

Christian Brothers University Handbook for the Center for Digital Instruction

INNOVATION FOR AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT EDUCATION
THE CENTER FOR DIGITAL INSTRUCTION

I. Introduction

This handbook is a resource manual for online and distance learning at Christian Brothers University. It is intended especially for instructors, designers, administrators, and affiliated staff who teach and interface with CBU's online instructional tools. For the most part, online instruction is similar to what occurs in traditional face-to-face academic settings. Courses are structured around syllabi, course outcomes, projects, assessments, and most importantly, subject matter expertise and high level instructional skill. Nonetheless, digital education also brings with it a number of unique opportunities and challenges. For instance, the capacity for high speed replication and distribution of content makes it possible to grow class sizes but requires extra care to protect intellectual property. In a similar vein, motivating and sustaining the interest and productivity of students in the online environment may also require the adoption of practices not found in the face-to-face classroom. In short, the development of a robust online program at CBU requires establishing policies, procedures, and guidelines specific to the opportunities and challenges of digital education. These requirements and best practices are delineated and summarized in this handbook, which is maintained by CBU's Center for Digital Instruction (CDI). This handbook's function is primarily advisory with the goal of supporting effective online teaching by CBU's faculty. As such, it serves as a supplement to CBU's Faculty Handbook and Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual.

Reasons for developing and enhancing online courses: Many reasons exist for launching an online learning program. First, it provides access to a quality education that would ordinarily be difficult, if not impossible, for some students (e.g., they have limited transportation options, they live in an area without access to a University, or their employment hours limit their opportunities, etc.). Second, it provides faculty opportunities to challenge and engage learners through implementation of a variety of innovative and traditional instructional methods. Third, it provides an institution with the freedom to have a broader appeal beyond its normal constituents, potentially reaching around the world and creating strategic partnerships with other institutions. Fourth, an online program can bring in other funds for the institution. However, this last reason should not be the motivating factor for launching an online program. To develop and sustain a world-class online program, the institution must have a plan and a commitment to put a significant amount of revenue back into the program to help develop and sustain it or the program will fall short of its full potential.

Commitment: Institutional commitment is essential to developing and sustaining an online program. Through the gift of certain monies put forward to create and launch CBU's online program, the institution received a rare opportunity to expand its student base beyond the traditional, campus bound student body. By developing a world-class online program, CBU will see its influence spread across the United States and even reach international borders. Now is the time for the institution to commit to this endeavor by minimizing obstacles as much as possible. This can happen by intentionally seeking and purposefully compelling the commitment of *willing* administrators, faculty, staff, and students to ensure their involvement in designing, measuring, and continuously improving this effort.

Effect on traditional delivery: Online education is proving to be a disruptive challenge for universities that are unprepared. In some instances, online programs are seen as competing with the traditional campus. Should this be an insurmountable challenge, other solutions exist

that may be explored when appropriate. A better approach is to change how the institution thinks about what is happening in academia and view this disruption as an opportunity to expand, learn, and grow together.

II. Definitions

Online Instruction

Distance Education: According to CBU's accreditation authority, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), "Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous." (SACSCOC, 2018) It also defines correspondence courses as "a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced." Lacking adequate interaction between faculty and students or between students, will result in a loss of funding from the federal government. For this reason, Christian Brothers University (CBU) will subscribe to the distance education model described by SACSCOC and will expect high interaction between students and between faculty and students.

Learning Management System (LMS): An LMS is the application or program that is a conduit for course and program content and interaction to students through a web interface. They are "collaborative platforms used to manage online learning courses." After several months of research, demonstrations, and comparisons, the faculty selected Canvas to replace the previous LMS. "The Canvas Learning Management Platform allows schools to build the digital learning environment that meets the unique challenges faced by their institution. Canvas simplifies teaching, elevates learning, and eliminates the headaches of supporting and growing traditional learning technologies." (Instructure, 2020) The CDI team will be working to support and equip the LMS, and then train the faculty in the use of these tools.

