

College of the Environment Class Modality Policy

1. Guiding Principles

The CENV expectation is that Bellingham-campus courses offered during the academic year will be offered in a face-to-face modality, supporting the character of the residential experience at Western. The Salish Sea Region courses and academic programs, as well as any other degrees specifically designed and approved for online or hybrid delivery, may include substantive remote modalities, as defined by the University. Departments may develop and seek approval for online certificates and degrees, subject to appropriate accreditation requirements.

1.1 When reviewing and approving a class for alternate modality

1. CENV is committed to substantive and regular interaction and contact among students and between students and the instructor of record regardless of modality.
2. Face-to-face instruction is the core modality for students in the College, and there is an expectation that any proposal for an alternative modality will offer a compelling pedagogical rationale for that modality.
3. Classes taught in alternative modalities must meet the same student learning outcomes as the face-to-face modality of that class.
4. The principles outlined in this document apply to the delivery of all proposed and previously approved courses taught in online and hybrid modalities.
5. The development and maintenance of documents and use of these documents to evaluate and approve online and hybrid courses are the purviews of the College Curriculum Committee.

1.2 CENV will track modalities of scheduled courses

CENV is committed to maintaining the face-to-face modality of its Bellingham-campus academic programs. The intent behind maintaining the face-to-face modality on the Bellingham campus is a) to ensure that students enrolled in College of the Environment programs offered on the Bellingham campus can be confident that the overwhelming majority (at least 90%) of the courses they need for their degree will be face-to-face, and b) to help departments be confident that students cannot create degree pathways where over

fifty percent of their credits are from courses offered in alternative modalities, which may require separate approval and accreditation. The following actions will be taken to monitor course modality impacts on academic programs and student experiences:

1. The CENV course modality proposal form will require instructors to describe how the alternative modality may potentially impact the modality of the academic programs in which the course is listed.
2. During scheduling each year, the Department Chairs and Program Directors will have discretion to decide course modality, choosing from among the approved modalities for each course. A course approved for an alternative modality does not always need to be scheduled as such.
3. Chairs will strive to schedule at least ninety percent of Bellingham-campus academic year courses as face-to-face modality each year, while knowing that extenuating circumstances (e.g., faculty leaves, faculty disability accommodations, access to diverse and highly qualified non-tenure track instructors) can impact modality both during initial scheduling and due to emergent needs.
4. At the end of each academic year, the Chairs and Program Directors will report to the Dean a summary of the modalities of courses taught the preceding academic year to assess the impact alternative modalities may have had on specific academic programs and student pathways through them. If a potential impact is indicated that may continue into the next academic year, then the Dean and the Chair or Program Director of the affected academic program will develop a plan to remediate the potential impact.

1.2 Department or academic program modality policy

Each department or academic program may adopt its own modality policy. When developing its own policy, a department or academic program must adhere to the criteria and expectations outlined in this document.

2. Minimum Criteria for Courses with Alternative Modality

All courses approved for alternative modality for delivery in any term, for any degree must successfully demonstrate:

1. *A compelling rationale for hybrid and online modality.* In the case of online classes taught in the summer, enhancing student access constitutes a compelling rationale for online modality. For online or hybrid classes taught during the academic year, general student access alone will not be considered an adequate justification; justification for hybrid or online modality should articulate pedagogical benefits of the requested modality for that specific class.
2. *Sufficient total work and contact time.* In accordance with Washington state policy, there should be three hours per week of total student work per credit hour for a standard 10-week course (in practice, one “hour” is equal to approximately 50 minutes of actual contact time). Furthermore, contact time must follow WWU’s Academic Coordinating Commission credit-hour policy, which provides guidance on the amount of contact time (at least one hour per week per credit) and states that contact hours include direct instruction in the form of synchronous meetings and/or instructor-created recordings and readings, as well as regular and substantive interaction.
3. *Sufficient regular and substantive interaction.* The proposal should carefully outline how course components will ensure substantive and regular interaction with the instructor and provide evidence that the overall amount of work required is appropriate for the number of credits assigned for the course.

Recorded video lectures may not be proposed as the only form of instructor interaction. At least 25% of contact time each week for all classes must include substantive interaction with the instructor. Substantive interaction is defined by the distance learning policy of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities¹, as a combination of at least two of the following modes of instruction:

- Conducting direct synchronous instruction
- Providing detailed feedback on a student's work (not simply a grade)
- Providing tailored and contemporaneous information or responses to questions about the content of a course or competency in the form of written or recorded communication

¹ <https://nwccu.app.box.com/s/mafhw08hcz4jrtj9nrz9dglr2f8vgqa>

- Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency
- Using other modes of instruction as described in the NWCCU distance learning policy and those that may be uniquely appropriate to the class

Independent asynchronous work, for example, reading course materials; listening to podcasts; organizing notes; watching videos not created by the instructor; and completing assignments, is considered to be "homework." Faculty should take care to discriminate between "contact time" and "homework" in proposing an alternative modality course.

4. *An accounting of resource requirements.* This should include a list of hardware, software, and other technology infrastructure tools required of the faculty instructor and students (e.g., computer, and stable internet connection, specialized equipment or software), as well as any technical or pedagogical training required for the instructor to effectively teach the class in an alternative modality.

APPENDIX I – Remote Modality Definitions

Course modality definitions

Alternative Modality: Online or hybrid modality.

