

## **DL Task Force – Group 3 – Instructor Support and Workload Update Report May 19, 2010**

### **Team Members**

Art Schneider, Facilitator  
Eric Kirchner  
Judy Hedberg  
Brooke Gondara  
Mike Talbert  
Sheila Brown  
Peter Seaman

### **Overview**

The task of this sub-group was to research, discuss and make recommendations (identify multiple options) around the issues of instructor support and DL workload. The specific topics were:

- ✓ *class size and overages*
- ✓ *telecommuting and required number of hours on campus*
- ✓ *technical support*
- ✓ *skill development*
- ✓ *CL-web classes (formerly called Hybrid classes)*
- ✓ *“Q” classes*

### **Topic: Class size and overages**

#### ✓ **Initial Topic Questions**

Our initial discussions centered around identifying relevant questions to address these issues. Some of the questions this group considered for class size and overages were:

- a. What are practices for determining class size
- b. who decides on class size limit (SAC, Dean, etc)
- c. attrition caps
- d. overage decisions and maximum limits What are the considerations for differences in class size
- e. What is a fair formula for compensation (overages, overloads) does the 115% compensation work
- f. should there be a consistent “not to exceed” limit on how many additional students should be allowed into a DL section. This “speaks” to the question of quality vs quantity. How many students can an instructor teach and manage before the quality of that teaching is affected?
- g. What are the financial factors (rooms, servers, custodial, heat, transportation...)
- h. practices of other colleges

## ✓ **Research and Preliminary Findings**

Preliminary findings are based on existing research, interview with peer colleges, survey of division deans, informal discussions of DL faculty and staff.

- a) The research we reviewed on ideal online class size provided a range of numbers – from 12 to 30. So 25 is safely at the upper end of this range.
- b) The Instructional Technology Council, a consortium of community colleges that offer DL courses, has surveyed member institutions since 2004. They have consistently found “enrollment caps by class type” of:
  - 27 students for an [online] introductory math class;
  - 25 students for an [online] introductory English composition class;
  - 30 students for an [online] introductory political science class. (p. 6, March 2010).
- c) Interviews with peer institutions were inconclusive. Some established the same class size limits for DL and face to face classes; limits varied but the majority appeared to have limits within the 20-35 range.
- d) Most peer institutions compensated faculty for teaching more students than the established limits/caps

### Factors that should be considered when adjusting class size up or down from the agreed limit/cap:

- 1) Volatility of the material: A CIS course in a programming language or a nanotechnology course in a technology that is evolving rapidly will need to be updated much more frequently than a course in a more settled area (perhaps history or anthropology). An instructor of a course with volatile subject matter will need to update the course much more frequently and will therefore not be able to teach as many students.
- 2) Canned vs. custom materials: An online course that uses “e-packs” usually requires much less preparation than an online course with custom materials that the instructor creates. An instructor who creates her/his own Camtasia videos, for example, should carry fewer students.
- 3) Level of automation in the course itself: Online courses that use self-scored exams may be able to carry more students than online courses that require more instructor-intensive assessments (essay exams and papers, for example). But self-scored exams can also be time-intensive – especially if the instructor creates large “test banks” of self-scoring questions. A better measure is to look at where the test banks come from: an instructor who downloads a test bank from a publisher will spend much less time creating assessments than an instructor who creates them from scratch. Courses that use “e-packs” with publisher-provided test banks could be considered candidates for enrollment above 25.
- 4) Type of learning activities and frequency of feedback: Some online instructors use very time-intensive learning activities and provide frequent, detailed feedback to students. An example is a discussion board or discussion forum where the instructor participates regularly and provides detailed, individualized feedback to each student. But other instructors don’t use the discussion board at all, in which case the class might be a candidate for a higher student load.

### Some perspective

The committee found during its journey that there is much anxiety, among both deans and faculty, about the disparity between the standard class size of 35 for face-to-face (f2f) classes and 25 for DL classes. But if a standard of 25 for DL classes appears to be founded on variable factors, then the standard of 35 for f2f classes exists in its own quicksand. The only solid delimiter for 35 that we could find is the fire code – the fact that many PCC classrooms hold a maximum of 35 bodies. The number 35 doesn't seem to be based on pedagogical factors at all, and every instructor we interviewed who has taught in both modes (f2f and online) says without exception that teaching 25 online is far more work than teaching 35 f2f – mostly b/c collective contribution in a f2f class is limited by the time in the classroom, unlike a DL class in which student contributions are unlimited and individual and must be dealt with individually.