Course Modalities

Traditional Course: Defined by the number of hours spent in required in-person meetings in various forms, including lectures and group discussions that occur at a specific time, in a specific physical location, on a specific day.

Hyflex Course: "Online activity is mixed with classroom meetings, replacing a significant percentage, but not all required face-to-face instructional activities." (Mayadas, Miller, & Sener, 2015) This kind of course is anchored to a specific time and day but may be accessed by way of technology as well as physical space. Remote students may access the course through technological means while others attend the course in a physical location. A third possible is that students access the lecture asynchronously, at a time

that is convenient for them. These courses use web conferencing or other synchronous media and lecture capture to provide access to a classroom experience for the remote students while also maintaining a traditional class schedule. These kinds of courses require much planning and instructional design and is only encouraged as a modality when prepared adequately and/or required as a last resort.

Hybrid/Blended Classroom Course: This kind of course mixes both synchronous and asynchronous modalities, replacing a significant portion of the required face-to-face instructional activities, but not all. For example, this kind of course may typically meet three times in a week, but in this version will meet only once each week while offering online work that replaces the traditional face-to-face meeting. Another option might be to deliver most of the course content online while requiring a weekend of lab work once or twice during the term. Besides freeing the faculty and students for other online experiences, this frees up physical classroom space. Please see Appendix “Hybrid Modality” for further explanation on this.

Online Course: All course activity is done 100% online with no required face-to-face activity. These kinds of courses open the door for the institution to reach beyond the region, even beyond national boundaries. They are defined as fully online course delivery with a heavy emphasis on the interaction of the faculty with the students, of students with other students, and engagement with course content. “Since 2002-03, the Babson Survey Research Group has conducted a national survey of online learning. Their protocol defines a Blended/Hybrid course as being up to 79 percent online and an Online Course as being 80-100 percent online. They have maintained that distinction in order to ensure longitudinal consistency across survey years. However, most institutions now consider an online course to be 100% online.” (Mayadas, Miller, & Sener, 2015)

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous Course Delivery¹:

Synchronous online classes, like *traditional* classroom classes, require the design of face-to-face or voice-to-voice activities as part of the educational and learning experience. In a synchronous online classroom, students may be in a physical space or virtually “seated” in class together using delivery technologies like telephone and live video conferencing usually with live chat, polling, and file sharing capabilities at the ready. Faculty may design and use passive learning activities, like live or video recorded lectures. This modality is NOT recommended by CDI as it limits the student access to those who can meet at the specific times/days as indicated. However, CDI does highly recommend the use of synchronous contacts through the use of office hours as well as small groups.

¹ Synchronous courses provide the highest level of faculty interaction and immediacy while asynchronous courses provide the broadest access to the widest locations and most often agrees with the varied schedules of this population of students. Both of these kinds of classes may use technologies such as online discussions, email, or other social networking applications (called apps).

Asynchronous online classes are neither correspondence nor self-paced courses. Unlike traditional or synchronous online classrooms, students and teachers in asynchronous classrooms are not required to be online at the same time. Nevertheless, asynchronous online classes require the design of learning activities that compel students to interact with each other, the faculty, and course specific content within a certain pre-arranged interval. Again, faculty may design and use both passive (video recorded lectures) and active learning activities (discussion forums, homework assignments, and group work, etc.). While not exclusive, many asynchronous online courses follow a schedule that consists of a number of weeklong modules.²

Program Modalities

Traditional Program: This degree program will mainly be delivered by traditional means, campus based, physical classroom attendance. They may include a mix of traditional and hybrid courses and might allow for some web-enhanced content delivery but will require students to be in a face-to-face learning environment every week of the term.

Hybrid/blended Program: A significant portion of the program courses are offered online while a few may be required on site. These programs may include a mix of traditional and online courses but may also be made up of online and hybrid courses. This second option reduces the number of times required for a student to be on site, which increases the appeal to a wider, non-traditional student population. (See Appendix A for further explanation of Hybrid Modality.)

Online Program: All credits and courses for a degree program are offered through fully online, asynchronous courses. Students can complete the whole program from a distance with no required face-to-face meetings.