Face-to-Face: Instruction is accomplished through regularly scheduled in-person class meetings. Alternative instruction may be employed on a limited basis to meet varying pedagogical needs. In this case, an account of alternative instructional time should be documented in the syllabus.

Hybrid: Instructional time is divided between face-to-face and online (in-person meetings are required, but less face-to-face time is included in the regular course schedule, replaced by alternative instruction methods including online instruction). At least 25 percent of instructional time should be scheduled face-to-face. Courses with classroom-based instruction linked to classrooms in multiple locations (the ITV model) are considered hybrid.

Online: Instruction occurs online. Scheduling options for online courses include:

- Synchronous – instruction occurs during regularly scheduled class meeting times.
- Asynchronous – instructional time does not include scheduled meetings.
- Mixed Synchronous & Asynchronous

Please check with WWU Academic Coordinating Commission (ACC) for updates to course modalities and definitions.

Appendix II – CENV Course Modality Proposal Form (Include as an Attachment in Curriculog)

This form will be used by the faculty submitting a request for an alternative course modality. Consider including these answers to prompts in the Curriculog form rationale, as appropriate. Upload this form to the Curriculog form, along with all syllabi, to demonstrate that the course meets the CENV policy. Use separate pages as needed to address the prompts.

1. Select the proposed remotemodality:

- Synchronous online
- Asynchronous online
- Mixed asynchronous/synchronous online
- Hybrid

2. Which term(s) is this modality change proposed for:

- Summer
- Academic year (Fall, Winter, or Spring)

3. Which site(s) is this modality change proposed for:

- Bellingham Campus
 - Salish Sea Region Campuses
 - Online certificate or degree
- Other _____

4. Provide a compelling rationale for online modality.

5. **Providedetails on total contact time and student work**, (Per ACC Policy on Credit Hours, include detailed schedule of weekly or daily minutes or hours contact time with the instructor and student outside work time for each week of the quarter).

6. **Provide evidence of regular and substantive interaction** as part of the detailed accounting of total contact time (at least 25% of the instructor contact time should be substantive interaction).

7. **Provide an accounting of resource requirements** (as appropriate).

8. **Attach syllabi** for all proposed modalities, including a face-to-face modality syllabus if the class has previously been taught in that modality. Syllabi must follow the WWU Academic Coordinating Commission’s Syllabus guidelines.

CHAIR TO FILL OUT

9. **Degree programs:** in which degree programs is the course a requirement or elective?

Degree program (major, minor, certificate)

10. Constraint to online offerings: Per the US Department of Education definitions, when 50% or more of the courses or credits in an academic program are provided via distance learning, the program must be classified as an online/distance program. Please indicate how the alternative modality will influence the overall online/distance nature of the academic programs in which it is included (e.g., total percentage of program courses offered face-to-face versus online):

Helpful Links:

- ACC Curriculum Management website <https://registrar.wvu.edu/curriculum-management>
- ACC [Course modality lookup tool](#) to see course offerings and their modalities since fall 2017 (Excel spreadsheet download). Does not include approvals for 2021-2022 or beyond.
- [ACC Syllabus Requirements and Guidance](#) (ACC approved 12.8.2020, Faculty Senate approved 1.25.2021)
- [ACC Policy on Credit Hours](#) (ACC approved 5.24.2022, Faculty Senate approved 5.31.2022)
- [Permanent and Temporary Modality Changes](#) (ACC approved 5.24.2022, Faculty Senate approved 5.31.2022)
- Department of Education Definitions of Distance Learning

Appendix III – CENV Course Modality Rubric (include as an attachment in Curriculog)

This rubric will be used by the CENV Curriculum Committee to evaluate and approve course modality proposals submitted by the department. A proposal needs to satisfy all the requirements listed below for approval. If a proposal is not approved, the rubric will be returned to the department as justification for denial and to provide guidance on how it can be improved. Upload this form to the Curriculog form, along with all syllabi, to demonstrate that the course meets the CENV policy. Use additional pages as needed to provide suggestions for improvement.

1. Does the proposal provide a compelling rationale for online modality?

Yes

No

If not, how can it be improved?

2. Does the proposal provide details on total contact time and student work.

Yes

No

If not, how can it be improved?

3. Does the proposal provide evidence of regular and substantive interaction as part of the detailed accounting of total contact time (at least 25% of the instructor contact time should be substantive interaction)?

Yes

No

If not, how can it be improved?

4. Does the proposal provide an accounting of resource requirements (as appropriate)?

Yes

No

If not, how can it be improved?

5. Does the syllabus follow the WWU Academic Coordinating Commission's Syllabus guidelines?

Yes

No

If not, how can it be improved?

6. Will approval of the proposed alternative modality for this course retain the current program status based on US Department of Education definitions (Appendix 2, #10)?

Yes

No

If not, how can it be improved?

APPENDIX IV – Procedure for Approval of Alternative Course Modalities

- Step 1:** Proponent completes the CENV Course Modality Proposal Form (Appendix II) and sends the form to the Department Chair, or designated authority, who completes Questions 9 and 10. The Chair attaches the form to the Curriculog proposal.
- Step 2:** Department reviews the proposal. It will signify its decision in Curriculog and to the Dean of the College.
- Step 3:** The CENV Curriculum Committee reviews the proposal using the CENV Course Modality Proposal Rubric (Appendix III) and attaches the completed rubric to the Curriculog proposal. When recording their decision, the CENV Curriculum Committee will note whether the proposal meets the college modality policy.