Definitions

For purposes of SACSCOC accreditation, “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.” At NOVA, the following classes fall under this definition of distance education:

- Classes that meet 100% online (online classes)
- Classes where face-to-face instruction is less than 50% but not 100% online (distance education hybrid classes)
- Classes where the instructor and students are in different locations (synchronous distance education classes)

This means that these classes must deliver instruction and be administered in accord with the SACSCOC Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education. Compliance with provisions of this policy must be regularly and systematically documented.

The term “hybrid classes” is closely related to distance education, but the term has different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. Sometimes, hybrid classes count as distance education, and sometimes they do not. The common element for all hybrid (or “blended”) classes is that a portion of the instruction is face-to-face and a portion is online. A standard hybrid class at NOVA is structured so that 50% of the instruction is face-to-face and 50% of instruction is online. In this case (and others where the face-to-face component is more than 50%), the hybrid class is not considered distance education for SACSCOC purposes. However, if the class is structured so that less than 50% of the instruction is face-to-face, it is considered distance education for SACSCOC purposes (see second bullet above).

For purposes of course coding in SIS, there is another definition of “hybrid” that must be used as prescribed by SCHEV. This definition and coding scheme are primarily formulated to account for facility utilization (see section below).

Expectations

Because distance education classes do not follow the traditional pattern of meeting face-to-face for the time periods specified by the number of credit/contact and lecture/lab hours in course descriptions, special attention must be given to the way the instruction is delivered and the classes are administered. As indicated above, NOVA must demonstrate through regular and systematic documentation that all classes considered distance education for purposes of accreditation meet all provisions of SACSCOC policy. At the same time, NOVA must ensure that its non-distance education hybrid classes meet the institutional standards of quality expected for all instruction at the college. (See below for Special Requirements for All Hybrid Classes.)

It should be noted that the college promotes and supports the appropriate use of instructional technologies that make it possible for instruction to continue in circumstances (notably emergencies) where it is not possible for faculty and students to meet according to the prescribed schedule. There may also be an occasional necessary absence on the part of the faculty member (in consultation with the dean) or of the student (in consultation with the faculty member). That said, the college expects all standard classes to meet face-to-face as scheduled.
Responsibility for Administering Distance Education and Hybrid Classes

At NOVA, the three types of classes that constitute distance education are administered as follows:

- Classes that meet 100% online (online classes) must be offered through ELI.*

- Classes where face-to-face instruction is less than 50% but not 100% online are considered Distance Education Hybrid Classes:
  - Hybrid classes that meet face-to-face less than 30% are administered the same as online courses and must be offered through ELI.
  - Hybrid classes that meet between 30 and 49% face-to-face are jointly administered by the campus and ELI. They are campus classes listed in the campus section of the Schedule of Classes and have a campus section number, but the campus must coordinate these classes with ELI when the Schedule of Classes is developed so ELI can track and report student success according to SACSCOC guidelines, ensure correct PeopleSoft coding according to VCCS and SCHEV standards, and track compliance with the college-wide standards on training, course quality, student support, etc.

- Classes where the instructor and students are in different locations at the same time through the use of technology (synchronous distance education classes) will be jointly administered by the sponsoring campuses and ELI. An on-campus face-to-face section is a campus class listed in the campus section of the schedule and has a campus section number, but the campus must coordinate these classes with ELI when the Schedule of Classes is developed so ELI can arrange technical support, track and report student success according to SACSCOC guidelines, ensure correct PeopleSoft coding according to SCHEV standards, and track compliance with the college-wide standards on training, course quality, student support, etc. The section at the remote site will carry a section number at that campus. Campus Deans are responsible for coordinating scheduling and room use for these synchronous distance education classes.

- Classes that meet face-to-face 50% or more, but less than 100% of the normal meeting pattern for that course, are considered a Non-Distance Education Hybrid Class.

  - Non-Distance Education Hybrid Classes are administered by the campus.

