

InDev Q & A (4/1/20)

Without sacrificing the rigor of our academic programs, the Instructional Development Subcommittee of the UofSC Faculty Senate (InDev) revised and simplified its process of reviewing and approving undergraduate courses for blended/hybrid and fully online delivery. In short:

1. The updated InDev Checklist (Rev. 4/1/20), has been streamlined to contain more user-friendly language and examples. Perhaps most significantly, the Checklist no longer requires proponents to include a tally showing the total number of student “learning minutes” per course-related activity; and
2. InDev will be working to review and approve* undergraduate courses submitted through APPS on a rolling basis, as needed, without the requirement of waiting to take action during its regularly scheduled monthly meetings.

**No undergraduate course is fully approved for online delivery without an affirmative vote by the Faculty Senate.*

Q: So, I don't have to count learning minutes in my application, right?

A: Right. Although the updated InDev Checklist no longer requires proponents to include a tally showing the total number of student “learning minutes” per course-related activity, applications will continue to show a schedule of learning activities for the proposed course. The inclusion of this schedule aligns with best practices in developing online courses. In addition, proponents will be required to tick a checkbox in APPS certifying that the course “incorporates an amount of work equivalent to the face-to-face version of the course and appropriate for the number of credit hours awarded (2,100 total minutes of time on task per credit hour awarded)”.

Q: Aren't we required by law to count learning minutes?

A: Not in specific detail. The University of South Carolina uses the federal definition of a credit hour, and requires that for a traditional, face-to-face course, students experience at least 700 minutes (14 hours) of classroom instruction with the expectation of twice that amount (at least 28 hours) of supplementary academic work outside the classroom per each credit hour. Courses offered online or through non-traditional forms of delivery must simply demonstrate equivalent expectations for student achievement and incorporate an equivalent amount of work. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, UofSC's accrediting body, also uses the federal definition of a credit hour.

Q: What constitutes “an equivalent amount of work” for online courses?

An online or blended course should incorporate learning activities that require students to expend approximately the same amount of time as they would in a traditional version of the course. For example, in a traditional 3-credit course, students would attend three 50-minute class periods and complete about five hours of study and/or homework outside the classroom—totaling 7 ½ hours of work per week in a 14-week semester (6,300 learning minutes). In a 14-week online or blended version of the same course, there may be few or no traditional class meetings, but students should spend 7 ½ hours each week engaged in some combination of appropriate learning activities. These might include (but are not limited to) watching recorded lectures; completing reading or writing assignments; taking exams or quizzes; participating in discussion boards or synchronous class meetings, small-group activities, or peer review sessions; and/or preparing recorded assignments or presentations.

Q: Do I still have to submit new online course proposals through APPS?

A: Yes, unless specifically exempted, before any undergraduate course may be delivered 50% or more online, it must be submitted through the University's Academic Proposal System (APPS) (see https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/provost/planning/academicprograms/proposals/index.php), then approved by InDev and ultimately by the Faculty Senate. You might not realize that many courses have *already been approved* for online delivery, and you should always check https://www.sc.edu/study/academic_overview/online_education/courses/course_search/index.php before preparing and submitting a proposal through APPS.

Q: When do these changes become effective?

A: Early- to mid-April 2020. The InDev Sub-committee is poised to begin a rolling review process using the new Checklist as soon as the information and materials are updated in the system.

Q: What if I have a course that was submitted under the old Checklist, but is currently pending in APPS?

A: Then you're probably in good shape! Applications that are currently under review that were submitted under the previous format of tallying learning minutes will likely meet or exceed the requirements of the new Checklist. Therefore, absent any other major issues with the application, those courses will likely be approved soon.

Q: How quickly will course proposals be approved?

A: We anticipate that in most cases, the process will be much faster than in the past. During times of increased need, InDev, which is comprised mainly of faculty volunteers, will review and make determinations on undergraduate courses submitted for online delivery on a rolling basis, rather than only taking action during regularly scheduled monthly meetings. For example, rather than using a "second Thursday" cut-off date for application consideration and only the "third Thursday" physical meetings to vote on those applications, InDev can review applications in the que on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, deliberate and vote via electronic means, and respond to proponents in a more timely manner.

Q: Who can help me prepare a course application, and build an online course for delivery?

A: Faculty are strongly encouraged to work collaboratively with the instructional designers at the [Center for Teaching Excellence](#) (CTE) and take advantage of the production support services available at the [Office of Distributed Learning](#) (ODL) for blended/online course development and to ensure adherence to best practices in online teaching. Those offices, the [Division of Information Technology](#) (DoIT), and the Provost's [Keep Teaching](#) webpage all have resources available to help you in developing and enhancing your blended/online course.

Q: Who developed the revised InDev Checklist?

A: Members of the InDev Sub-Committee revised the Checklist with input from key personnel at ODL, CTE, the Provost's Office, the Graduate School, and the Sub-Committee on Courses & Curriculum, as well as with advice and concurrence from the Faculty Senate's Steering Committee.