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Definitions of 3 Learning Modalities: Online, Remote, and Emergency Remote

(Traditional face-to-face learning, independent studies, and practica are not addressed in this document.)

Online Learning

“Online learning” refers to asynchronous courses that are designed to be taught 100% online¹ and are coded as “online” at SMUMN.

- This instructional mode allows students to engage in the class at any time of day so long as certain deadlines for the completion of work are met each week.
- Students are not required to meet for scheduled simultaneous sessions.
- While limited use of synchronous sessions may occur (see guidelines for synchronous sessions below), online learning is designed to allow students to participate asynchronously. It is especially appropriate for students who are in different time zones from the instructor, such as international students, and students who need increased flexibility with their schedules.
- Asynchronous online courses typically rely on tools such as pre-recorded lectures and discussion forums. However, substantial instruction/interaction should occur weekly during the course (see guidelines below) through chat-rooms, discussion threads, and other means.
- An asynchronous class can be self-paced but can also have weekly deadlines.
- Online courses have been approved by the program director/chair and, for graduate/BS completion, by the curriculum committee.
- The course site including but not limited to syllabi, course materials, grading, discussion questions, and formal assignments should be completed and loaded at least two weeks prior to the first day of the term/semester.

¹ According to HLC definitions, “distance-delivered courses” are those where “at least 75% of the instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication, correspondence or equivalent mechanisms, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other.” Additionally, “distance-delivered programs” include those “certificate or degree programs in which 50% or more of the required courses may be taken as distance-delivered courses.”

The following guidelines assist staff and faculty:

- [Guidelines for Synchronous Sessions in 100% Online Courses](#)
- [Clarifying Weekly Instruction for Blended and Online Courses](#)

Remote Learning

In the online-synchronous remote course, both students and instructors participate online or in-person at the same scheduled day and time.

- Remote learning is designed primarily for synchronous instruction and can be conducted via video conferencing with some asynchronous elements.
- Students and instructors are required to meet simultaneously on a set schedule for a specified amount of time (note that no more than 2 hours of online synchronous sessions are recommended at a time).
- Synchronous sessions may be supplemented by the use of asynchronous activities and assessments, delivered via the learning management system.
- Substantial instruction/interaction occurs weekly during the course at the regularly scheduled course times.
 - Traditionally, “blended” courses use both online and in-person learning experiences when teaching students. In-class time or synchronous online meetings may be either replaced or supplemented by asynchronous online learning experiences.
 - Blended programs may include field work, site visits, or residencies. Substantial instruction/interaction occurs weekly during the course through the use of technology and in-person instruction. The degree or amount of “blending” in the course is determined according to the following scale:
 - Amount of reduced seat time
 - 1-24% Lowest
 - 25-49% Medium
 - 50-74% High
- The course site including but not limited to syllabi, course materials, grading, discussion questions, and formal assignments should be completed and loaded at least one week prior to the first day of the term/semester.
- A plan/schedule for any synchronous sessions (either remote or in-person) should be delivered on or before the first day of the course.

Emergency Remote Learning

During times of crisis (e.g., pandemic, natural disaster, civil unrest, etc.), instructors respond not only by shifting their courses to an online delivery mode but by also **extending a further sense of care to our students and attempting to build a community that can work together to confront situation-specific learning challenges.**

- See “A temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances,” with the intention of returning to the original mode of instruction, from [The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online](#).
- Faculty members determine the best way to instruct and access resources temporarily, keeping in mind the challenges that students might be experiencing during a crisis. See ["Teaching in Time of Crisis"](#) for helpful resources and approaches.
- Emergency remote learning may or may not have synchronous sessions. If synchronous sessions are held, they should occur at the posted time and should not be rescheduled. Synchronous sessions do not have to meet for the full block of time scheduled, as an onground session would.
- Substantial instruction/interaction must occur weekly, with at least one, one-hour synchronous session held weekly (instructors should keep in mind the capacity for student engagement online and offer no longer than two-hour synchronous sessions at one time)
- The faculty assigned to the course offers engaged instruction in a revised format, appropriate to the emergency. This may include revising assignments and due dates, shifting class discussions to online discussion boards, etc.
- Students enrolled in the course continue to exchange ideas with one another and their instructor.
- An emergency remote course will return to its original delivery format when the crisis is over.