

Policy for Online Learning at CCSU

Following the March 2015 report of the joint Faculty Senate-Academic Affairs Task Force to Enhance Online and Hybrid Learning, the Faculty Senate formed the ad hoc Online Learning Implementation Committee (for membership, see the end of this document) to develop the policies necessary to implement the Task Force's report. After a year of study, research, and discussion, the Online Learning Implementation Committee presents the following report, which if adopted by the Faculty Senate would become CCSU's online learning policy.

1. Definitions

The Online Learning Implementation Committee proposes four designations to distinguish among types of online and on-ground course offerings. The designations are applied to individual sections of existing or newly-created courses (e.g. GEN 100 section 1), not to the course itself (e.g. GEN 100). These designations will make the format of the course clear to potential students prior to registration.

1. A fully **online** course section is a section in which 100% of the class contact hours are conducted via the internet. The instructor for such a section shall provide all content via course management systems approved by the offering department and/or program.
2. An **online-hybrid** course section is a section that combines on-ground and online sessions so that at least 50% but less than 100% of contact hours are conducted via the internet. Online-hybrid courses are classified as "online courses" for the purposes of university caps on the total number of online courses offered during a semester.
3. An **on-ground-hybrid** course section is a section that combines on-ground and online sessions so that more than 50% but less than 100% of contact hours are conducted on-ground. On-ground-hybrid courses are not classified as "online courses" for the purposes of university caps on the total number of online courses offered during a semester.
4. A fully **on-ground** course section is a section in which 100% of contact hours are conducted on-ground.

2. Oversight Committee

The Online Learning Implementation Committee recommends the creation of the Online Learning Committee: a standing committee of the faculty, under the auspices of the Faculty Senate, charged with overseeing the creation, selection, and evaluation of CCSU's online course offerings, and the ongoing assessment of the online course program overall. As its proposed make-up suggests, the committee will do its work in consultation with other relevant faculty committees.

Membership: The committee will be composed of the following members:

- One faculty member from CLASS, elected by CLASS faculty via the Senate's Election Committee
- One faculty member from SEPS, elected by SEPS faculty via the Senate's Election Committee
- One faculty member from SoB, elected by SoB faculty via the Senate's Election Committee
- One faculty member from SEST, elected by SEST faculty via the Senate's Election Committee
- Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee's Online Subcommittee, elected by the Graduate Studies Committee to represent School of Graduate Studies
- One member of the Curriculum Committee, appointed by the Curriculum Committee
- One member of the Assessment Committee, appointed by the Assessment Committee
- One member of the Instructional Technology Committee, appointed by the IT Committee
- One member of the Academic Standards Committee, appointed by the Academic Standards Committee
- The Director of the IDTRC or designee, *ex officio*
- The Associate VPAA charged with oversight of online courses, *ex officio* and non-voting

Responsibilities: The committee's responsibilities shall be as follows:

- The committee will oversee the design and assure the provision of appropriate training for all faculty wishing to teach an online, online-hybrid, or on-ground-hybrid course
- The first time a faculty member wishes to teach a particular course in online, online-hybrid, or on-ground-hybrid format, the committee will review and approve all requests to do so, to assure that the faculty member has received appropriate training and that the course's use of online technology is in accord with university standards. This review will include courses already taught online prior to the adoption of these guidelines. The committee will *not* evaluate course content, which is the purview of the relevant academic department.
- In the event that the number of requests to teach online or online-hybrid courses in a given fall or spring semester exceeds the cap on such courses established by the Faculty Senate (set by the Senate in Fall 2015 at 40 undergraduate courses for each Fall and Spring semester), the committee will prioritize the requests according to the criteria listed elsewhere in this document
- The committee will receive and review the aggregated information from the section of the online Student Opinion Surveys concerning students' online learning experience, for purposes of ongoing evaluation of the university's online learning program. The committee will *not* receive the department-specific section of the Student Opinion Surveys, and does *not* evaluate individual courses or instructors

- The committee will gather data on and conduct ongoing evaluation of the university's online learning program and will make recommendations thereon to the Faculty Senate
- The committee will make recommendations to the Senate on the currently approved caps on online sections during the Fall and Spring semesters as needed. The committee may also make recommendations to the Senate on potential new caps on online sections during Summer and Winter sessions
- The committee will make an annual report to the Faculty Senate

3. Priorities for Online Course Offerings

All requests to teach a course in online or online-hybrid format must include a rationale for the use of that format. In the event that the number of requests to teach online or online-hybrid courses in a given fall or spring semester exceeds the cap on such courses established by the Faculty Senate, the committee will prioritize the requests according to the following criteria (please note that these priorities apply only to undergraduate course offerings; the School of Graduate Studies has its own criteria in place):

Online Courses

1. Courses in which the content or subject matter is already substantially online (e.g. online searching in library sciences, online course development in education).
2. Courses designed to meet the specific needs of their target audiences (e.g. a course for students involved in full-time internships)
3. Courses with other compelling rationales for using the online format (given the value of campus community as well as student-faculty and student-student face-to-face contact, the convenience to faculty or students of not having to come to campus will be among the least compelling rationales).