### **Overages and Compensation for Overages**

- contractual issue. Is part of the MOU related to DL in the contract
- most peer institutions had some type of formula for compensating faculty for overages.
- DL faculty are paid per student when the SAC-recommended class size limit is exceeded by 115% by the end of Week 2 (last day to drop with refund).
- there appears to be some question as to whether this policy is followed consistently across the college
- why not pay faculty for every student beyond the class size limit? The 115% figure was originally agreed to because it was thought there needed to be an attrition factor.
- some faculty have questioned why the additional compensation applies only to DL sections that exceed 115% of the class size cap. Why not face-to-face sections also?

### ✓ **Initial Discussions and Thoughts About Class Size and Overages Group 3 Members**

There appears to be a consensus that class size limits for DL classes should be consistent but also flexible. 25 appears to be a reasonable and defensible default limit based on our research. We believe SAC's and Deans (with SAC concurrence) should have the flexibility to adjust up or down the limits based on how individual courses are taught. If this limit is different from face to face classes, it is due to the additional workload inherent in teaching and managing quality DL classes.

The group continues to discuss the class size and overage issues

## **Topic: Telecommuting and Required Number of Hours on Campus**

### ✓ **Initial Topic Questions**

- a. What is current practice at PCC?
- b. impact on program health
- c. practices of other colleges
- d. How frequently do faculty feel overly restricted by the on-campus requirement?
- e. How frequently does practice fall below the on-campus requirement?
- f. Are there consistent reasons for falling below the on-campus requirement?
- g. 5 hours minimum - contractual
- h. perspective of administration
- i. perspective of faculty peers
- j. impact on student access to ft faculty

### ✓ **Research and Preliminary Findings**

The Gap Analysis does not specifically define this as an issue. However, this issue consistently comes up when discussions on DL are started. The following issues from the Gap Analysis may be related:

- Retention – faculty-student interaction has been identified as critical. An on campus presence will be important for some students.
- Workload – this is focused on class size, but could be related. Important concepts are consistencies between faculty, departments, campuses, etc. It is also a negotiation guiding principle
- Scheduling – obviously whether a faculty member is on or off campus is related to where the class is. Scheduling seems to have more issues with fairness and student need, and the issues with on or off campus presence should be flexible to those.
- PCC community – how does this affect relationships between faculty, part time and full time.
- The majority of the peer institutions appear to require FT faculty to be on campus a minimum of 20 hours or more. Most of the peer institutions do not allow FT faculty to teach exclusively online.

The Faculty Contract makes specific points:

- Full time faculty teaching DL courses can have their on-campus presence requirement reduced proportionally to their DL load, but must be here a minimum 5 hours per week. The purpose of this time is for meetings, SAC participation, other committees, recruiting, assisting and mentoring students, informing and assisting college operations, and research.(section 5 and 26)
- Part time faculty teaching DL are required to attend one staff meeting or development activity per term. (section 5)
- The Memorandum of Understanding regarding DL (pg. 88) states: “The parties agree to provide significant latitude to Instructors, Division Deans

and the College Distance Education Department to develop individual agreements which **meet the needs of all three.**" This might suggest a way around the requirements listed in items 1 and 2 above.

✓ **Initial Discussions and Thoughts Telecommuting and On Campus Hours Among Group 3 Members**

This is a contractual issue so any recommendation that differs from the accepted contractual language will have to be negotiated if it is embraced by the federation. There are mixed opinions on whether or not the 5 hour minimum should be increased. Most of the group members felt like faculty should be on campus more hours in order to meet with students, collaborate with peers, and fulfill their non-teaching responsibilities. There are others who feel that the 5 hr minimum requirement is reasonable especially for faculty who teach primarily or fully DL courses.

**Topic: Technical Support**

✓ **Initial Topic Questions**

- a. What is the best way to provide Technical Support to online learning?
- b. Is the support adequate and useful?
- c. Should support be 7 days a week for specific hours or 24/7?
- d. Who should provide the support: college or outside service?
- e. Should there be a 24/7 number to call for faculty if the LMS is not working properly?

