# INDIANA UNIVERSITY KOKOMO

**Online Education Policy**

## Rationale

Indiana University Kokomo's commitment and mission focus on learner-centered, transformative learning experiences.  Creating a clear standard for expectations in online education allows the institution to maintain our high standards in academic quality, inspire excellence in teaching, and achieve student learning outcomes on par with our traditional face-to-face courses.  Furthermore, the institution seeks to continue with the integration of best practices by improving on technologies and online course development as appropriate.  This document describes the recommended policies and operating procedures for the development, delivery, and evaluation of 100% online courses at IU Kokomo. This policy applies to faculty of all ranks including tenured/tenure-track, lecturers, clinical faculty, and adjunct. In the event an online course is offered through Indiana University Online Class Connect (IUOCC), or is a part of an online collaborative program, those policies override this document.

## Definition of Online Education

IU Online defines online education as a subset of distance education that uses Internet technologies to deliver instruction to students who are physically separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction. In online education, instructional content is intentionally designed and delivered asynchronously on the Internet to replace classroom instruction time (contact hours) between the student and instructor.

## Faculty Qualifications for Online Education

As with traditional courses, instructors of online education courses will meet the expectations regarding the qualifications of faculty outlined in the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) guidelines.  Faculty requesting to teach online courses must show competence in online instruction through prior training in teaching online, and/or possess skills necessary for teaching online (computer skills, database management, word processing, presentation software, etc.). The general standards regarding faculty conduct, office hours, and faculty responsibilities also apply in the online education setting.  Deans and/or Chairs should consider evidence of prior online teaching and/or online training prior to scheduling teaching assignments. Deans and/or Chairs, in consultation with each faculty member, will determine the precise terms and conditions of every academic appointment and teaching load.

Prior to online education courses being taught, appropriate training—both technical and curricular—should be available to faculty. In addition, it is highly recommended that the faculty:

– Be trained in IU Kokomo's adopted Learning Management System; and

– Stay current with emerging methods and new technological avenues that may promote greater student success in online education; and

– Earn the Basic Online Instruction Developers Certificate provided by IU Kokomo's Center for Teaching Learning and Assessment or equivalent.

## Curriculum & Intellectual Property

Online education courses are designed to meet the same learning outcomes and level of rigor as traditional courses. All online courses are delivered through the university approved Learning Management System (LMS). Faculty members are to adhere to the Department, Division, or School guidelines to ensure course curriculum is aligned to standards, such as accreditation standards, as well as university standards for student accessibility.

Faculty members engaged in online education courses are entitled to academic freedom as teachers and researchers in accordance with the provisions of Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, which includes "freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject" and "full freedom in research and in the publication of the results."

The university is entitled to use online instructional materials "created for ordinary classroom and program use, such as syllabi, assignments, and tests, for administrative purposes" in accordance with the Indiana University Intellectual Property Policy.  Should a faculty member engaged in online teaching leave the university, he or she grants the University a "non-exclusive, royalty-free, worldwide, unlimited license to use the Online Instructional Materials for Online Instruction, including the right to revise such Online Instructional Materials" per the Intellectual Property Policy.

## Evaluation of Faculty Teaching Online Courses

The IU Kokomo Promotion and Tenure Criteria recommend to faculty members not yet promoted or tenured to plan to be observed at least once each semester by colleagues of their choice to ensure the rigor and quality of instruction. For faculty members engaged in online instruction, the recommendation parallels the face-to-face course recommendation. In such, observations of online courses and face-to-face courses should be included in the promotion and tenure dossier. It is recommended academic units incorporate these recommendations in their definition for excellence for teaching in the annual report for all faculty ranks.

## Quality Assurance of Course Design

IU Kokomo is committed to adhering to the highest possible standards in online education. Online education courses should be subject to regular ongoing assessment by the academic unit. If a course is offered at the campus level both online and face-to-face, learning outcomes must be identical. Online courses must adhere to the rules of conduct as outlined in the Code of Academic Ethics, which includes clear course goals and liberal contact hours. Online courses should parallel instructional time commitments required for face-to-face courses.

