



KENTUCKY STATE UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

PROCEDURE TITLE:

KYSU Online SME Model for Online Courses

VOLUME, SECTION & NUMBER:

1.3.8

ENTITIES AFFECTED:

Faculty

Administrators

Subject Matter Experts

Instructional Designers

ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY:

Academic Affairs

Office of Online Education

APPROVED BY:

Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs

Office of Online Education

EFFECTIVE DATE:

7/1/2024

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the *KYSU Online SME Model for Online Courses* document is to explain the Subject Matter Expert's (SME's) responsibility for developing and maintaining the content of online courses. It also describes the relationship between the primary course shell and the individual sections of a course, which are exact copies of the primary course shell. The SME Model for online courses also relates to the *KYSU Online Course Content Management Procedures*, which define the workflows for developing, redeveloping, and changing the content of a course's primary course shell.

PROCEDURES STATEMENT:

Since online courses are delivered entirely through the LMS, and since students engage the content asynchronously, the content within the LMS essentially stands in place of the instructional content represented by lectures in a traditional/residential course. Therefore, apart from regular face-to-face interaction with faculty in a classroom setting, students must encounter a well-designed, easy-to-navigate online course that facilitates their learning. Developing an effective online course is time-consuming and requires more advanced proficiency with the LMS. When multiple sections of the same



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online course are needed, the student experience can vary greatly depending on the ability of the instructional designer and the amount of time allocated to developing the course in the LMS.

KYSU Online aims to deliver a consistent educational experience to students in different online sections of the same course. Their experience should also remain consistent from term to term, as the general layout and elements of various online courses should be familiar. Moreover, there should be consistency (or parity) between online and residential versions of the same class. A consistent student experience will also reduce the burden on faculty to assist students in locating instructional content within the LMS.

SME Model Overview

KYSU Online will implement the SME model in its online programs. The SME model is an approach to differentiating the roles of online faculty in developing, maintaining, and teaching the content of online courses; it ensures consistency across multiple sections of an online course. This model positions KYSU Online to implement standards of consistent instructional design while minimizing the burden on faculty to become instructional designers. This model also supports assessment and accreditation reporting.

The SME model is a more formal approach to the traditional, informal collaboration among faculty members in a department who teach sections of the same course in a residential setting.

- For example, in a residential setting, two professors might agree to use the same textbooks in their respective sections of the same course to help students and the bookstore with simpler logistics and matching costs.
- The faculty might also agree to use similar assignments and examinations to simplify program-level assessment efforts in a residential setting.
- At other points, a faculty member might cover a residential course usually taught by a colleague on sabbatical; the covering faculty member might inherit and incorporate the syllabus, the textbooks, the assignments, and the lecture notes of their colleague rather than redesigning the course from scratch.

The point is that faculty in traditional residential programs often collaborate on courses to meet the needs of the students and the department. The same spirit of collegiality and collaboration undergirds the online programs. However, the online modality of courses, the use of eight (8) week subterms, and the unique needs of online students require a more formalized approach to faculty collaboration than what might occur less formally in a residential department. The SME model formalizes faculty collaboration by designating one credentialed faculty member as the SME for one online course.

SMEs are integral to the development and redevelopment of online courses. They maintain the primary course shell, coordinate textbook updates, and engage with online instructors to drive continuous improvement of online courses. The SME collaborates with the Office of Online Education, program coordinators, online faculty, and instructional designers to select content, arrange modules, develop assignments, write the syllabus, and ensure alignment with learning outcomes.

KYSU's Office of Online Education oversees the appointment of credentialed faculty as SMEs for specific courses. This process involves collaboration with the academic department, faculty, and other relevant



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parties engaged in course development. Some full-time faculty will be appointed as SMEs, and their service in this role is included within the scope of their full-time faculty contracts with Kentucky State University. In some cases, adjunct faculty will serve as SMEs. Full-time and adjunct faculty can serve as SMEs for multiple classes simultaneously, contingent upon other workload. Depending on the nature and extent of the workload represented by a SME assignment, the Director of Online Education can submit a proposal to the Provost to formulate a SME agreement detailing the rationale for additional compensation for a SME's scope of services.

