a cover memo detailing how the proposed virtual version fits into the overall curriculum and attesting that the proposal satisfies the criteria for Engagement and Evaluation of Learning as specified in point C.4 below. The memo should also affirm the Department’s commitment to offer at least as many in-person as virtual seats for any class required for a major, a minor or a concentration within a major (item B.6 above.)
3. After the course has been approved by the Faculty Executive Committee, the complete proposal packet and Department/FEC approval memos shall be submitted to the Undergraduate Council for final approval.

4. Departments, FECs and the Undergraduate Council should not approve a proposal unless it explicitly satisfies the following requirements with regard to student engagement and evaluation of learning:
  - a. Student Engagement. The proposal must clearly articulate feasible and appropriate strategies to promote student engagement. The syllabus and information sheet questions (especially number 3) should include proactive ways of encouraging students to interact with the instructor and with each other.
  - b. Evaluation of learning. The bar for ensuring academic honesty must be at least as high as for in-person classes. Measures adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic necessarily reflected emergency circumstances, and thus may not meet this bar. Proposals should explain how exams will be monitored, or explain why monitoring is not needed.

This process is simpler than the Spring 2021 policy. It eliminates a “temporary approval” stage by which the course could be offered in virtual form up to three times with just FEC approval. Brief consideration was given to delegating all approvals to FEC’s, but Undergraduate Council, with its focus on undergraduate education, seems better positioned to evaluate whether proposed courses satisfy policy requirements.

The Spring 2021 policy was found lacking in clarity about what exactly a proposal needed in order to be approved. Point 4 is intended to address this.

#### **D. POLICIES GOVERNING EMERGENCY REMOTE INSTRUCTION**

As defined above, “remote” includes instruction that was not specifically designed for virtual delivery but is offered in virtual format in response to emergency conditions or other circumstances.

1. Departments and other responsible units may authorize remote instruction under emergency circumstances, subject to the following limitations:
  - a. Emergency remote instruction must be synchronous and must offer students the opportunity to ask questions and otherwise interact with the instructor and each other.
  - b. Emergency remote instruction should not be authorized for the same instructor or the same course for more than a single quarter in a given academic year, unless the instructor has ADA or COVID-19 related accommodations approved through Insurance and Risk Management. If emergency conditions are expected to continue for more than a quarter, the department (or other responsible unit) should pursue Approved-for-Online status for affected courses, or offer them In-Person.
  - c. Departments and other responsible units must document all cases in which emergency remote instruction was authorized as part of their Program Review Self Statement.
  - d. Multiple-listed classes may not use emergency remote format without explicit agreement of all departments/units involved.

This provision allows a department to authorize remote instruction in response to unforeseen circumstances – instructor illness, a problem with a classroom, threats of violence, etc.

Rather than trying to specify in advance what constitutes an emergency, this language leaves it to the discretion of the chair but places limits on its use and requires documentation.

Restricting emergency remote instruction to synchronous only is intended to limit moral hazard by an instructor who might seek to minimize the time and effort devoted to teaching. This same logic supports the streamlined approval processes for synchronous remote for Summer Session (part E) and UNEX (part F)

2. For each course being taught, the hosting department may permit the instructor to switch up to one week's worth of in-person course meetings to synchronous remote if an emergency such as illness arises. Emergency remote meetings for more than one week must be authorized by the Department, as provided in point D-1 above.

#### **E. DISTANCE INSTRUCTION IN SUMMER SESSION**

Summer Session is distinct from regular academic quarters in various ways that may increase the value to students of distance learning opportunities. Students may use summers to work, travel, take internships, or engage in other valuable activities that preclude taking in-person courses. Departments are thus authorized to offer distance versions of existing classes as specified below.

Summer Session courses may be approved on a yearly basis to be offered in remote form during Summer Session only. Departments wishing to offer summer remote classes must submit the full roster of courses to their FEC for approval each year. FECs should only approve rosters that satisfy the following conditions:

1. Summer remote courses must offer the same number of synchronous contact hours as an in-person version.
2. Each summer remote class using online exams must state how the instructor will ensure that safeguards against academic dishonesty are at least as strong as for an in-person course.
3. Courses that have been Approved-for-Online during the regular academic year may be offered in the approved format during Summer Session.