In accordance with the Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education Programs developed by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC), IU Kokomo faculty engaged in online teaching should ensure curricula for online learning are "coherent, cohesive, and comparable in academic rigor to programs offered in traditional instructional formats." More specifically:

- The curricular goals and course objectives show faculty member has knowledge of the best uses of online learning in different disciplines and settings;

- Curricula delivered through online learning are benchmarked against face-to-face courses and programs provided by IU Kokomo should contemporaneous courses exist.

- The curriculum is coherent in its content and sequencing of courses

The IU Kokomo CTLA provides training regarding course design and implementation. Training is provided online, in onsite workshops, and through individual consultations in a format that prepares faculty to develop courses that are in accordance with *Quality Matters Rubric*, IU's chosen quality assurance process for online and blended courses.

It is recommended faculty who engage in online teaching attend at *minimum* a basic Quality Matters course (Quality Matters Applying the QM Rubric) offered at the CTLA. This course applies the Quality Matters principles in course design. As IU Kokomo faculty become more experienced in online teaching, faculty should seek QM Certification through a formal QM process review.

## Regular and Substantive Interaction

Faculty members engaged in online education courses must adhere to the Federal Interaction Standards for regular and substantive faculty-to-student interaction. Indiana University has developed a policy for regular and substantive interaction based on the Federal Interaction Guidelines (see: source, and source).  This policy requires regular (repeated) and substantive instructor-initiated interactions that are related to the academic subject matter. This interaction must be more than giving a numerical grade or providing feedback on student work. In addition, grading of student submissions cannot be the sole form of instructor interaction in the course.

The following examples are provided as a suggestion of ways a course and instructor could meet the interaction standard. The course should include evidence of multiple methods and multiple instances.

*Course Examples*

- Planned regular (weekly or twice monthly) announcements or other communication that directly addresses student contributions to the course, including challenges and successes. Students should have a channel to respond to announcements.

- A general open discussion thread is available for students to post questions on muddy points. The instructor encourages learners to participate and answer their peers' queries.

- If grading rubrics are used, the rubrics should include clear, thorough descriptions for each criterion reference point.

- In a discussion thread, the instructor responds with formative coaching to student posts.

- The instructor allows for iterative submissions (ie. rough drafts) and provides feedback on the submissions.

- Instructor provides opportunities for students to engage in reflection on aspects of their learning and provides responses to such reflections.

- Instructor provides a mechanism for students to provide feedback on the course experience regularly and articulates a plan to respond to this student communication.

- Instructor requires students to meet during office hours (virtual or otherwise, at least once during the semester).

- A structure is in place to facilitate ongoing conversations around assignment feedback, and learners are encouraged to reflect on and respond to this feedback.

- The course includes synchronous group critique sessions via videoconference or other meeting technology.

To meet this standard a course may include:

- course policies or syllabus statements around interaction plans;

- assignments that include planned interaction in their design.

# Online course enrollment

In regards to online enrollment, this policy takes into consideration the aforementioned guidelines for regular and substantive interaction.  The enrollment in online courses should be set to the number of students the faculty member can reasonably accommodate without compromising student learning, response time, and quality of feedback. IU Kokomo's commitment to student learning provides a learner-centered environment with an average class size of 22 students. It is recommended online education courses should be at a smaller value of 20 students with a maximum cap of 25 students. A smaller course capacity enables a larger, more diverse, and more creative variety of interactions between students and faculty in the online setting.  It is recommended faculty not be required to teach more than 20 students on their first attempt at teaching online. Caps for online course offerings should not exceed course enrollment caps for equivalent face-to-face courses.  Larger sections should be compensated by additional credit in load assignment in the same manner as traditional classes. The appropriate enrollment for online education courses is ultimately the discretion of the dean or chair of the school or department.