The SME for each course is the primary representative of the Office of Online Education at the course level. As directed, the SME will work with program coordinators, the Director of Online Education, and the Online Advisory Committee to maintain sufficient parity between the online course and other modalities. For example, assessments of learning outcomes may require coordination between faculty teaching residential and online modalities. The academic department and the Director of Online Education should ensure that the SME has appropriate involvement in department meetings and assessment planning to ensure efficient coordination of objectives in online sections. Additionally, if the residential faculty votes to modify a learning outcome shared by multiple courses, they should ensure effective coordination with the Director of Online Education and the Online Advisory Committee, who will involve the program coordinator and SME of the affected online courses as needed. The department administrators must exercise particular care to ensure information-sharing with colleagues who are SMEs and may not be present on campus to participate in administrative meetings.

The SME for each online course is the "keeper" of the syllabus, with a particular focus on the instructional components of the course. As such, the SME must ensure that the information in the syllabus is accurate, current, and sufficiently coordinated with residential counterparts. The SME will work with the program coordinators and the Office of Online Education to ensure that the course syllabus conforms to the standards of KYSU Online.

In addition to contributing to the development and maintenance of online courses, SMEs often teach in the online sections of those courses once the course launches, working separately as the online faculty in assigned sections. Instructional course load is separate from SME involvement in course development, so the Office of Online Education does not require that initial SMEs accept course load as online faculty after course development is complete.

Course Components of the SME Model

The foundation of the SME Model is the primary course shell in the LMS, which represents the finished work of the SME. When the course is offered online, the primary course shell will be used to create course sections into which students are enrolled. This occurs during the course copy process. The primary course shell is never populated with students. Each section created during the course copy process is populated with students and assigned to an online faculty instructor.

When a SME decides to edit, change, or redevelop the content of the primary course shell, this initiates a course change process. Upon the SME's request, a development course shell is created, which is a copy of the primary course shell. The SME edits, changes, and redevelops the course content within the development course shell. Once the SME is finished and the development shell is reviewed (see the *KYSU Online Course Update Procedures* for the requirements), the development shell is converted to the primary course shell. Since the course copy process always requires a completed primary course



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shell, SMEs must follow the redevelopment and change timelines relative to the start of each online term/subterm.

DEFINITIONS:

Subject Matter Expert: SMEs are integral to the development and redevelopment of online courses. They maintain the primary course shell of online courses, coordinate textbook updates, and engage with online instructors to drive continuous improvement of online courses. The SME collaborates with the Office of Online Education, program coordinators, online faculty, and instructional designers to select content, arrange modules, develop assignments, write the syllabus, and ensure alignment with learning outcomes.

SME Model for Online Courses: The SME model differentiates the roles of online faculty in developing, maintaining, and teaching the content of online courses and ensures consistency across multiple sections of an online course.

Primary Course Shell: The foundation of the SME Model is the primary course shell in the LMS, which represents the finished work of the SME. When the course is offered online, the primary course shell will be used to create course sections into which students are enrolled.

Development Course Shell: When a SME decides to edit, change, or redevelop the content of the primary course shell, this initiates a course change process. Upon the SME's request, a development course shell is created, which is a copy of the primary course shell. The SME edits, changes, and redevelops the course content within the development course shell.

Course Copy Process: The primary course shell is never populated with students. Each section created during the course copy process is populated with students and assigned to an online faculty instructor.

RELATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS:

1.3.7 KYSU Online Course Content Management Procedures

1.3.18 KYSU Online Advisory Committee Procedures

1.3.19 KYSU Online Curriculum Proposal Procedures

STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REFERENCES:

N/A

POLICY OWNER/INTERPRETING AUTHORITY:

Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs

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