Personnel

Full-time Faculty: CBU defines a full-time faculty member as one whose major employment is with the institution, whose primary assignment is in teaching or research, and who has a contract as a full-time employee.

Adjunct Faculty: CBU defines adjunct faculty as part-time faculty who must meet the standards of the accrediting body (SACSCOC) and whose primary role may be that of a Subject Matter Expert (SME), a course facilitator, or both. CBU employs adjunct faculty on a temporary basis and contracts with them to teach a specific course(s) for a single term or semester through the office of the Vice President for Academics and Student Life (VPASL).

Subject Matter Expert (SME): CBU considers a SME to be a content expert from either an academic, technical, or vocational field. SME's combine extensive educational

² Some courses using modules may be less sensitive to a weekly format, instead planning only by content topic, which may or may not be in a weekly format.

training and first-hand knowledge through professional practice, anecdotal stories, case studies, best practices, tips and/or “tricks-of-the-trade” that they share to improve knowledge and enhance skill development. A SME will provide insight, analysis and expertise on a wide range of subjects that add value to the curriculum of CBU. SME’s may be full-time faculty members, adjuncts, or even outside resources approved by the faculty to help develop online courses for CBU under contract. The SME may also assist the institution in reviewing current course content and making recommendations for improvements.

Course Facilitator: In some instances, mainly for the sake of rapid deployment of courses or scalability, CBU may choose to hire a course facilitator. A course facilitator may teach in the online environment using a pre-designed course with little to no option to alter the course. If a course facilitator believes a change to the course content or structure is necessary, the course facilitator may make recommendations to the area chair and/or the school dean during the evaluation process. By deploying course facilitators, certain courses may become scalable by allowing CBU to use and reuse the course. A course facilitator must meet the same qualifications as an adjunct. Course facilitators, therefore, may be deployed by the Office of Online Learning and Educational Technology with approval from the VPASL.

CBU Online Students

Student: There are several student types enrolled at CBU. Most CBU students are classified as “s”, called “DAY” students, or as GRAD or CAPS students. In addition, they may be categorized as full or part time students, or as residents or commuters.³

Orientation: For new exclusively online students, CBU has created an online orientation, which is made available to them upon notification of acceptance as a student at CBU. Students are not required to work through the tutorial but are highly recommended to do so. The Online Student Success Specialist(s) will monitor incoming students and will apprise them of this opportunity very early in their coursework if it appears the student is having difficulty with the medium. The faculty will also make similar recommendations as needed. At some point, this may be incorporated into CBU’s orientation requirement for first-year students.

Community: In each online classroom, students will interact with other students as well as with the faculty. CBU’s online-only students will also be part of a larger community of learners that will have access to a social platform that will provide them access to community events, community knowledge base, shared experiences, and even special events that are designed just for them.

CBU Online Student Success: Generally, the online learner is a nontraditional student whose focus may include work, family, and other demands of their time. Most often, the online class is the quickest item to release in an already punishingly full schedule.

³ The definition of “student” is in process. Under consideration includes those who are corporate and/or non-degree seeking students.

Discouragement plagues the online student because of the distance from the physical campus. Therefore, institutions with online programs look for ways to keep the student engaged even in the midst of their lives. Research gives several modalities to encourage and secure student success.⁴ Because distance may provide a challenge for convenient access to the CBU campus, the university will connect and engage with the students through a variety of means:

- The faculty in the online classroom will provide an instructional presence that will help the student engage the course content.
- The instructional design team will work to present a meaningful learning atmosphere for the student.
- An intermediary role—the Online Student Success Specialist—has been created that will span the gulf between academics and home for the distant student. Their purpose is to be a regular voice to connect with the students, to advocate for them when necessary, to encourage them, and to help them when they are having difficulties. CBU Online Student Success Specialists will help students learn to be successful learners.

Academic Conduct: All CBU students, regardless of student type, are bound by the university's policies and procedures. For students, these are articulated in the [Compass Student Handbook](#). Of special significance are the university proscriptions against all forms of academic misconduct, including plagiarism and cheating. Violations of CBU's academic conduct policies will be addressed with the protocols outlined in other places, including the academic catalog, the student handbook, and the faculty handbook.