✓ **Research and Preliminary Findings**

- a. A Faculty Help Desk is active and utilized by faculty
- b. The faculty help line is 503-977-8227
- c. The Faculty Blackboard help desk normal business hours are M-F 8AM to 5PM. After hours support by Presidium M-F 5PM to 8AM Saturday, Sunday and Holidays and anytime PCC is closed
- d. There is no dedicated email address to use
- e. After hours support is limited and problematic

✓ **Initial Discussions and Thoughts About Technical Support Among Group 3 Members**

Faculty support during normal hours is relevant, successful, and useful. Support during after-hours, especially late at night and weekends, is not adequate. Andy Freed, resident DL tech "guru", is a life-saver for many DL faculty.

## Topic: Skill Development

### ✓ Initial Topic Questions

- a. What training should PCC make available?
- b. Should it be required. If so, who should receive the training (new DL instructors, veteran DL instructors who have never received any formal training)
- c. Should regular refresher training be required. If so, what type of training should be required and/or provided (LMS interface training, course creation/modification training, best practices training)
- d. How often should training be offered
- e. Who is responsible to provide it
- f. What modality should be used
- g. Should there be a formal assessment with action plans for those who do not meet the minimum standards
- h. What type of compensation should be available to for attending training sessions.

Online mentors:

- a. Should we have them
- b. What are their responsibilities
- c. Should they come from within the SAC or does it matter
- d. Should they only be FT faculty or are PT faculty and non-teaching instructional designers also eligible

### ✓ Research and Preliminary Findings

There is a general consensus that faculty skill development opportunities are quite expansive. The online instructor training program offered through the distance learning department is comprehensive and is regarded positively by most DL faculty. Training is available through online, self-paced tutorials, a Blackboard Faculty Development “course shell”, peer mentor assessments and assistance, and one-on-one training by ITS staff.

**Issues of concern:** Many instructors who do the minimal amount of entry-level training, have been mentored as opposed to attending formal training, or have received no training (depending on their dean) tend to settle into teaching their online course and don't upgrade it until forced to. A number of the worst, most antiquated online courses (as observed by DL training staff) are taught by the most experienced online instructors - largely because these instructors don't incorporate updated technology or “best” online pedagogical practices in their online courses; they are simply content to

continue doing what they have always done, and in fact they resist technological upgrades as unwelcome intrusions that would force them to change. What incentive do instructors have to learn about new practices and technologies? Currently there are none at PCC beyond the general ones.

If there is a clear need for online instructors to keep up with technology, is there an analogous requirement for face-to-face instructors to improve in-class teaching practices? There does not appear to be a formal process at PCC, so perhaps it's unrealistic for DL instructors to shoulder a greater burden than face-to-face instructors do. The DL dept has discussed plans to create an advanced training program but have not implemented anything at this point. There clearly appears to be a need for encouraging or mandating all DL instructors to receive on-going training and updates in relation new DL technology and best practices of online teaching.

✓ **Initial Discussions and Thoughts About Skill Development Among Group 3 Members**

It is the consensus of the group that PCC offers extensive, quality training for faculty. The faculty mentors appear to be a positive addition to the DL faculty experience at PCC. Faculty training schedules and compensation are areas that could require additional discussion and modification.

Additional discussions within our group need to take place around the issue of faculty who have not incorporated updated technology or “best” online pedagogical practices in their online courses.

**Topic: CL-Web Classes (formerly called hybrid classes)**

✓ **Initial Topic Questions**

- a. What is the definition of hybrid classes; is there a consistent definition
- b. How many programs/departments district-wide use CL-web regularly
- c. What proportion of coursework is offered online as opposed to in the classroom
- d. What are the CL-web class size limits for different disciplines or courses
- e. How are they being designated in the catalogue, and are students understanding this designation
- f. Do instructors like hybrids? Why or why not
- g. Do students like hybrids? Why or why not
- h. What kind of classes may be better as hybrids than entirely online or entirely on campus and why?
- i. Which disciplines here at PCC have curtailed them and why

- j. Which students have success in these classes and which find them troublesome

✓ **Research and Preliminary Findings**

In the past, CL-web (formerly called hybrid classes) were reviewed and managed by the Distance Learning department. Funding for development of CL-web classes was also provided by the DL department. During this time the original criteria denoting the difference between CL-web and a course that uses web resources (web-enhanced) was **class time**. Some seat time was always replaced by some online time with CL-web courses. The DL department discontinued their oversight and compensation for CL-web classes approximately 5 years ago. Since then, CL-web classes no longer have consistent oversight nor standards unless individual SAC's have defined their own standards.