Online-Hybrid Courses

1. Courses in which the content or subject matter is already substantially online (e.g. online searching in library sciences, online course development in education).
2. Courses designed to meet the specific needs of their target audiences (e.g. a course for students involved in full-time internships)
3. "3+1" courses: 4 credit courses where 3 credits are offered on ground with a 1-credit "between class" online component that has a compelling rationale for being online
4. Courses where the online component is synchronous, or broken into small groups meeting synchronously, allowing students to express themselves online as an alternative or enhancement to on-ground participation.
5. Courses with other compelling rationales for the substitution of online for on-ground sessions.

4. Further Guidelines for the development and introduction of online and hybrid courses

4a. Policies

1. The decision to offer a course online rests exclusively with the academic department.
2. Online courses must be generated by CCSU faculty and approved by the offering department or program.
3. Faculty who wish to offer online and online-hybrid courses must work with the Instructional Design and Technology Resource Center to develop online content, gain an understanding of CCSU standards, and become proficient in mechanisms for course delivery regardless of the term in which the course is offered, including Winter and Summer sessions (see below for details on the training process).
4. Online courses from sources external to the university (e.g., MOOCs, Khan Academy) cannot be offered as credit bearing courses.
5. Ongoing faculty control of online policy and practice is assured by the creation of an Online Learning Committee.
6. A faculty member cannot be required to offer a course online, unless online teaching was a criterion for his or her hiring.

4b. Process to apply to teach an online or online hybrid course for the first time

This process is currently in place and will remain so subject to alteration by the Oversight Committee. The process to teach a course online starts at the department level. Please follow the steps below:

1. Read and complete the Online Course Proposal Request Form, located on the Forms link on the Registrar's Office web site home page.
2. Submit the form to your department chair for approval: each department may have internal processes for determining which sections should or should not go online. The approved form will be forwarded to the Dean for approval. Once approved by the Dean, it will be forwarded to the Associate Vice President.
3. Once the course is approved, the course section will be set up in Banner for you.

4c. Training for faculty

Faculty teaching online and hybrid courses must participate in training opportunities utilizing local Instructional Design and Technology Resource Center facilities, which may also include Quality Matters training (see below). Beginning with the adoption of this policy, all faculty wishing to teach in online or online-hybrid format for the first time (including those who have already taught in those formats prior to the adoption of the policy) shall self-designate their current online and hybrid course level of proficiency from the list below in order to allow IDTRC to work with the faculty member to design the appropriate training to best support their training and course development needs:

Expert user: excellence in online learning. Certified by Quality Matters, Online Learning Consortium, etc. Would be willing to serve as a mentor. Confident to teach or moderate an online teaching session.

User: some confidence in online teaching in need of support for improved course delivery.

Novice: never taught online

Quality Matters (QM)

Quality Matters (QM) is a faculty-centered, peer review process that is designed to certify the quality of online and hybrid courses. QM is a leader in quality assurance for online education and has received national recognition for its peer-based approach and continuous improvement in online education and student learning. CCSU subscribed to the Quality Matters program in November 2013 and ever since, our faculty have been improving their online courses to meet QM Certification standards. The program has three primary components: The QM Rubric, the Peer Review Process, and QM Professional Development. CCSU is implementing the QM Program for its online and hybrid courses to ensure they meet expectations, either from initial design and development or through revisions. The Quality Matters Rubric is research supported and promotes best practice-based quality standards and procedures. Faculty peer-reviewers use the QM Rubric to review online courses. We have adopted the QM Rubric and are using the underlying principles of Quality Matters to help meet the objective of ensuring quality assurance and promoting continuous improvement.

4d. Website Support

Two websites have been developed to support online learning at CCSU, one for instructors and one for students.

“So you want to teach online...”: www.ccsu.edu/it/teachonline. Faculty resources to support online learning. Includes timeline with application. The recommended timeline for creating an online course is available on this website and is provided in Appendix B below.

“Online Course Readiness Preparation”: www.ccsu.edu/it/onlinereadiness. Student resources to assess readiness for online learning and provide support to students engaging in online learning. This link will be sent to all students enrolled in an online course by the Registrar at the end of pre-registration and again 10 days before the beginning of the course.