III. Instructional Practices

Academic Freedom: All online courses at CBU must incorporate a common design. Landing pages and other generic course components will possess a common format that is identical in every course shell. These design features are the responsibility of CDI to maintain and are not to be modified without permission from CDI. By contrast, academic course content is generated by the course creator, i.e., the faculty member or subject matter expert. Control of content thereby falls under the principle of academic freedom belonging to all CBU faculty members.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs): CBU requires that all courses are accompanied by a syllabus that states the SLOs for the course. **To ensure continuity among course assessments, all course sections of the same course will have the same SLO's and will have several key assignments in agreement to help ensure educational effectiveness, regardless of the delivery modality.***

Syllabus: All CBU faculty members will be required to post a course syllabus in the Canvas shell created for each course.

Grades: All CBU faculty members will be required to post course grades in the Canvas shells created for each of their courses.

⁴ For more research, please see McMurtrie (2018), Diaz (2000), Allen & Seaman (2015) in the References

Course Design: CBU online courses will use an internet-based, asynchronous, highly collaborative learning environment requiring regular and ongoing interactivity among students and with the faculty.

Video: To ensure courses sustain high quality interactivity, faculty are highly recommended to intersperse concise video lectures with graphics, activities, and/or discussion question(s), when appropriate.⁵ Student learning outcomes are the ultimate determinant of adequacy of video length; however, an even blend of interactive media with short impactful videos is the best practice. For instance, a report by Panopto (2018) argues that ever-shortening attention spans of online audiences requires the use of more numerous yet shorter videos to engage online learners. In addition, brief videos, combined with interactive media, will be more accessible for distant students. The recommendation from CDI is to follow industry best practices and limit lecture videos to between six and ten minutes.

Course Structure: Designers will establish course structures to facilitate course navigation—including both temporal indicators (when things are due) and “physical” locators (where things are due). Modules will be made available in a timely fashion and with adequate “navigational” directions for the overall course that students can follow for course readings, assignments, and general, as well as specific, expectations of students.

Minimum Standards for Course Design: To function well for students, all CBU online courses should meet these basic standards:

- **Executive pages**
 - Home landing page updated beyond filler text
 - Syllabus
- **Contact Information for Teacher**
 - Means of assessment and engagement
 - Correct dates applied
 - Clear instructions for where to engage, turn in, or enter.
- **Structure that leads the student through the course.**
 - All necessary resources and links intact.
 - All media accessible (when needed)

Interaction: Interaction with the online student is important to the success of the online course. Therefore, CBU expects faculty to spend no less time than the total time it takes to prepare, attend, and interact with students for a course on a geophysical campus (i.e., no less than the equivalent of 50 minutes per credit hour). This interaction should include both motivational and substantive comments during online interaction. Each faculty person will monitor his/her students’ activity and follow-up with those who are absent over a period as specified by the faculty. Faculty will also respond to questions students raise in course forums within 24 hours.

⁵ QualityMatters published a report that says video lectures should not be any longer than 15 minutes in length, with an expectation to keep the video to 6 minutes, if possible. (Guo, Kim, & Rubin, 2014) Another report shows that the “optimal educational video should be no longer than 10 minutes”. (Kaltura, 2015)

The 24 hour expectation also applies to student correspondence via CBU email or other communication channels established for the course.

Content selection: Instructional faculty will have the opportunity to create their own courses, as long as the SLOs, core course assignments, and assessments meet standards for consistency and have received approvals from chairs and any other required approvers. By contrast, *course facilitators* will not be permitted to alter established course content without permission from the chair, dean or other appropriate director. All courses will be developed and built by the faculty under the care of CDI. More developmental freedom is expected for upper level courses and for any course taught by full faculty.⁶

Course Evaluation⁷: All online courses will be subject to the same student evaluation practices as traditional face-to-face and hybrid courses. These evaluations will be administered by the registrar. Also, periodically, the staff of CDI will review courses with responsible parties in accordance with quality assurance and assessment rubrics for online course delivery to assess, review and revise courses to ensure a quality teaching and learning experience.