**Findings from survey of PCC division deans and department chairs.**

1. What departments at which campuses are currently running hybrid classes?

Over the past 4 terms there have been over 120 courses offered as CL-web, generating 490 FTE. Very few of the courses were full. Some of these courses include Art History, Business Administration,, Computer Science, Computer Application Systems/ Office Systems, ITP, and Writing.

2. What is the definition of CL-web classes as the school is currently using them?

CL-webs are whatever the department or instructor want them to be--there is no consistent definition and there is quite a range of uses. CL-web means that some of the work is in the classroom at a fixed time and some of the work is online in a Blackboard shell, but it is up to the instructor how much or what kinds of activities are in which modality.

Some departments consider a CL-web to be an online class with one or more face-to-face meetings also required, while others use it as a class that has material available online and for which students may decide to either attend campus classes or work online. In other departments, students spend 50% of the class time online with the other 50% on-campus. Still others meet with their classes for three hours once a week while the fourth hour is online. Finally, some departments consider it to be an on-site class that offers a significant amount of the class work online.

From a student perspective there is sometimes a perception that if the course is not totally online then it should be listed in the schedule as a CL-web. But

some SACs and individual instructors list their courses as WEB but require some on campus, real time participation.

3. What proportion of coursework is offered online as opposed to in the classroom, i.e., how are they different from web enhanced or online classes with a classroom component?

This is an individual faculty member's decision. Most faculty see web enhanced and hybrid classes as fairly similar, especially now that audio and video are available. Hybrid is considered the same as CL-web. SLIP faculty explain that it's not so much the quantity of online vs ftf work, but rather the quality of the ftf time that improves the effectiveness of an otherwise online course.

4. What are the class size limits for different disciplines or courses?

25 is the agreed upon norm for some departments, but there are variations. Computer Science may have up to 50 students. . Some departments make the decision based on the size of the classroom, generally 25-35, while others simply keep the cap the same as for on-site classes.

5. How are they being designated in the catalogue, and are students understanding this designation?

Some sections in the schedule currently footnotes: "Some class sessions replaced with online assignments." Some are designated CL-web. Others are not labeled. There is some concern that students do not understand the designation until they get to the first class.

A conflict arises when students enroll in what is described as an online or distance learning course and then find out that it requires them to be on one campus or another at a specific time after it is too late to drop/add. The schedule of classes sometimes makes this clear, and some faculty spell out these expectations beforehand in the CIP, but there is no consistency in this practice, students often don't read the schedules carefully, and the CIPs are hard to find.

On the other hand, the Interpreting program is a cohort program. The CL-web is required in the second year, and all students are enrolled. In such a case, the designation is less of a problem.

6. Do instructors like CL-webs? Why or why not?

Those who offer them like the flexibility of having the students work on line as well as in the classroom. Typically, if the instructors didn't like this delivery mode, they wouldn't use it. One benefit is increased flexibility they offer to both faculty and students and the use of online resources to

supplement classroom instruction. Even more, CL-webs allow instructors to meet with students once a week at night or on Friday or Saturday mornings without having to make students endure a four-hour class.

A final benefit is that they provide a way for faculty to test their ability and desire to teach online without committing to the unknown.

#### 7. Do students like CL-webs? Why or why not?

Many students like the added scheduling flexibility. Originally, students originally did not enroll in CL-web classes. Now, they don't seem to particularly care if a class is a CL-web or not if they can get in. Students seem to like the convenience of meeting once a week along with the flexibility of doing work on line. However, students who are struggling in a particular class sometimes have difficulty keeping up without the full classroom time.

On the other hand, we do know that students choose online classes because they cannot or prefer not to be tied to time and place. CL-webs do little to meet this need.

If the students don't come, then departments are not interested in offering these classes.

#### 8. What kind of classes may be better as CL-webs than entirely online or entirely on campus and why?

CL-webs are good for courses in which a personal touch would get a higher percentage of students to fully engage in the course material. Courses and programs that require both hands on experiences and guided performance are good candidates. Subject areas where some sort of face-to-face interaction is desirable or necessary, such as Art, Speech, or Education, are ideal for CL-webs.

Courses that meet for four hours may also be ideal for CL-webs as four hours is too long for most students to sit in class, especially at night.

CL-webs also suit BA well. The growth in the dept. has made finding classroom space difficult. CL-web classes potentially double available classrooms. Also, business students are pretty savvy about technology and seem to thrive with the flexibility CL-web offers.

Computer based courses can be either way since there is no need to use labs on campus.