5. Online Course Evaluations

The opportunity for students in online and hybrid courses to complete a student opinion survey must be the same as that provided to on-ground courses. An online method for administering student opinion surveys is necessary for online courses. The university currently has access to SelectSurvey tool. This is an online survey tool capable of supporting student opinion surveys. For the 2016-17 academic year this will be the tool utilized for the assessment of online courses.

The process will work as follows: each department running an online or hybrid course designates a person to coordinate the online surveys. The designated person will be trained by IDTRC (Instructional Design and Technology Resource Center) in the SelectSurvey tool. At the appropriate time, the designated individual provides the link to the active survey for a particular term to those teaching online and hybrid courses in their respective departments. These

online/Hybrid course surveys will need to be available to students for two weeks prior to the final exam period and the data not available to the faculty teaching the section until after the all student grades have been rolled by the Registrar for that semester.

The data resulting from the online student opinion survey will then be available to the designated person in the department. The faculty will be able to get the results of the survey as soon as the designated person makes the data available to them.

After the initial year of online course evaluations, the Online Learning Committee will assess whether or not SelectSurvey is an effective mechanism for administering these surveys; in the case that SelectSurvey is not an effective tool, the committee may choose to investigate other online survey options. In additions, depending on the results of the pilot year, on ground courses may elect to choose the online survey tool in the future.

In addition to department course evaluation (student opinion surveys), data will be collected from students in a separate assessment of online learning overall, in order to measure the overall effectiveness of online learning at CCSU. A pilot program was conducted in summer 2014; results are shown in Appendix A. A similar survey will be developed by the Online Learning Committee and administered to all online sections, either as a separate assessment or as a separate section of the existing course evaluation. Data on online learning as a general process will be aggregated for overall assessment and shall not be used in promotion or tenure deliberations. While the administration of department-specific student opinion surveys in summer and winter session online classes shall follow a department's general policy on the assessment of summer and winter classes, the instrument used to assess online learning in general shall be administered in summer and winter online classes.

6. Verification of Student Identity

NEASC requires that its member institutions have a system in place to verify the identity of students taking online courses. Currently there is no such system in place at CCSU, and one needs to be instituted in the very near future to satisfy NEASC as well as to assure the academic integrity of online courses. Recommending and implementing a specific system will be one of the first actions of the Online Learning Committee. In choosing from among the packages and programs that are currently available, three important properties should be considered: (1) Ability to be integrated with Blackboard; (2) Ease of use; (3) Cost. See Appendix C for further information about some available options.

7. Intellectual Property

The following policies will govern ownership of and property rights concerning online courses and course material:

1. Tripartite Division:
 - a. online course material created by faculty, both its content and its structure/design, is the intellectual property of its creator, as detailed below;

- b. the course designation (subject designator and number, e.g. GEN 100) is the property of the university that offers the course; and
 - c. the delivery platform (e.g. Blackboard) is the property of the entity with which the university contracts for its use
2. The course shell and contents of an online class (including the online component of a hybrid class) is and shall remain the intellectual property of the faculty member or members who developed it, for purposes including indication of authorship, copyright, publication, and subsequent use. Neither the course shell nor its contents, in whole or in part, may be copied or otherwise utilized by another faculty member or other person without the express permission of the original author. The University may not hand over the intellectual property rights of the faculty to the delivery platform provider.
 3. In the event that a faculty member is unable to complete the instruction of an in-progress online or hybrid course due to illness or other emergency, the department may give access to the course's online materials to a faculty member designated to complete the course, with the understanding that the latter faculty member shall make no further use of the material.