Quality control of curriculum: To ensure quality and equivalencies, every section of each equivalent course designation will have the same SLOs and specific key assignments and assessments. Faculty, chairs/directors, and school deans will need to approve SLOs and key assignments and assessments to ensure the viability of CBU's online program and to aid in the assessment of the courses and degree programs.

- All who teach online for CBU will be selected and retained according to established policies and procedures for faculty recruitment and hiring. The same standards will apply to SMEs and course facilitators.
- The dean of the appropriate school is responsible for ensuring ongoing review of each member of the extended faculty, drawing on such sources as published syllabi, course evaluations, affirmations, and complaints brought to the dean's attention. The dean or an assigned department chair should involve the CDI director and staff in the review of the faculty's teaching and development in the online classroom. Similar expectations exist for evaluation of SMEs and course facilitators. CDI will provide remediation services to faculty, SMEs, and course facilitators at the request of the dean.

Workload and teaching responsibilities (course development): For calculations of teaching load, online instructional credit hours are equivalent to credit hour assignments in CBU's traditional and hybrid courses. (Also see note below under "Enrollment").

Adding New Faculty: As the online program develops and grows, more full time faculty may be needed. Determination of program needs falls within the scope of the university's program prioritization initiative within CBU's strategic plan.

Enrollment: Generally, online courses will range in class size between 15 and 25 students. These numbers reflect an expectation for a high level of interactivity between students and between

⁶ SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.4.10

⁷ SACSCOC Comprehensive Standards 3.7.2 and 3.7.3

faculty and students. For upper level courses that will require a substantial amount of faculty presence in the form of frequent, substantive interactions whereby critical thinking is a considerable portion of the course expectations, course registrations will be limited to 15 students. For those courses that have more faculty discourse than interaction, registrations may reach as high as 25 students. Considerations for creating additional online seats > 25 will be evaluated on an ad hoc basis by the chair/director, dean and VPASL.

Office hours: Among those areas of responsibility that together comprise a professor's contribution to the academic discipline, CBU has clear expectations of its faculty regarding contact with students in addition to teaching time. This contact may take many forms, including chat features in the LMS, email, phone conversations, online video chats, and texting, as well as less formal opportunities for interaction. Any of these methods will be sufficient in order to be accessible to the online student.

- CBU also recognizes that students need time formally set aside on a consistent basis for interaction with faculty. The university expects its online faculty to set aside a minimum of three hours/week during the fall and spring semesters of instruction for this kind of interaction.
- The university does not expect its faculty to be continuously available to students during normal working hours nor outside of semesters of instruction, and so urges its faculty members to post on their syllabi the procedures students must follow to arrange meetings with them.

Intellectual property: In keeping with CBU's policy regarding intellectual property (Faculty Handbook, Appendix K), "Course materials, including but not limited to course web pages and web supplements, developed by faculty members of CBU shall remain the property of the members with the provision that materials developed while working at CBU may be used without charge by any other CBU faculty members when teaching at CBU. Exceptions to this policy should be made in writing with the Vice President for Academics and Student Life." If the university hires a SME by contract, who is neither a full nor adjunct faculty member, for developing course materials, the content they develop will be the property of CBU. The SME agrees that the university considers any content they produce under contract as a work made for hire. CBU shall retain all intellectual property rights of that content.

IV. Training and Technical Support

Training*: Any faculty member teaching online for the institution shall participate in CBU's Online Faculty Training (OFT).^{8 9} The training will be approximately one month online with week-long modules. During that month, the faculty will experience what it is like to be an online student; they will participate in all of the same things a regular student experiences including

⁸ In cases where instructors have taught fully online at another institution and can show examples within their course that align with CBU standards, the Office of Online Learning may allow the instructor to teach online for one semester. If allowed, the instructor's course will be reviewed by the Office of Online Learning at the conclusion of that semester and a determination made as to whether the instructor would need to take CBU's Online Teacher training (and successfully complete).

