3 March 2014

TO: Leo Estrada  
   Chair, Undergraduate Council

FROM: Jan Reiff  
      Chair, Academic Senate

RE: Draft UCLA Online Course Approval Policy

Before I summarize the Executive Board’s comments on the draft policy, let me thank you again for finding time in your filled day of program review activities to answer our questions. All of us appreciated both your answers and the special effort on your part.

The Executive Board also wanted to extend a special thanks to the Undergraduate Council for the time it has spent over the last three years grappling with the complexities of the policy and in producing this draft. Having a policy in place for online courses will help UCLA move forward wisely in this rapidly evolving area of pedagogy.

**General Comments**

*Title ...* This may be self-evident, but there was discussion that the title should clearly state that this is for *UNDERGRADUATE* courses to avoid any possible confusion. As UgC knows, in some of the professional schools and graduate programs, there are already robust online offerings that would violate the policy.

How does this policy apply to courses that are already being taught online? It would seem reasonable to let them continue to be offered.

The policy effectively states the need for assessing the effectiveness of these courses and it requires in *B,(C)* an explanation of how individual courses fit into overall programs for the major/minor. It also, in *B,(H)*, wisely looks to gathering valuable information for subsequent assessment on online education before permanent approval. It is not clear, however, if the lessons learned are just for the class or for the program. Would it make sense to ask for a description of how such courses have affected majors/minors more generally, or is that something better left as a specific question asked in program reviews of departments that have embraced online (and perhaps) blended instruction?
There was significant discussion as to how long the concerns articulated in this policy will remain the key concerns associated with online instruction. Would it make sense to have a charge back to the Undergraduate Council in the introductory section that asks the Undergraduate Council to revisit the policy in 5-6 years?

Specific Comments

In paragraph 2, the sentence “Furthermore, these online courses must be available to all students, including those with disabilities.” Would it make more sense to move this from the introductory section to one of the requirements in the Policies section? We think this is, in fact, an important requirement. By putting it into the Policies section, it would seem to have more weight. If it is moved there, should there be a bullet point under supplementary information that asks for a description of methods for ensuring that the course is accessible to all students?

A. 2 Online courses will be approved initially for up to three offerings or for two years ..... We were happy to learn that this section is already being reconsidered to accommodate the requirement of the UC ILTI initiative that their funded courses, some of which are new, be taught for a minimum of three years with potentially multiple offerings in those years.

Note: All courses proposed by non-Senate faculty .... We wondered why anyone would propose a course that could only be assured of being offered for only one year, especially an online course that usually has a fair amount of overhead. Given the requirements and possible exceptions in A1 and the approved initially for up to in the first sentence of 2, if the parenthetical note really necessary?

A. 3 Gateway and required courses for major and minors .... We agree with the principle here. Our question is whether the Supplemental Information asks for evidence from the department that this requirement is being met at either the point of initial approval or permanent approval.

B.(E) Several other campuses have included provisions that prohibit charging students for taking any exams associated with a course. Is this something UgC has considered?

Again, the Executive Board greatly appreciated that the Undergraduate Council solicited our thought on this very important topic.

Cc: Mark Kaminsky, Interim UgC analyst
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