Determining Instructional Time, Student Work, and Appropriate Credits for Online and Blended Courses

For assistance, contact your unit’s e-learning or academic technology contact or TeachingSupport@UMN

[This document is part of a set of resources available here to assist U of M faculty, staff, and academic units in creating new courses that meet University and Higher Learning Commission requirements, assigning online academic credits, and promoting the development of high quality courses that include substantive interaction between students and instructor. It was created collaboratively by representatives from academic and technology support units, Academic Technology Support Services, the Center for Educational Innovation, and the Office of Undergraduate Education (Twin Cities).]

As part of submitting your online course for approval, you will need to include a brief description of how: a) the course content (instructional time); and b) student work/engagement with the content justify the number of credits you are seeking. The list below provides examples of online course content and student work/engagement to assist you in writing this description and including the appropriate amount of total student academic time to match the academic credits you are requesting. In addressing these areas, ask yourself:

- How will I actively engage students and provide group and individual feedback (informed by your knowledge and expertise) in an online environment throughout the duration of the course?
- How will I incorporate content on the course site that leverages my expertise in the discipline and guides students in their understanding of the subject?
- How will my syllabus demonstrate that there is an appropriate amount of instructional activities/content/time to merit the number of credits requested?

Building Online Courses with faculty/student, student/student, and student/content interaction.

Total student academic engagement is set by U of M policy as 150 minutes per credit each week. The expectation is that students will spend approximately twice the amount of instructional time completing student work (studying, writing papers, group projects, etc...). Instructional time refers to the time students are receiving/acquiring/engaging with content. It does not refer to the instructor’s preparation time. This is not an exhaustive list, and not all of these activities should be used in every course.

Instructional Time

(Receiving/acquiring the content = bold; Students engaging with content = normal)

- Instructor(s) authored asynchronous audio/video presentation - Instructor video segments (including current event/updates), guest presenter video segments, audio, lecture capture, slides with audio narration, demonstrations
- Synchronous (“live”) audio/video presentation - Web conferencing (note that alternative arrangements need to be made for those who cannot participate in real time)
- Instructor(s) authored text/graphic content modules - Guided lessons (ideally with periodic checks for understanding/interactivity)
- Instructor feedback to entire group (not individual grading) - LMS announcements and/or instructor responses to discussion forums
- Class discussions with faculty and students (multimedia) - Academic discussions, student/faculty intros
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- Class discussions with faculty and students (LMS discussion board) - Academic discussions, student/faculty intros. Teaching online takes the form of facilitating, moderating, coaching, hosting, tracking students, providing formative feedback, sharing expertise, etc.
- Class formative and summative quizzes and exams - LMS quiz and exam capacity (may be with electronic proctoring)
- Instructor(s) authored interactive content - Simulations and academic gaming

Student Work

(Receiving/acquiring the content = bold; Students engaging with content = normal)

- Course readings/graphics not authored or guided by the instructor
- Opportunities for reflection and articulation of what is being learned
- Other homework assignments
- Writing assignments
- Researching answers to questions posed in class
- Group/Individual Projects

Based on the elements you plan to use in your course (see above examples), please address the following questions, then adequately describe the instructional activities and student work in the syllabus.

1. How many credits are you requesting for this course? (based on 150 minutes per credit each week of instructional time and student work time)?

2. How much course time in total hours will be instructional time (both receiving/acquiring content and students engaging/working with the content)?
   a. Please briefly describe the basis by which you arrived at this estimate (what type of instructional activities are part of the course?).

3. How much course time in total hours will be student work time (both receiving/acquiring content and students engaging/working with the content)?
   a. Please briefly describe the basis by which you arrived at this estimate (what type of student work is part of the course?).