⁹ SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.4.12

forum discussions, assignments, tests, etc. They will also receive reading assignments for each module. Faculty will receive a grade for successfully completing the course. Faculty must pass the online training course in order to teach online for the institution. As incentive and following successful online training completion, each participant who will be teaching for CBU will receive a stipend after the Drop/Add period of their first online course, provided the course is not canceled. Graduates of OFT will be eligible to participate in other programs that will further equip them for teaching online as well as take an active role in a mentoring program.

Continuous quality improvement*: Once faculty complete CBU's Online Faculty Training, CBU expects faculty who teach online to participate in online teacher training events that will be offered throughout the year. CBU's goal is to ensure that both faculty and their students have the best online experiences. Courses also expected to be updated regularly and receive a full revision every five years. With the explosion of technology and the growth of the industry, tools for teaching have equally become more plentiful and accessible. Streaming video and audio are the expectation, no longer the exception. The methodology of content delivery is developing so rapidly that a "subject matter expert" will not be able to keep ahead of the development of the delivery systems, let alone their own special areas. Faculty need continuous development in their craft, especially when it comes to the medium of online teaching. CBU will provide faculty with the tools to teach their students in the online delivery modality. To do this, CDI will provide traditional corporate as well as just-in-time training opportunities throughout the year. A schedule of these learning opportunities will be developed and distributed to the faculty and staff before each academic year.

Available assistance: the CDI staff will provide immediate assistance for all faculty using CBU's LMS. CDI will offer this help during normal business hours and will be available by email in the case of an emergency in off hours. CDI will provide technical assistance for specialized needs to faculty to ensure a high-quality teaching and learning experience. Faculty are also encouraged to use the help service provided by the LMS. (Instructure/Canvas)

ADA-compliance: In accordance with CBU's policy to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, a student with disabilities should follow the procedures in the student handbook. The student and the faculty member, upon satisfaction of the requirements for approval of accommodation, "will mutually agree on how to carry out the accommodation request so as best to satisfy the student's needs without adversely affecting the academic integrity of the course." (John J. McGoldrick, 2017)

V. Student Services

Library: According to the accrediting body, CBU is expected to provide access to library resources that will support student learning. Not only will CBU be expected to provide access to those resources, but training will be offered to help educate the online students as to the resources available for their use. "The institution is expected to ensure that all distance education students, regardless of where they are located, have access to library/learning resources adequate to support the courses they are taking." (SACSCOC, 2018) ¹⁰

¹⁰ Core Requirement 2.9 Comprehensive Standard 3.8.1, 3.8.2, 3.8.3

Other Services: Other services the online student will need access to are already provided for by CBU. Students will have access to faculty advisors, any tutorials and/or mentoring that will help them be successful to the completion of their degrees. They also must have access to the same complaint system that is available to the traditional student.¹¹

VI. Marketing and Recruiting

CDI is not responsible for the marketing or recruiting for Online Learning at CBU. However, it is ready to assist through any means necessary in any endeavor and welcomes every opportunity to promote Christian Brothers University, its programs, faculty, staff, and students.

VII. CBU Online Funding

A very generous donation gave CBU the ability and opportunity to launch a quality online learning program. This gift makes it possible to extend a quality education to those who would not ordinarily have the opportunity. Although the funds are generous, the expectation is that the online program will be a fully self-sustaining program within three years. This will occur over the first three years of the program's existence. Steady, targeted growth directed at specific degrees that are strategically launched will increase interest and visibility of CBU's online program. The expectation is that through CBU Online, the faculty will be better equipped to teach using technology that will enhance the delivery of course content and encourage a higher degree of engagement with the students of CBU. It is equally possible that new connections to potential students will be gained, extending the appeal and influence of the institution beyond the region.

To ensure the longevity and constant development of CBU's online program, the institution will designate at least 70% of the funds generated through tuition revenue to be reinvested into the online program in order to both fund and develop the program. The Center for Digital Instruction may return unused funds to the general budget for specific items within the institution's regular budget, like funding scholarships or other student-related educational needs. A portion of the generated funds reinvested into the online program will go to the contributing school and area (degree program) to help train, purchase new materials or tools, support the library for this degree, etc.

