

Proposal: To set aside specific final exam dates, times, and locations for fully online courses

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Introduction

The proliferation of fully online courses that are designed for and taken by current undergraduate students at the University has led to logistical issues regarding the availability of exam slots that inconvenience faculty and students alike. As exam slots are not assigned to fully online courses, the system as it currently stands cannot reserve in-person final exam locations and times for these courses without the risk of the exam conflicting with one given by a traditional, brick-and-mortar course. If faculty do not proactively indicate at the very beginning of the semester the timeframe they prefer for the exam, they have to wait until very near to the end of the semester before an exam room and time can be assigned, leading to unnecessary confusion and uncertainty.

Background

The number of fully online sections has shown explosive growth over the last few years. In S12, there were 301 fully online sections offered throughout the University, representing 6,981 enrollments. By S14, those numbers had more than doubled: 721 sections representing 15,682 enrollments. The trend shows no sign of abating, and the large majority of these enrollments are current undergraduate students at the University who are taking online courses alongside their face-to-face courses.

The Academic Support Policy dated January 6, 2011 (provide link), defines fully online courses at Rutgers University as those that are:

- Designed, deployed and offered as entirely online courses.
- Coded and advertised in the Schedule of Classes as fully online courses.
- Accurately coded by mode of instruction as online courses.
- Not scheduled to utilize classroom facilities in a matter that prevents a traditional course from using requested classroom space. Typically online classes do not have any face-to-face meetings, **but for the express purposes of orientation and/or in-person exams**, a limited number of face-to-face meetings are allowed within an online course while still maintaining the online course designation.

In light of the provision for face-to-face meetings per the last bullet above, COHLIT (expand acronym) has further defined a fully online course as one that has three or fewer in person meetings during the course of the semester. Many faculty take advantage of this provision to schedule face-to-face final exams, primarily to ensure academic integrity. However, University systems are not configured to be able to provide online courses with final exam slots, resulting in an untenable situation for faculty and students: waiting until very near to the end of the semester before an exam room is assigned. Given the continuing growth in online teaching and learning, this situation needs to be resolved.

Proposal

After consulting Scheduling and Space Management, the Registrar, and many faculty who teach online, the School of Arts and Sciences makes the following recommendation:

- That the Sunday occurring during the official Final Examination period be set aside for face-to-face exams for fully online courses.
- That exam slots be provided at 11 AM, 2 PM, and 5 PM.

- That these slots are allocated at the same time that classroom space is allocated for face-to-face classes, in order that the final exam time and location may be included in an online course's syllabus.