

ONLINE EDUCATION VISION

The purpose of the policies and guidelines articulated in this set of documents is to assure high quality in the delivery of online learning with regard to instruction and procedures. Fisher approaches its online learning activities with the recognition of its mission to provide “teaching, learning, and scholarship in a student-centered educational environment”.

The goals of St. John Fisher College’s online learning options include, but are not limited to, enhancing the traditional campus personalized learning experiences of our undergraduate students with skills that will be required in a twenty-first century workplace, increasing access to expanded markets, and creating flexible program offerings for graduate and completion degrees.

St. John Fisher College’s online and hybrid programs and courses are integrated into the functioning of the traditional college, and are academically responsible, expandable, and meet the financial and academic needs of the college. Online learning activities follow best practices, including those found in the Middle States Commission on Higher Education’s “Distance Education Programs: *Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (Online Learning)*” as well as standards set forth by accrediting bodies such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International, the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), and the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE). While each School has its own paradigm for quality of course design, the emphasis is on consistency with some flexibility. To those ends, the courses that are offered in the online and hybrid modality meet the same quality standards as those that apply to campus-based instruction.

ONLINE TEACHING & LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

St. John Fisher defines an online learning course as one that is taught primarily through the campus course management system, Blackboard, with the incorporation of other educational technologies where appropriate and that requires no face-to-face meetings on campus throughout the duration of the course. Online courses at Fisher are generally taught in an asynchronous fashion, meaning that students can complete the given tasks and assignments in a course at a time that is convenient for them within a given time period defined by the instructor, usually a specific week in the term. Some courses taught online may also incorporate the use of synchronous technologies that allow for real-time communication through the web using web cams and microphones, often used for student group meetings, student presentation or guest speakers. Faculty may also use synchronous sessions to administer office hours with students.

Because the nature of the classroom environment changes when taught fully online, the role of the faculty member also transitions to a coaching and mentoring role, allowing learners to actively participate in class discussions and activities. Typically, online courses at Fisher will have multiple forms of assessment, including discussions, projects, presentations and group work. Assessments will be administered continuously throughout the term of the course ensuring students have frequent feedback on their progress. Students taking online courses at Fisher will have multiple interactions within any given course, including student-to-content, student-to-instructor and student-to-student communications.

The lack of seat-time in an online course can make it difficult to conceptualize the amount of work that happens on a weekly basis in an online course. Faculty at Fisher utilize a time-on-task analysis method to design the content of every online course. Students should expect to spend approximately 10 hours of time each week participating in course-related activities in a three credit hour semester long online course and approximately 20 hours per week in three credit hour courses that are offered in a seven-week term.

Fisher defines hybrid courses as those that reduce some portion of the normal seat time and replace that time with online activities, including asynchronous discussions and other technologically enhanced activities. The amount of seat time reduction may vary anywhere from 33% to 66%. The online activities in a hybrid course will look very similar to work conducted in a fully online course, therefore many of the same design strategies previously described for online courses also apply to hybrid courses. Similarly, a time on task analysis is also used in the design of hybrid courses to ensure the total learning time is equivalent regardless of the modality in which the course is delivered.

GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY TEACHING ONLINE/HYBRID COURSES

The nature of online and hybrid courses, including the lack of a physical presence on campus and specific meeting times and locations for some or all of the course activities, requires guidelines to ensure consistency among faculty in the process of administering online courses at Fisher.

