WWU College of Science and Engineering – Course Modalities policy guidelines (approved 10/10/23)

PREAMBLE:

The College of Science and Engineering's policies on course modality are anchored in four fundamental principles:

1. The College of Science and Engineering and its associated departments and programs recognize **Western's traditional identity as a residential university with robust faculty-student engagement**. Our academic strength lies in our commitment to student-centered, inquiry-based learning, with authentic opportunities for student scholarship and research. We are thus dedicated to centering these approaches for our students.

2. The College of Science and Engineering supports **Western's commitment to access and inclusivity for students across the state of Washington** and recognizes the value of providing courses that are accessible to diverse communities. This commitment may include offering a subset of courses in alternate modalities or in locations other than Bellingham.

3. Curriculum and modality decisions should be based on **frequent assessment of course and program outcomes**, with emphasis on assessment across and between modalities.

4. **Departments carry primary responsibility for their curricula** and curricular decisions. This responsibility includes decisions regarding course modality.

Given the principles above, it is expected that most courses will be taught in face-to-face modality. However, courses may be taught in other modalities, including hybrid or online (synchronous or asynchronous), *if the use of this modality can be shown to significantly improve the student experience, access, or student outcomes relative to a face-to-face class*.

Approved modalities: acceptable modalities for WWU courses are described in the course catalog and may be accessed at https://catalog.wwu.edu/content.php?catoid=20&navoid=5651#course-modalities-instructional-method.

Approval procedures:

If (a) a modality change is sought for an existing course, or (b) a new course is proposed in an alternate (hybrid or remote) modality, faculty must complete and upload a copy of the Alternate Modality Proposal (Appendix I) to Curriculog. The modality proposal will be evaluated based on the Proposal Evaluation Rubric (Appendix II). Modality approval will be confirmed via the radio button in Curriculog. All discussion and approval of modality will occur at the department and college levels; ACC will not further consider course modality.

College/department policy structure:

The College sees its role in curriculum consideration as secondary to that of departments and programs.

Department policies:

Departments are encouraged to create their own policies surrounding modality. Department policies may be more restrictive than College policies. If a department chooses not to develop their own policy, their course proposals will be evaluated using this document. Departmental plans will need to be updated as changes to course offerings occur and to incorporate results from monitoring the effectiveness of the use of different modalities. Review and reapproval of these plans will be necessary when such changes are made, to align with institutional priorities and standards. Departmental modality policies must be approved by PPBC.

Departments proposing changes to service courses (courses required for programs in other departments) are required to communicate with other departments when proposing modality changes. Service courses must be offered in face-to-face modality with sufficient frequency to support the needs of other departments, and at least once per year.

Summer session policy:

The College recognizes that many students move away from Bellingham or work during the summer, making remote classes more accessible and appealing. For this reason, completion of the Alternate Modality Proposal (Appendix I) is not required for summer classes.

Distance learning approval for degree programs:

Per NWCCU accreditation, any program in which 50% or more of class credits are taken online must be approved as a Distance Learning degree. Outcomes assessment must be performed separately for students in the Distance Learning and traditional programs. If a program is not approved for Distance Learning, departments should be cautious about the number of remote classes offered so that students cannot accidentally take more than 50% of their credits online. If there is a reasonable possibility that students will wind up with more than 50% of their credits taken online, it is strongly recommended that departments retain the Distance Learning approval granted during the COVID-19

pandemic. Of particular note are departments offering a significant number of remote courses during summer quarter.

Appendix I: Alternate Modality Proposal (include as an attachment in Curriculog)

Requestor Name and Department: _____

Course Prefix & Number: _____

Course Title: _____

All courses, regardless of modality, must be in compliance with ACC requirements regarding credit hours, information included on syllabi, contact hours, and meeting times. Proposals must be specific about how time will be spent (i.e. in Zoom contact, in watching videos, or in face-to-face meetings) in conformance with the guidelines laid out in the "ACC Policy on Credit Hours".

Is this a new course or existing course? ☐ New ☐ Existing (Temporary or Permanent)

Requested Modality (may check multiple options; please see modality definitions): ☐ Hybrid ☐ Online-Synchronous ☐ Online-Asynchronous ☐ Online-Mixed synchronous and asynchronous

Course funding model (check one or more): ☐ Self-Sustaining (OCE) ☐ State-Supported

Please answer the following:

- What is the benefit to students of the proposed modality? Please describe how the choice of modality significantly improves student experience, outcomes, or access.

- How are the pedagogical elements (objectives, learning activities, interactions, instructional materials, technologies, and assessments) constructed to ensure that students achieve the desired learning outcomes?

- Describe how assessment will be performed to ensure that students are achieving the desired learning outcomes, emphasizing differences (if any) with face-to-face instruction?

- Are additional resources required to effectively deliver the course in the modality requested? If so, how will this need be met?

Appendix II

CSE Course Modality Proposal Evaluation Rubric

This rubric will be used by the CSE Curriculum Committee to evaluate and approve course modality proposals submitted by departments. 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. The review process allows for departments to provide improved or additional documentation to address criteria that the committee deems unsatisfied upon initial review.

1. The proposed modality will result in significantly improved student experience, access, or outcomes relative to a face-to-face class. ☐Yes ☐No

    If not, how can it be improved?

2. The pedagogical elements of this class are appropriate for the modality and constructed to ensure that students can achieve the desired learning outcomes. ☐Yes ☐No

    If not, how can it be improved?

3. The assessment plan ensures that students are achieving the desired learning outcomes. ☐Yes ☐No

    If not, how can it be improved?

4. The proposal includes a complete syllabus consistent with ACC policy that includes course credits, meeting times, and a detailed weekly schedule. ☐Yes ☐No

    If no, how can it be improved?

5. The syllabus meets ACC credit hour guidelines for alternate modality courses. ☐Yes ☐No

    If no, how can it be improved?