

December 14, 2023

ELIZABETH H. SIMMONS  
Executive Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Exception to Policy on Distance Education Courses for Summer Sessions 2024 and 2025

Dear EVC Simmons,

As part of the Senate Ad Hoc on Distance Education's work, the Ad Hoc recommended that the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) consider a limited-term exception to the Policy on Distance Education Courses for a three-year period (Summers 2024-2026) to allow any undergraduate or graduate course to be offered online without formal approval of the R-course designation. After discussion and input from other standing Senate committees, EPC approved a limited-term exception for two years (Summers 2024 and 2025).

EPC's decision memo is attached with additional details about their decision. Many of EPC's comments were echoed during Senate Council's discussions of the Ad Hoc report during the Council's November 6 and December 4, 2023 meetings. Senate Council was also in support of granting an exception for a period shorter than the three years recommended by the Ad Hoc, and both committees highlighted the challenges of consistently depending on short-term exceptions for offering online courses during the summer. We look forward to collaborating with Academic Affairs on long-term strategies and plans to expand the availability of R-designated online courses during Summer Session.

Sincerely,



Olivia A. Graeve  
Chair  
San Diego Divisional Academic Senate

Attachment

cc: Christine Alvarado, Acting Dean, Division of Undergraduate Education  
James Antony, Dean, Division of Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs  
Geoff Cook, Chair, Educational Policy Committee  
Arshad Desai, Chair, Graduate Council  
Jeffrey Gattas, Associate Chancellor/Chief of Staff  
John Hildebrand, Senate Chair  
Ashley Hill, Senate Associate Director  
Lori Hullings, Senate Executive Director  
Carlos Jensen, Associate Vice Chancellor, Educational Innovation  
Kelly Kish, Associate Chancellor/Chief of Staff  
Pradeep Khosla, Chancellor  
Cindy Lyons, University Registrar  
John Moore, Dean, Division of Undergraduate Education  
Mirle Rabinowitz Bussell, Chair, Undergraduate Council  
Alison Sanders, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs

December 8, 2023

**PROFESSOR OLIVIA GRAEVE, Vice Chair**  
**Academic Senate, San Diego Division**

SUBJECT: Exception to Policy on Distance Education for Summer Session

At its meeting on November 13, 2023 and November 27, 2023, the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) discussed the recommendation from the Senate Ad Hoc on Distance Education to suspend the Policy on Distance Education Courses for a three-year term for Summer Session. The Committee approved a limited-term exception to the Policy on Distance Education Courses to allow any undergraduate or graduate course to be offered online for Summer 2024 and 2025, without formal approval of the R-course designation. The Committee approved the limited-term exception for Summer 2024 and Summer 2025 only. EPC reached this decision, which was not unanimous, after extensive discussion and deliberation, and notes the following:

- EPC recently issued an updated Policy on Distance Education Courses, which simplifies the proposal process for online courses (R-courses). As a result, the Committee strongly urges instructors and/or academic units who plan to use the exception to the Policy on Distance Education in either Summer 2024 and Summer 2025 to formally propose an R-course.
- EPC recognizes that Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council will be overwhelmed by R-course proposals given the new, simplified procedures for proposals, by the increasing faculty interest in offering R-courses and the end of exceptions to the Policy on Distance Education Courses. It is partly for this reason that EPC agreed to the limited-term exception for Summer 2024 and Summer 2025 only.
- Committee members raised several concerns about continuing to grant exceptions to the Policy on Distance Education Courses:
  - There are numerous challenges associated with online instruction for courses that do not have an R-course designation, specifically: course design, use of pedagogy that is not adapted to the online setting, and issues pertaining to academic integrity. The Administration should inform instructors about the resources and support available for online instruction.
  - The University should be committed to empirically examining the effects of R-courses on student outcomes. Without the R-course designation, it is challenging to determine which courses are offered remotely.
- The Committee requests that following Summer 2024, the Administration should identify academic units that are offering online courses during Summer Session, without the R-course designation, and reach out to those units with a reminder that there is only one Summer Session remaining that a course may be offered online without the R-course designation. EPC is not open to considering another exception to the Policy on Distance Education Courses beyond Summer 2025.

Of note is that EPC's discussion focused heavily on the concerns about academic integrity in online courses. Committee members suggested that having the option to offer an in-person exam for an online course could mitigate many of the concerns related to academic integrity. The Committee emphasized that if the Administration is committed to increasing the R-course inventory it must provide significant resources to give instructors additional assessment options, such as expanding campus testing centers and investigating collaborations with other universities in the UC system (and beyond) to provide assessment options.

In conclusion, EPC reached the decision to provide a two-year exception because the idea that online courses for Summer Session will have an indefinite exception to the Policy on Distance Education Courses is untenable. The exception for Summer 2024 and 2025 will give Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council enough time to adapt to the new R-course approval process and for academic units and instructors time to submit proposals for R-

courses. The Committee looks forward to partnering with the Administration to provide instructors more options for exam modality.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Cook, Chair  
Educational Policy Committee

cc: L. Hullings  
J. Lucius  
C. Wastal