- The academic calendar for online and hybrid courses closely follow the traditional academic calendar of the College. Online courses are taught in either a 7-week or 14-week calendar during all three semesters; Fall, Spring and Summer. Hybrid courses may be taught during a variety of course lengths; 7-week or 14-week calendars during fall and spring semesters and 6-week or 12-week calendars during the summer semester. The full academic calendar can be found here: <https://www.sjfc.edu/news-and-events/academic-calendars/>.
- Instructors of online and hybrid courses should monitor that all students have completed the Online & Hybrid Student Orientation in Blackboard prior to starting any activities in their own courses. Instructors teaching online and hybrid courses will be added to the Online & Hybrid Student Orientation module in order to verify which students have completed the Orientation Quiz. An instructor may choose to award points based on the completion of that task in their own course grading scheme.
- Online and hybrid courses within Blackboard may be made available for student viewing prior to the start date of the course. However, students should not be required to complete any assignments or begin active participation in the course prior to the start date other than the orientation module. It is expected that class begins on the start date listed in the academic calendar. Assignments that are due during the first week of the course should be limited to the amount of work a student can reasonably expect to complete if they began work on the first day of the course.
- If there is a scheduled College break or holiday during the term, students in an online or hybrid course should not be required to perform course related tasks during that time. The Blackboard course may be left available for students to access, but is not required to be monitored by the faculty or students in the course.
- Online courses at Fisher should include aspects of social, cognitive and teaching presence while creating a sense of community among all learners. Creating a cycle for the course (weekly or otherwise) and maintaining the sense of online community following that cycle together is essential to successful online course facilitation. While content may be visible for students to read ahead, activities that involve active participation (blogs, discussions, VoiceThread, etc.) should be made available within a set timeframe (i.e., weekly) to engage all learners on a common topic. This will prevent students from working ahead independently without peer interaction and will focus the group on the specific topics of that week, which will result in better discussion and small group collaboration in the course. Fisher's online course should avoid a self-paced design model.
- Formative and summative feedback should be spread throughout the entire term of the course to ensure that students received frequent updates on their progression in the course. Large assessments at the end of the term should be scheduled to ensure a sufficient amount of time for grading and submission of final grades by the dates listed in the online academic calendar.
- Faculty presence in an online course and the online portion of a hybrid course is essential to creating a successful online learning environment. Faculty are encouraged to respond to student inquiries within 24 hours for 7 week courses and with 48 hours for 14 week courses. Faculty are

also encouraged to grade student work and provide feedback on student progress within 7 days following the assignment due date. Please be aware for 7-week courses, even the 7-day turn around may not be adequate to provide student feedback on assignments that scaffold throughout the term.

- Faculty are encouraged to have at least one proctored event in the design of their online courses. A proctored event may include any technology where the instructor can see and hear the student using audio and video to verify their identity (i.e. Collaborate, VoiceThread) or a proctored exam overseen by the faculty member or a designee of their choosing.
- Faculty should abide by the College policy on reporting of attendance for all students per the Registrar's policies and practices posted on the College website. In online courses, attendance is defined as active participation in the course activities, most commonly in a discussion forum within the course. The sole act of logging into the Blackboard course does not qualify as attendance on its own.
- Faculty should abide by the College policy on office hours (Faculty Statutes Part 5 Teaching Faculty, Department Chairs, Deans, 5.A Teaching Faculty, 3.5.A.4) and make themselves readily available to students throughout the term of the course. This may be done through phone, email and/or Blackboard Collaborate.
- Faculty need to be mindful of students needing accommodations in the creation and selection of the course materials and resources used in their online courses. All materials used in online courses must comply with the College policy, as posted by the Provost.
- Course evaluations for online and hybrid courses will follow the same policies and procedures that apply to all courses. The same online platform, EvaluationKit, used to administer campus course evaluations will be used to administer online course evaluations. Slight wording changes in specific questions on the evaluation are made to account for the lack of seat time, but the intended nature of any question on the evaluation will not be altered.

INITIAL APPROVAL PROCESS FOR ONLINE/HYBRID PROGRAMS & COURSES

Those Schools looking to propose the creation of an online or hybrid program should utilize the College policy for program approval. Online and hybrid programs follow the same policy in this regard as any other program. See Recommended Guidelines for New Program Development, under Dean and Faculty Resources at <https://www.sjfc.edu/departments/provosts-office/dean-and-faculty-resources/>.

The determination to offer individual courses online or hybrid outside of a fully online or hybrid program (i.e. the selection, frequency, and eligibility to teach) is a matter of academic policy that can have substantive implications for resources and other matters. Subject to policies and restrictions established by the School, this determination is made at the department level consistent with the normal discretion of the School Dean and the Provost.