However, a better model may be to look for flexible alternatives to meet student and pedagogical needs. For example, Chemistry and Speech have

found some technology solutions that make online courses more flexible for students while they may not be fully asynchronous. One program that is fully distance learning requires the students to come to campus for a weekend once a term. For testing we could have a system for finding proctored environments.

9. Which disciplines here at PCC have curtailed them and why?

No relevant responses.

10. Which students have success in these classes and which find them troublesome?

Most students seem to accept some online work as part of their life here at PCC.

Those who are undisciplined may have difficulties with CL-webs, and students who are struggling academically, are not well-organized, and/or do not have good computer skills are not good candidates for CL-web.

However, many students find them helpful and the on-line portion has also given students confidence in using the computer for educational purposes and helped them become more comfortable in taking a full online class.

On the other hand, some students say that they enrolled for a campus course and are upset because they are not getting their full money's worth when much of the course is online.

✓ **Initial Discussions and Thoughts About CL-Web Classes Among Group 3 Members**

A clearer definition of CL-Web as opposed to regular face-to-face classes that also include a web resource should be developed. There is currently no standard for CL-Web classes. Students appear to be confused. There is a question as to whether the combination of on-campus and online content is adequate to meet the CCOG contact hours requirement. A consistent policy for minimum percentage of face to face vs online is missing. SAC oversight needs to be strengthened. Online requirements need to be consistent and "advertised" better in the class schedules. At least one SAC, Computer Applications and Office Systems, has defined a CL-web as a minimum of 50% face-to-face hrs/wk. They have also agreed to list a detailed footnote for all CL-web sections to reflect the required number of hours/wk of online work. For instance, a 5 hour/week CL-web class that meets the minimum of 50% face-to-face (2.5 hrs/wk on campus) would have a footnote that reads "Minimum of 2.5 hrs/wk online work required"

## Topic: “Q” Classes

### ✓ Initial Topic Questions

- a. Definition
- b. Rationale
- c. Workload implications
- d. Student access implications

### ✓ Research and Preliminary Findings

A “Q” class (Q is a code from banner that designates these classes) is a class being taught by an instructor (full time or part time) that involves both an on-campus section and an on-line section. The classes originated in trying to “save” on-campus sections that would otherwise be cancelled due to lack of enrollment. Combining the on-campus class with the same class being taught on-line and assigning both classes to the same instructor often meant that there was enough enrollment to make the class or classes go. Enrollment for the two sections combined are often the equivalent of a single section. The instructor is credited with one class toward their teaching load instead of two. This is **different from CL-web classes** where the students know at the outset that the class has both an on-campus and on-line component. CL-web classes are also only a single section as opposed to two distinct sections for “Q” classes. Instructors must prepare for two distinct classes but are only compensated for one section. Instructors must have the depth of material for an on-line class prepared and maintained to teach a “Q” class and they have to be in the classroom more hours than the CL-web instructor with prepared lectures. This constitutes the extra work involved for the instructor. Currently there is no extra compensation for volunteering to teach a “Q” class (It is against the contract to be assigned a “Q” class without instructor approval). This scenario does change if both sections get enough enrollment. In this case, the instructor will be compensated for two sections as opposed to one.

Primarily used by CIS and CS departments. Used in a modified format by Gerontology. No other PCC program appears to use the “Q” class model.

Only one other peer institution utilizes a similar scheduling option but they do this infrequently and only with a single program.

**Issues of concern:** Does the “Q” class conform with the faculty contract for workload definitions? There is inadequate compensation for the extra work that is necessary unless both sections have enough enrollment to count as two unique classes. Currently faculty have to agree to teach a “Q” class. They cannot be assigned without this permission. Some instructors who have chosen to **not** teach “Q” classes have had their choices of classes reduced because the classes they want to teach are being offered in the “Q” format.

**Advantages of the “Q” class:** low-enrolled classes do not have to be cancelled; some instructors prefer to teach on campus but they have been “forced” to teach DL because the face-to-face section does not have enough enrollment; students benefit because the online students are allowed to attend the weekly lectures in the face-to-face sections and the students enrolled in the face-to-face sections are allowed to work through the online material because they are given access to the online “class shell”.

✓ **Initial Discussions and Thoughts About CL-Web Classes Among Group 3 Members**

Few programs utilize this type of class. Further discussion/research is necessary to determine if “Q” classes should be a scheduling option for programs. Possible conflicts with the faculty contract also need to be researched further.