VIII. Conclusion

The Center for Digital Instruction is establishing an annual review and revision process for this handbook in order to remain relevant with online learning and technology developments. We also ask you to contact the Center for Digital Instruction if you notice any inconsistencies or mistakes. We welcome suggestions for improvements in the functions of the Center as well as the information in this handbook and will provide a process for gathering, analyzing, and accepting or rejecting, change requests.

The contents of this handbook are for your information only. While CBU believes wholeheartedly in the practices and procedures we describe in this handbook, they are not necessarily the conditions of employment. The Center for Digital Instruction reserves the right to

¹¹ Federal Requirement 4.5

modify, revoke, suspend, terminate, or change any or all such plans, practices, or procedures in this handbook, completely or in part, at any time, with or without notice.

Finally, this is an organic document meant to guide CBU as it develops and launches into the world of online learning. We recommend some of the points become policies. However, other points contained in this handbook may change over time as the institution grows its online presence. We share these recommendations and policies to provide a framework to develop steadily, orderly, and with care for both the faculty and the students in the online courses. Ultimately, these recommendations should help the institution engage in the future, to think and behave entrepreneurially, and yet responsibly, as students near and far reach out to Christian Brothers University for a high-quality degree and a great educational experience.

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APPENDIX

Hybrid Modality

A hybrid degree program, simply defined, is one that mixes both online and traditional content delivery. The degree to which that mix occurs can vary from subject to subject, from course to course. A hybrid degree may have up to 30% of the courses delivered in the traditional format, with the majority being offered online. (Mayadas, Miller, & Sener, 2015) Likewise, a hybrid degree may offer a mix of fully online and hybrid courses with no full semester length traditional courses.

A hybrid course is similar to a hybrid degree in that it is a mix of both delivery modalities, online and traditional. CBU's accrediting body states their expectations are connected closely to CBU's own policies. The Faculty Handbook has set expectations for the amount of work associated per credit hour for a traditional, hybrid, and online course.

The accrediting body does not define the line between fully online and hybrid courses and programs. It does, however, promote the expectation that Student Learning Outcomes are equivalent across all delivery systems and that provable results are available. Standard 10.7 states, "The institution publishes and implements policies for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for its courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery." In other words, the only control that SACSCOC wants to exert over any delivery system is that the institution abides by its own policies. A more telling paragraph that relates directly to this standard goes deeper into detail.

Policies related to determining amount and level of credit should go beyond the expectation that courses are taught in traditional "seat time" fashion. Institutions offer credits for laboratory classes, studios, internships, professional practicums, independent studies, activities courses, and web-based instruction, to mention just a few of the alternatives. Nontraditional course work may vary in format but is equivalent in expected learning outcomes. If the institution uses some measure of credit other than the semester credit hour, either institution-wide or within specific programs (e.g., direct assessment competency-based programs), the institution provides an explanation of equivalency. When undergraduate and graduate courses are offered through nontraditional delivery, the institution awards credit compatible with sound academic practice in the field¹². (SACSCOC, 2018)

This standard gives institutions like CBU the authority to be innovative and experimental in finding the right tools needed to provide their students with the best learning experience possible. A mix of hybrid courses can go a long way toward meeting the needs of the distant student without requiring them to relocate to the Memphis area. Such students can have a great learning experience, be prepared for their desired position upon graduation, and become a good reference and marketing tool for future students. This is all possible when the SLOs agree across delivery systems and faculty work to engage students in innovative and effective ways.

One other delivery method, while equally supported and useful, should not be considered as either a true hybrid or online course. Often called a "flipped" course, the faculty uses the weekly scheduled time to practice or participate in some form of active learning. Lecture content is delivered online as either pre-recorded short video lectures or through some other means. This enables the faculty to use the scheduled time as a sort of regularly scheduled lab time.

In all of these methods, faculty are still required to be cognizant of instructional time as outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

¹² SACSCOC 2018 POA Resource Manual, 10.7