



CLAS Directors of Undergraduate Studies  
Notes  
April 4, 2017

These notes are simply a rough record of the conversation. Thank you for sharing this information with your department or program.

**1. Update on changes to the funding for the development of online courses:**

Approval of development funds for CLAS online courses has moved from the Division of Continuing Education (DCE) [**Note: this unit is now called Distance and Online Education or DOE**] into CLAS. Helena Dettmer, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum, is now overseeing the approval process for the funding for the development of online courses and has created a new CLAS Online Education Advisory Committee to help shape the related policies and procedures. DCE is an important partner on this committee. Courses proposed for online development may be for the “distant education population” [e.g. those earning an online certificate or online CLAS major and degree or the DCE BLS or BAS degrees] or for on-campus students, especially with a focus on courses that need more seats which could be offered through online sections. Additionally, the College is very interested in supporting instructors teaching on-campus courses who would like to experiment with new modes of delivery, such by using as the flipped classroom, or by creating smaller online modules to support student learning through additional exercises, practice tests, videos or other visual tools etc. Departments could also consider creating alternative pathways to success, for example, by offering components of an on-campus course that are online and are off-cycle, addressing some of the course topics that especially cause students to fail. Also, a whole course does not need to be redesigned. Instructors could pick one component for the project. Professional course developers from DCE will support and help implement faculty ideas; additionally, faculty will be compensated. The amount of compensation for a course redesign was briefly discussed, but will probably be based on the size and amount of time required for the project and on the amount of funding that CLAS has overall for this project. Additionally, faculty who teach on-line courses are compensated depending on whether or not the course is on or off load. Departments also receive additional compensation for online courses. The group wondered how intellectual property rights would be handled when a course is funded by CLAS. Helena Dettmer will provide more information on both compensation and related copyright policies in the near future.

The College is also establishing a three-year review of all online CLAS courses to ensure their quality, with the review most likely occurring by discipline.

Discussion also focused on making sure all instructors are adequately compensated and that programs in need have enough instructors; additionally, there was concern voiced that a redesigned course can sometimes fad away if the instructor leaves the university since there is no guarantee that the new instructor will use the same format. Finally, there was some concern that online courses might not always be taught by the most qualified instructors and could in fact be run with those who are not experts in the field. All of these matters should be carefully considered by the College in relation to online course policy. These policies would only apply to course with their administrative home in CLAS and would not apply to courses offered by another college, such as CoM, though taken by CLAS students.

Helena will keep the group updated. A call for proposals will be announced through the DEO mailing most likely by May or June. An online form will be available by which to submit proposals. Questions? Contact Helena Dettmer at [helena-dettmer@uiowa.edu](mailto:helena-dettmer@uiowa.edu).

## **2. Funding to support instructors to revise currently offered GE courses:**

The Dean has allotted some funds to support best practices within GE courses. Departments interested in making either large or small changes to a current GE course in any GE area could qualify for funding. The changes must enhance best practices in GE courses which include early feedback for student work, engaged student learning, multiple ways of assessing students, assignments that build from simple to complex, a focus on teaching students how to learn and to study. The redesign could also focus on new ways to add writing and communication skills, as required for GE courses, for example, which can be challenging. Any ideas are welcomed and projects may be a total redesign or simply small changes that might help students. Course developers from the Center for Teaching and the Office of Teaching, Learning, and Technology will work with instructors to help implement the desired changes. Interested? Email [kathryn-hall@uiowa.edu](mailto:kathryn-hall@uiowa.edu) to discuss possible projects.

## **3. Changes to the CLAS grading recommendations:**

CLAS is in the process of revising the CLAS recommended grading guidelines with the help of the Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee (UEPCC). The new guidelines will be added shortly to the CLAS *For Faculty* pages under Teaching Policy and Procedures and will better reflect current grading practices in CLAS. Both criterion-based and norm-reference grading practices will be represented. The guidelines clarify that grading should be transparent, with students given enough information to compute their standing during the course. The revision also stresses other best practices in grading and emphasizes the importance of faculty discussing best grading practices within their departments or programs. The College hopes to host workshops next fall, partnering with the Center for Teaching on this matter. The College is also working to have the A+ grade equal to the 4.00 GPA rather than the 4.33 but all undergraduate colleges at UI will need to agree on this change first. The group then discussed the difficulties inherent in grading, particularly as a motivational tool to encourage students to study harder. That often simply does not work. At the same time, any changes in grading should not be just to “pass the student along.” Standards must remain high and challenging and ideas of student success should not remove this rigor. During the discussion, faculty noted the many problems of working with students who lack basic skills and often do not ask for help until it is

too late; it is important to intervene early with students whenever possible. Small changes to a course or to grading may not help because of the depth of the problem; students often seem unable to understand even the format of a test and seem unsure about how to even read it. Every five or six years students' knowledge seems to change radically, making it hard to meet students where they are at. Students today seem overly sensitive as well. Online courses may add to this since students then do not have to practice their people skills. Instructors agreed that teaching can be very challenging in part because of the lack of rigorous admissions at UI.

#### **4. New deadlines for textbook orders:**

Textbook orders will be due during the Early Registration period before the semester when the textbooks will be used. This new, earlier deadline is to ensure that UI complies with related federal regulation. The purpose of this legislation is "to ensure that students have access to affordable course materials by decreasing costs to students and enhancing transparency and disclosure with respect to the selection, purchase, sale, and use of course materials." See this section the [HEO Act](#) for more details concerning the legislation (scroll to down to this tag [Page 122 STAT. 3107]). In other words, textbook orders this semester would be due before April 10 since Early Registration for Fall 2017 begins on that date. The new deadline goes into effect Fall 2017. The mechanism for entering textbook orders into the UI online schedule of courses via MAUI will remain the same, with instructors still indicating the bookstores where the books will be ordered. However, instructors must then place their orders at those bookstores by the new deadline since students cannot access the book ISBN information in the bookstore until those books are actually ordered. The book-buying business is aggressive, and if instructors order their textbooks during the summer, it is too late for the bookstores to find the best deals for students. The group discussed the real difficulties for instructors meeting this deadline; it may encourage faculty not to use new books because of the trouble obtaining and reviewing them during the semester. This could harm the relevancy of the class, disconnecting it from new discoveries and information.