

FERPA COURSE MERGING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

FERPA COURSE MERGING POLICY

In certain situations, faculty members may merge course sections in Blackboard for a given term with FERPA regulations limiting the circumstances in which merged courses are allowed without student approval. In those situations, students have the choice to agree and cannot be required or forced to agree to a course merging. Situations where student approval is not needed and when student approval is required are outlined in the following sections.

OUTCOMES OF MERGING

- Ease of course management for faculty.
- Student work completed in Blackboard shells prior to merging will be deleted after the merge.
- Student access to enhanced course materials, greater diversity of opinions and life experiences in course discussion boards, as well as expanded class sizes for course activities.

MERGES ALLOWED BY FERPA **WITHOUT STUDENT APPROVAL**

1. Sections of a course that have the **same instructor AND are offered at the same time or both modes of instruction are online asynchronous:**
 - a. Two or more concurrent, online asynchronous sections
 - b. Online synchronous sections and on-campus face-to-face sections
 - c. Online synchronous sections and hybrid/blended sections
 - d. IVN sections and on-campus face-to-face sections
2. Lecture/lab courses with lectures scheduled at the same time (i.e. all sections of BIOL 111 with the same lecture professor scheduled at noon MWF).
3. Cross listed courses with the same instructor meeting at the same time (i.e. CJ 325 – Research Methods and HIST 325 – Research Methods).

MERGES ALLOWED BY FERPA THAT **REQUIRE STUDENT APPROVAL** PRIOR TO MERGING

The situations listed below must have signed release forms or email approvals for **every student in every class section** prior to merging:

1. Sections of a class that have different instructors (i.e. MATH 103 taught by Professor X and Professor Y)
2. Different courses with the same instructor other than lecture/lab co-requisite sections (i.e. ENGL 120 and ENGL 120 with Professor Z)
3. On-campus classes or sections taught at different times – even by the same instructor (i.e. 9:00 am PSYC 111 and 11:00 am PSYC 111 with Professor A)

FERPA COURSE MERGING PROCEDURES

IF THE COURSE MERGE IS ALLOWED UNDER FERPA **WITHOUT STUDENT APPROVAL**, TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. It is recommended that faculty contact Information Technology (IT) more than one week prior to the term start to request the course merge.
2. Disclose the section merging within the syllabus. An example syllabus statement is provided below.
3. Email the students in all sections a notification of the merged courses before the last day to add.

EXAMPLE SYLLABUS STATEMENT

The students in this course are merged in Blackboard with students enrolled in <insert subject, catalog number, class name, and delivery method>. Students will have access to the names, locations, email addresses, discussion forum postings, and contributions to group activities of all students enrolled in the merged course within Blackboard *for the current term*. Merged classes in Blackboard allows for access to enhanced course materials, greater diversity of opinions and life experiences in course discussion boards, as well as expanded class sizes for course activities.

IF THE COURSE MERGE **REQUIRES STUDENT APPROVAL**, TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Obtain signed forms or emailed approvals from all students in all relevant class sections. Students have the choice to agree and cannot be required or forced to agree to the merged course. **If a student does not want to sign, the course cannot be merged.**
 - a. The form is included in the procedures and should be updated with the course information prior to providing to students for signatures.
 - b. Email approvals from students must be sent from their Dickinson State University email address and must include both the course information of the course in which they are currently enrolled and the course information of the potential merged course; specifically, language that clearly states the student's approval; the subject, catalog number, class number, and mode of instruction for the enrolled course; and the subject, catalog number, class number, and mode of instruction for the potential merged course. This could be accomplished in one statement such as:
As a student enrolled in the ELED 238 (4321) on-campus section at 2:00 p.m. MWF, I, Buster Blue Hawk, have read the course syllabus and I consent to being in the merged Blackboard shell with students in the ELED 238 (1234) on-campus section at 1:00 p.m. MWF.
2. More than one week prior to the term start, submit all signed forms or emailed student approvals to the Registrar and obtain email approval from the Registrar.
3. The Registrar will cc: DSU IT in the approval email to the faculty member.
4. The Registrar will permanently keep the release information for approved merged courses.

Delivery Options

The following delivery options are modes of instruction utilized for class scheduling purposes. Each class in the term schedule must be tagged with an instruction mode (for example, TC, FF, IA, and V2).

On Campus Face-to-Face (TC) : Describes the traditional classroom setting where the instructor and students are physically located in the same place and may incorporate multiple supportive technologies as appropriate. Activities when the instructor and student are face-to-face during the regularly scheduled class time are considered guided instruction. Activities other than those are considered student preparation. Depending on whether the course is traditional, activity-oriented, discretionary, fixed credit, or variable credit, the appropriate guidelines above apply.

Off Campus Face-to-Face (FF): Describes the traditional classroom setting where the instructor and students are physically located in the same place in an off campus location and may incorporate the use of multiple supportive technologies as appropriate. Activities when the instructor and student are face-to-face during the regularly scheduled class time are considered guided instruction. Activities other than those are considered student preparation. Depending on whether the course is traditional, activity-oriented, discretionary, fixed credit, or variable credit, the appropriate guidelines above apply.

Online Synchronous/DSUlive (IS): Online instruction occurring independent of location, but at the same time (real time.) Instructors will use Blackboard for distribution and collection of all course materials, discussion threads, and assessment activities. DSUlive sections may be offered in conjunction with face-to-face courses. All activities when the instructor and student are face-to-face during the regularly scheduled class time are considered guided instruction. All activities other than those are considered student preparation. Depending on whether the course is traditional, activity-oriented, discretionary, fixed credit or variable credit, the appropriate guidelines above apply.

Online Asynchronous (IA): Online instruction occurring independent of time and location. These courses are offered entirely online. However, students are expected to be engaged in guided instruction through means which include online reading of course syllabi, assignment sheets, power points, lecture or textbook notes, linked documents, discussion posts, or emails from the instructor or peers; online writing of discussion posts, assessments, analysis, or emails to the instructor or peers; taking exams; listening to or watching recorded lectures or linked audio or video files; engaging with an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction; presenting to or listening to peers; participating in virtual small group projects or study efforts; and in any other way interacting with the faculty member and/or class members regarding the academic subject of the course. Some of these means may add synchronous components to primarily asynchronous courses. Academic schools must document through syllabi that they are meeting the minimum credit hour requirement for the credit awarded. Depending on whether the course is traditional, activity-oriented, discretionary, fixed credit, or variable credit, the appropriate guidelines above apply.

Interactive Video (V2): A video and audio communications session between two or more remote sites with live, animated image transmission and display. This connection allows for both faculty and students to be seen and heard by each other.

Hybrid/Bended (CO): A form of instruction that includes students from different locations and/or environments (face-to-face, online, IVN, etc.) for synchronous and/or asynchronous instruction which includes at least 25% of the course as face-to-face delivery.