

Obtaining Online Course Approval

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Courses must be approved to be delivered online. Initiate this process through your department chair by providing the following:

1. Face-to-face syllabus*
2. Online syllabus*
3. Statement regarding how the learning outcomes are appropriate
4. Statement regarding how the contact hours are appropriate

**Syllabi should: 1) have matching learning outcomes, 2) indicate equivalent contact hours and similar assessments, and 3) meet all minimum requirements, including appropriate course description.*

Overview

The intention of the online course approval process – known as obtaining “Non-Traditional Formal Approval designation (NTFA)” – is to document for accreditation purposes that a course in any mode or any length other than the traditional face-to-face 15 week semester has the same learning outcomes. This is accomplished by demonstrating that the online course: a) has the same learning outcomes as the face-to-face course; and b) offers the equivalent contact hours as the face-to-face course.

The process for obtaining NTFA is initiated in the Curricular Approval Request System (CARS) (<https://registrar.tamu.edu/Our-Services/Curricular-Services/Curricular-Processes/Course-Inventory-Approvals#1-Non-TraditionalCourses-Summer%2FFall2018>). It is necessary to provide the syllabus for the course delivered face-to-face and the syllabus for the course delivered online. There are multiple requirements for these syllabi (listed below). Additionally, statements regarding the appropriateness of the learning outcomes and contact hours are required in CARS to obtain NTFA for a course.

Syllabus Requirements

The two syllabi that are provided as part of the approval process are: 1) face-to-face course and 2) online course. They should both include:

1. Minimum syllabus requirements (<http://facultysenate.tamu.edu/Quick-Links/New-Minimum-Syllabus-Requirements-for-Fall-2020>)
2. Appropriately worded course description (<https://registrar.tamu.edu/Our-Services/Curricular-Services/Catalog/Style-Guide-for-Catalog-Course-Descriptions>)
3. Same learning outcomes
4. Same contact hours
5. Similar assessments

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes should be worded and presented exactly the same in both syllabi. The most straightforward way to accomplish this is to copy and paste the learning outcomes from the face-to-face course syllabus to the online course syllabus.

Learning outcomes should be framed using Bloom's Taxonomy. For help with this, see TAMUG's Faculty Resources (<https://www.tamug.edu/AcademicAffairs/documents/Blooms-Taxonomy-Action-Verbs.pdf>) and Figure 1.

		COGNITIVE PROCESS DIMENSION					
		1. REMEMBER Recall and retrieval of foundational disciplinary information.	2. UNDERSTAND Make meaning out of information.	3. APPLY Use information in a similar situation.	4. ANALYZE Take apart information and explore component connections.	5. EVALUATE Examine critically and judge.	6. CREATE Create something new.
KNOWLEDGE DIMENSION	A. FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE Foundational information in a discipline.	<i>List</i>	<i>Summarize</i>	<i>Respond</i>	<i>Select</i>	<i>Check</i>	<i>Generate</i>
	B. CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE Connection of foundational elements to overall structure and function.	<i>Recognize</i>	<i>Classify</i>	<i>Provide</i>	<i>Differentiate</i>	<i>Determine</i>	<i>Assemble</i>
	C. PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE Methods for investigating and acting.	<i>Recall</i>	<i>Clarify</i>	<i>Carry Out</i>	<i>Integrate</i>	<i>Judge</i>	<i>Design</i>
	D. META-COGNITIVE KNOWLEDGE Reflection on thinking in the discipline.	<i>Identify</i>	<i>Predict</i>	<i>Use</i>	<i>Deconstruct</i>	<i>Reflect</i>	<i>Create</i>

Figure 1. Mapping Student Learning Outcomes (source: [Faculty Resources, Bloom's Taxonomy](#))

Definition of Semester Credit Hour

Per University Rule 11.03.99.M1 (<https://rules-saps.tamu.edu/PDFs/11.03.99.M1.pdf>), a semester credit hour is defined as: a minimum of 50 minutes per week of formalized instruction and a minimum of 100 minutes of out-of-class student work. For a 3 credit hour course over a 15 week semester, a total of 45 hours of formalized instruction is required.

Formalized instruction hours should include activities that address and demonstrate student competency in the defined learning outcomes. Activities that are counted toward formalized instruction hours must be REQUIRED and STRUCTURED.

Examples of activities that do count toward instructional time: online discussion boards, required participation in live or online discussions (e.g., review session, online chat, case discussions), tutorials, small group activities, virtual labs, instructional videos, and other instructor-driven self-guided activity

delivered live or by electronic media. Examples of activities that do not count toward instructional time: readings, homework, logging onto online courses, and other intrinsic preparation or activities.

The most straightforward way to demonstrate the same contact hours in the face-to-face course and the online course is to include a column in the Course Schedule that includes the contact hours by week.

Assessments

Assessments of learning outcomes must be similar across the face-to-face course and online course, as identified in the syllabus. The most straightforward way to demonstrate this is to have the same assessments (i.e., exams, research papers). Otherwise, use the statement in the CARS form to indicate how the learning outcomes are assessed in the online course.

CARS Requirements

CARS can be accessed through Howdy, under the “Employee” drop-down menu. To view the information on a course, click on “Course Form” then search for the class once logged into CARS.

The following must be addressed:

- Will sections of this course be taught as non-traditional? (i.e., parts of term, distance education) [Yes]
- Add a justification statement indicating the department/college faculty determined the learning outcomes are appropriate for the course. [*Statement on how the learning outcomes are met in the online course. List required, structured activities that are part of formalized instruction and make the course equivalent in contact hours. Address assessments as well.*]
- Add a justification statement indicating the department/college faculty determined the contact hours are appropriate for the course. [*Statement indicating the contact hours are equivalent based on formalized instruction hours.*]

Approval Process

Once you have requested online approval with the department chair, the request and accompanying materials will be reviewed by TAMU Curricular Services and the TAMUG Committee Preparer. If there are corrections or additions needed, you will be asked to revise your syllabus and/or the statements regarding learning outcomes and course hours. Once approved, the request will be reviewed by the curriculum committee then process through the Dean’s office, Faculty Senate, and Provost’s Office. For more details on the process, see: <https://www.tamug.edu/AcademicAffairs/pdf/TAMUG-Curriculum-Approval-Process-08-2019.pdf>