A variant of this policy was authorized for Summer 2022, with the plan to evaluate it in Fall 2022. There was a consensus on the Ad Hoc Committee that Summer Session should continue to be subject to different regulations. During the regular academic year, we explicitly expect students in to be physically in LA. During the summer we do not, and they benefit from the opportunity to take virtual classes during summer.

#### **F. DISTANCE INSTRUCTION BY UNIVERSITY EXTENSION (UNEX)**

Similar to Summer Session, the benefits from distance learning may loom larger for UNEX students. At the same time, ongoing departmental oversight of UNEX courses is more limited, so it is important to



maximize the impact of the oversight that does occur.

Credit-bearing UNEX courses (course numbers starting with X or XL) may be offered in Online or Hybrid format (as defined in Section A above) under the following conditions.

1. A fully synchronous version of an already-approved UNEX class may be offered without additional approval as long as:
  - a. It involves the same number of synchronous contact hours as an in-person version of the same course.
  - b. Safeguards against academic dishonesty are at least as strong as for an in-person course.
2. UNEX courses in which 50% or more of instructional hours (relatively to a fully in-person version of the course) are replaced with asynchronous instruction may not be open to enrollment unless they have been Approved-for-Distance through the following process:
  - a. Instructor must submit a proposal packet including syllabus, CV and completed Virtual Course Information Sheet, with responses to supplemental questions.
  - b. UNEX must forward this packet to the Department. If the Department approves the proposal, it should be forwarded to the Undergraduate Council.
  - c. Undergraduate Council has final approval authority.
  - d. Classes that have been previously taught with more than 50% of asynchronous instruction must be re-approved before they can be offered. In this case, student evaluations from the last three offerings should be included in the approval packets.
3. Approved-for-Distance status must be reauthorized for UNEX courses if more than 20% of synchronous (virtual or in-person) instruction is replaced with asynchronous, relative to the version of the course for which approval was previously granted.

*We only briefly discussed UNEX at the end of our last meeting, where there was sentiment that there needs to be more effective Senate oversight of UNEX.*

## UCLA Online Undergraduate Course Information Sheet

Before you begin the submission of your online course proposal, please refer to the UCLA Undergraduate Distance Education Policy and related resources.

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### Course Information

Department Name [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Course Number and Title [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Proposed Course Modality

Online (completely online except for exams which may be either online or in-person)

Hybrid (< 50% in-person)

### Please respond to the supplementary questions below:

- 1) **Academic Rationale.** What is the academic rationale for delivering this course online in the chosen format? If there are specific learning outcomes and/or pedagogical advantages achieved through the chosen format, explain them here.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- 2) **Curricular Structure.** Is this course required for a major/minor, or for a concentration within the major?  Yes  No

If Yes:

(a) What is the projected yearly enrollment for the Online or Hybrid class proposed here?

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

(b) What is the projected yearly enrollment for In-person versions of this class?

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

*(NOTE: Yearly enrollment does not include Summer Session.)*

- 3) **Instructional Engagement.** Describe instructor presence in a typical week for the course. How will the course facilitate interaction between the instructor and students, and among students?  
*Examples: using and actively participating in discussion forums (text, video or audio); designing assignments that require peer-to-peer interaction; small group work in breakout rooms or outside of scheduled class time; etc.*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- 4) **Role of TAs.** If applicable, explain the role of TAs and any needed training/resources for course delivery in the online format.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

- 5) **Evaluation of Learning.** How will learning be assessed? (E.g., exams, papers, quizzes, homework)

assignments) What measures will be put in place to ensure academic integrity, including remote proctoring and/or monitoring services? Instructors are encouraged to provide an in-person option for students to take exams on the UCLA campus whenever possible.

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 6) **Resources.** Will students need any technological resources beyond what is currently available through BruinLearn? What expenses (including textbooks) will students incur?

Click or tap here to enter text.

#### **Checklist Statements from Instructor (REQUIRED)**

- I commit to ensuring that my course will be made accessible to all students.
- I commit to ensuring that the instructional technology for my online course meets campus criteria for accessibility, privacy of student data, and data security.
- I pledge that the course will be designed such that TA workload remains within contract limits.
- This course will be designed such that instructor engagement with students will remain a central component of the educational experience.
- I confirm that I will be in Los Angeles and available to meet in person with students.