In addition to School specific processes, all online and hybrid courses, both as part of an online program or individual online courses, will follow the course development process outlined below, including review and approval by the instructor developing the course and the Educational Technologist. The Department Chair/ Program Director, or a designee of their choosing with expertise in the course content area, may also choose to review and approve the course prior to its first offering. Approval of a course does not ensure that it will be offered in any particular semester. The determination to offer a course resides within the department and School. Courses may be cancelled subject to low enrollment. Department Chair/ Program Director must file a change of modality form with the Registrar's Office for any course offered on the ground that becomes an online or hybrid offering. Compensation to teach online and hybrid courses will be consistent with the procedures for campus courses.

ONLINE/HYBRID COURSE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

FIRST TIME NEW COURSE DEVELOPMENT

1. **Completion of Application for Online/Hybrid Course Development Form:** Faculty and Department Chair complete the Application for Online/Hybrid Course Development form prior to the start of any course development or training activities. Department Chair must seek Dean and Provost final approval of the form.
 - a. Copyright Agreement & Training and Course Development Agreement: All faculty must agree to abide by these standards in the development of online and hybrid courses.
 - b. Intellectual Property Agreement: This statement must be agreed to for the development of courses offered within fully online or hybrid program, but may be optional on individual online or hybrid offerings. A stipend for course development will not be paid without an intellectual property agreement.
 - c. Any payment for training and course development is at the discretion of the Department Chair, Dean and Provost.
2. **Online/Hybrid Faculty Training:** Once fully approved, the Application for Online/Hybrid Course Development form will be shared with the Educational Technologist, who will contact individual faculty to arrange for training and discuss the course development plan.

Training Requirements:

 - a. Faculty participates and completes the Online Education Workshop & Fundamentals of Online Teaching training activities (offered once per semester).
 - b. A development shell is created in Blackboard by Educational Technologist and faculty begins developing course materials and organizing content.
 - c. Faculty attends training sessions on technologies as needed (including Blackboard, Echo360, Collaborate, VoiceThread, etc.).
3. **Online/Hybrid Course Development Review:** The course review and sign-off process proceeds as follows:
 - a. When the course is fully developed (must be at least 80% complete for review to begin), but prior to the course start date, the faculty member completes a self-review of the course using the Online/Hybrid Course Development Rubric. Once the self-review is completed they will notify the Educational Technologist.
 - b. Educational Technologist reviews course according to the same Online/Hybrid Course Development Rubric and arranges a time to meet with the faculty to review the course and the rubric feedback. Educational Technologist completes the sign off portion of the Application for Online/Hybrid Course Development form including the date training and course development were completed and forwards to the Provost's Office. The Educational Technologist will also notify the Department Chair/Program Director that the course development stage is completed.

* NOTE: The review by the Educational Technologist is intended to ensure consistency in the quality and success of online course delivery, it is not curriculum or content focused.
 - c. Department Chair/Program Director or designee of their choosing may also review the course according to the Online/Hybrid Course Development Rubric to ensure the

learning outcomes, content and assessments are consistent with the campus-based version of the same course and meets all other department/school requirements.

- d. After course sign-off is complete, the course may be copied from the development shell into the actual course shell where students are enrolled and the course may begin. If a stipend is to be paid, School Dean will proceed with arranging payment at the start of the semester of the first offering. Payments for course development will not be awarded prior to the first offering of the course.

SUBSEQUENT ONLINE/HYBRID COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Faculty that have developed at least one online or hybrid course at Fisher may develop additional courses without participating in training activities again. However, faculty must complete the Application for Online/Hybrid Course Development for each course that is proposed, including all necessary copyright and intellectual property agreements where applicable, and complete the Online/Hybrid Course Development Review process listed above. Payment for additional course development is at the discretion of the School Dean and Provost.

TRAINING OF FACULTY TO TEACH ONLINE/HYBRID WITHOUT COURSE DEVELOPMENT

In the situation where a course has already been developed for the online or hybrid environment, but additional faculty need to be trained to deliver the course, such faculty must still participate in the **Online Education Workshop** and **Fundamentals of Online Teaching** course. Payment for completion of training is at the discretion of the School Dean and Provost.

NOTE: Any faculty may choose to participate in the training activities; however, any stipends for participation will not be awarded until course development or assignment to teach an online course is complete.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF ONLINE/HYBRID COURSE DESIGN

All online and hybrid courses will be reviewed for overall course design updates, technology selection and maintenance every three years, above and beyond any normal course/program evaluation procedures as determined by each School.