  - Hybrid classes that meet face-to-face 50% or more are a campus class listed in the campus section of the schedule and have a campus section number. The Division Deans are responsible for correct PeopleSoft coding according to VCCS and SCHEV standards, and for tracking compliance with the college-wide standards on hybrid courses.

  - The Division Deans are expected to hold non-distance learning hybrid course faculty and courses to the same standards, such as faculty training requirements, as the hybrid courses overseen at the college level.

*A transition plan will be followed beginning Spring 2011 that allows existing campus online courses to be offered through ELI only on the originating campus. These courses must adhere to college distance education standards. The future of these courses for Fall 2011 and beyond will be negotiated on a case by case basis, depending on existing ELI courses and student demand.
Special Requirements for All Hybrid Classes

All courses at the college, whether delivered in a face-to-face, hybrid, or online format, must teach the content defined in the Course Content Summary for that course and must achieve the student learning outcomes identified by the relevant program/discipline.

To improve the clarity of information provided to students, class notes in the Schedule of Classes for all hybrid courses must:

- Use the hybrid icon;
- Include at least the following standard college hybrid course statement: “Hybrid class. Includes both classroom meetings and significant additional online work which replaces some classroom meetings. Class meets face-to-face (insert schedule). Computer with internet access required.”
- Include the required note as the first note in PeopleSoft, because only the first note shows in the online schedule available on the NOVA website.

All faculty who will teach a hybrid course must complete training prior to offering their first hybrid class.

- The Associate Vice President for e-Learning will work with the Division Deans to establish a grandfathering procedure for faculty currently teaching hybrid courses who can demonstrate that their courses meet quality standards for hybrid instruction.
- TAC will provide training and develop a certification process which will include course design training, technology training, and training on successfully teaching a hybrid course.
- Faculty –particularly adjunct faculty—should not be assigned a hybrid course without prior training, or mentorship by an experienced hybrid instructor (in those instances where staffing must occur on an emergency basis and a trained hybrid instructor is not available).
- Training should be ongoing—hybrid faculty are required to regularly update their skills by attending periodic refresher workshops to work on course updates, learn new strategies, share with other faculty about what is and is not working, see demonstrations of what other faculty are doing, etc.

Faculty may not offer hybrid classes, or any class that meets less than 100% face-to-face, without the specific approval of their Division Dean. Division Deans, in consultation with their Provost, will review all hybrid class schedules and coordinate their scheduled meeting times and locations as necessary to fully utilize classrooms throughout the term before finalizing the class schedule.

Course Coding of Hybrid Classes

Campuses are responsible for entering all hybrid courses in the Schedule of Classes, whether distance education hybrids or non-distance education hybrids, and coding them according to college SIS procedures.

- Hybrid courses that meet face-to-face less than 50% of the time must be coded as a hybrid to meet SCHEV and VCCS requirements.
Courses that meet face-to-face 50% of the time or more are not coded as hybrids, but should be identified as hybrids in the Schedule of Classes, and include the standard college hybrid class note.

Classes where the instructor and students are in different locations through the use of technology (synchronous distance education classes) require special coding to show whether distance education is being delivered or received by that particular section. (Consult the specific coding for guidelines from College Information Systems for details.)

**Interpretation**

Questions concerning policies and procedures affecting hybrid classes and distance learning should be directed to the Associate Vice President for eLearning.

*These recommendations were developed by a group, convened by Vice President Steven Sachs and Associate Vice President Jennifer Lerner, informally called the Hybrid Policy Advisory Group. The group includes Sheri Robertson (Associate Vice President for Academic Services), Alicia Tucker (Acting TAC Coordinator), Patty Fleck (long-time instructor of TAC’s summer institute on hybrid instruction), Susan Johnson (long-time hybrid instructor), and Joyce Samuels (Chair, Academic Deans Council), with input from John Dever (Executive Vice President) and Charlotte Calobrisi (Special Assistant for Compliance Certification).*