

GUIDELINES FOR NON-TRADITIONAL AND ONLINE GRADUATE PROGRAMS AT WHEATON COLLEGE

Graduate education consumers are increasingly seeking flexibility and creativity from graduate programs to accommodate 21st-century lifestyles. Fortunately for them, market forces are such that many institutions of higher education are finding ways to meet these expectations despite the challenges such accommodations pose to traditional academic values and business practices. The following guidelines for non-traditional and online graduate programs at Wheaton College have been developed to assist program leaders, faculty, and support staff seeking to design flexible graduate programs that reflect the academic standards of the College, are readily navigable by graduate students, and mesh with the business practices of Wheaton's support departments. These guidelines are to be used as the basic template for future non-traditional and online graduate school programs.

I. DEFINITIONS:

A. Non-traditional Graduate Programs – Programs designed in such a way that a student, whether on an independent schedule or as part of a cohort, may earn a graduate degree or certificate by satisfying the requirements of a curriculum consisting of intensive, hybrid, and/or online courses.

B. Intensive/Hybrid Courses – Since courses need to have academic activity within the first week of the scheduled term, all courses with one or two weeks of on-campus meetings need to also have an online component to them. These courses need to meet or exceed all provisions of the College “Policy for Intensive/Hybrid Courses” approved by the Graduate Council (see policy below).

- i. Intensive courses are those in which the “in-seat” class-time is one to two week(s) in length, and which are offered for 2, 3, or 4 hours of graduate credit. Hybrid courses use online and in-person hours to complete “in-seat” class time.
- ii. The courses will be scheduled within parts of term, with the following requirements:
 - The student can complete independent pre-work during the standard term (fall, spring, summer) and prior to the start of the part of term in which the course is scheduled.
 - The student cannot be required to interact with other students or the instructor or complete assignments prior to the start of the part of term in which the course is scheduled.
 - Academic activity needs to take place within the first week of the part of term in which the course is scheduled. This activity could be through an academic discussion board posting/response, reading report, or assignment to validate participation.

- All the student’s work must be submitted prior to the end of the part of term in which the course is scheduled unless the student requests and is approved for an Incomplete (INC) grade prior to the end of the part of term in which the course is scheduled.
 - These are not one-and-two-week courses; it is the “seat-time” that is compressed and not the course itself.
 - The course instruction requires student engagement that includes 12.5 hours of seat time and 25 hours of independent study per course credit hour. For example, a 4-hour course requires 50 hours of “seat time” and 100 hours of independent study. “Seat time” may be distributed between in-person and online components depending on the course type (intensive or hybrid) and length (e.g., number of days of in person classes).
 - Seat time includes instruction, discussion videos, student presentations, and examinations.
 - Independent study includes any component in which students work on their own (or in a group) on work that is outside of direct contact hours (e.g., writing papers, reading, conducting research, preparing assignments, etc.).
 - Departments will establish guidelines for evaluating how to count independent work (e.g., a shorter but dense textbook will take longer to read than a longer introductory text).
- iii. Grades are to be reported to the Registrar’s Office by the grading deadline for the part of term in which the course is scheduled.

C. Online Graduate Programs – Programs designed in such a way that a student, whether on an independent schedule or as part of a cohort, may earn a graduate degree or certificate by satisfying the requirements of a curriculum consisting entirely of online courses.

- i. The courses will be scheduled within parts of term, with the following requirements:
- The student cannot be required to interact with other students or the instructor or complete assignments prior to the start of the part of term in which the course is scheduled.
 - Academic activity needs to take place within the first week of the part of term in which the course is scheduled. This activity could be an academic discussion board posting/response, reading report, or an assignment.
 - All the student’s work must be submitted prior to the end of the part of term

in which the course is scheduled unless the student requests and is approved for an Incomplete (INC) grade prior to the end of the part of term in which the course is scheduled.

- The required student engagement includes 12.5 hours of seat time and 25 hours of independent study per course credit hour. For example, a 4-hour course requires 50 hours of seat time and 100 hours of independent study.
- “Seat time” includes instruction, discussion forums, videos, student presentations, and examinations.
- Independent study includes any component in which students work on their own or in a group outside of direct contact hours (e.g., writing papers, reading, conducting research, preparing assignments, etc.).
- Departments will establish guidelines for evaluating how to count independent work (e.g., a shorter but dense textbook will take longer to read than a longer introductory text).