1. Educational Technologist will work with the Department Chair/ Program Director to identify the appropriate contact (e.g., faculty who developed the course or most recent instructor) to set up a periodic course review meeting three years after the original offering of the course.
2. Educational Technologist and instructor will conduct a review of the course design, use of technology, and any changes that may be necessary since the course was originally developed, to maintain quality and consistency. The Online/Hybrid Course Development Rubric will be used as a guide to ensure the course is using the most recent and effective design and technology options available at Fisher for online course delivery.
3. Educational Technologist will submit review with suggested recommendations for revisions to Department Chair/ Program Director on the current state of the online/hybrid course.

4. Department Chair/ Program Director will determine when and who will perform the revisions identified as part of the review and provide a timeline for those revisions.
 - a. Please note, if substantial revisions are necessary, and only for courses that were originally requested to be offered online by the College and/or those in which the faculty received payment to develop, then the retooling may be eligible for compensation. The School Dean will determine an appropriate stipend, if any, commensurate with the work to be done.
 - b. In those cases when the Department Chair/ Program Director deems that substantial revisions are necessary above and beyond normal maintenance and outside of the three-year cycle of review, the Department Chair/ Program Director will determine when and who will perform the revisions, provide a timeline for those revisions, and contact the Educational Technologist about the proposed plan. It is recommended that extensive revisions outside the three-year review cycle outlined above only be considered either two years after the original offering of the course or after the third offering of the course.
5. Once substantial revisions are made, the faculty member should complete a self-review and notify the Educational Technologist.
6. Educational Technologist will review to ensure consistency in the quality and success of online/hybrid course delivery.
7. Educational Technologist will notify the Department Chair/Program Director and School Dean following the review.
8. Department Chair/Program Director or designee of their choosing may also review the course to ensure the learning outcomes, content and assessments are consistent with the campus-based version of the same course and meets all other department/school requirements.
9. Any payment for the retooling of an online/hybrid course will be determined by the School Dean. Such payment will only be issued after course retooling has been successfully completed.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Each program is reviewed following the normal course/program evaluation procedures within each of the Schools.
- Noel-Levitz Priority of Online Learners Survey – administered as needed to benchmark our student satisfaction with a national comparison group.
- Internal surveys administered to online/hybrid students to gather data on the quality and satisfaction of the student experience at Fisher specifically in these new learning environments.
- Faculty across disciplines are gathered to share best practices and tips on teaching online and hybrid courses and supporting students at a distance.

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS TAKING ONLINE & HYBRID COURSES

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY TO TAKE ONLINE & HYBRID COURSES

In order for an undergraduate student to be eligible to take an online course, he or she should have sophomore status or above. No such restriction applies to graduate students.

There are no restrictions on students registering for hybrid courses.

ONLINE STUDENT READINESS ASSESSMENT

Online courses require a specific skill set, both technological and personal, that traditional campus-based courses may not. Therefore, students who are curious about online courses are encouraged to complete the Online Course Readiness Assessment to evaluate their own personal fit for the online learning environment. Students are encouraged to complete this assessment and review their personalized feedback with their advisor prior to registering for any online course offering. Students should specifically consult with their advisor if they wish to take more than one online course in a given semester, unless enrolled in a fully online program.

ONLINE & HYBRID STUDENT ORIENTATION

Students are enrolled in an orientation module immediately upon registration for an upcoming online or hybrid course offering. The orientation module includes information on technology requirements and instructions, tips for being a successful online learner and links to campus services. The orientation in Blackboard is available to them throughout the time they are taking online/hybrid courses so it may be used as a reference at any time, although they only need to successfully complete the Orientation Quiz one time. Course instructors will monitor to ensure students complete the orientation prior to the start of the course. Students will be reminded to complete orientation through a general announcement two weeks prior to each semester.

VERIFICATION OF ONLINE STUDENT IDENTITY

In order to assist students in understanding their legal and ethical responsibilities as online participants in the academic community, and in compliance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act, specifically Public Law 110-35, St. John Fisher College has developed the Verification of Online Student Identity Policy. The full policy can be found here:

<https://www.sjfc.edu/media/about/leadership/provost/documents/VerificationOfStudentIdentity.pdf>