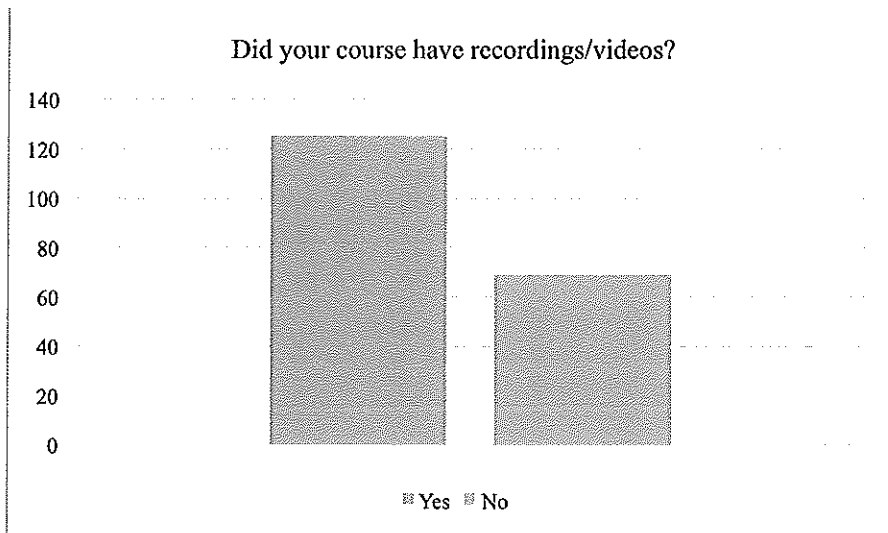
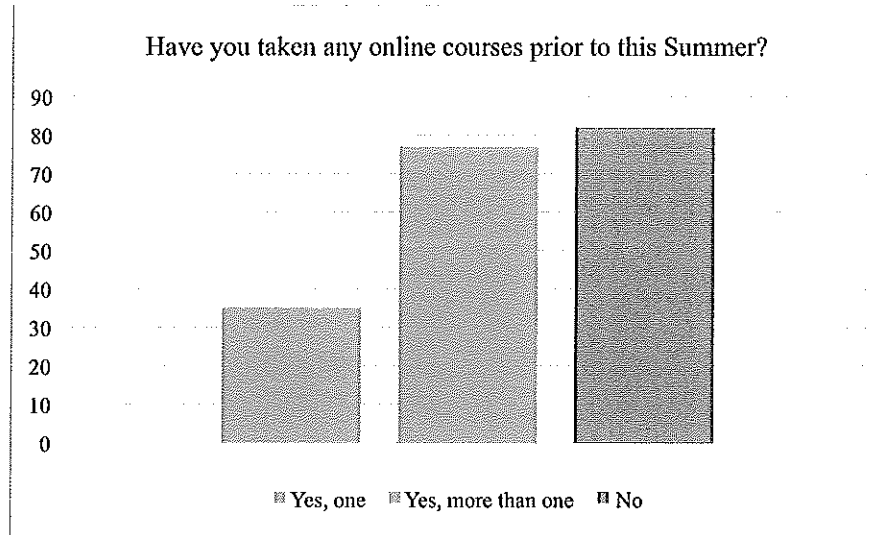
Submitted by the Online Learning Implementation Committee:

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Kristine Larsen (co-chair)
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Stephen Cohen (Faculty Senate)
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Martha Kruey (Academic Assessment Committee)
Frederic Latour (Academic Standards Committee)
Pankaj Nagpal (Information Technology Committee)
David Oyanadel (IDTRC)
Talat Salama (Curriculum Committee)

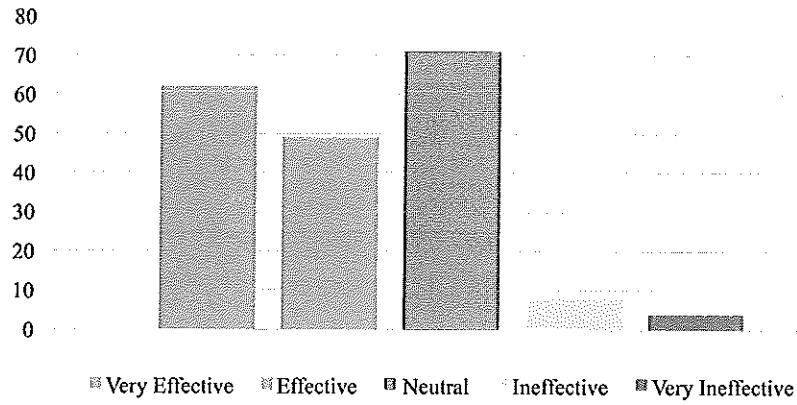
Appendix A – Prior assessment of online learning Summer 2014

Student Survey of Online Courses

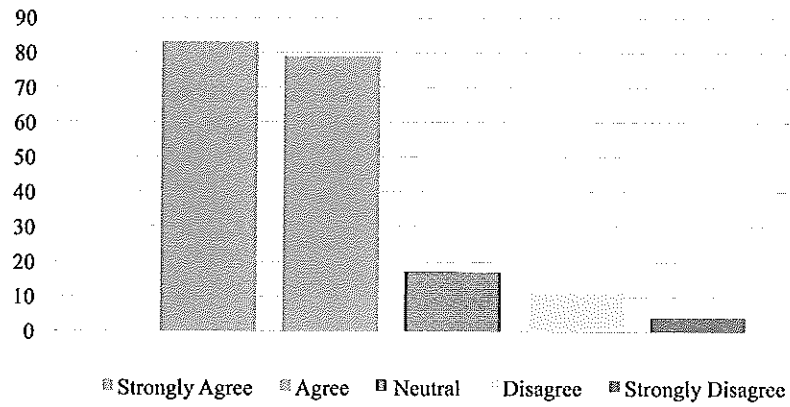
A survey was given to students who took online courses at CCSU during the Summer 2014 sessions to assess the instructional tools used and their effectiveness among other pertinent variables. The total number of academic departments that offered online courses was 38 and the total number of responders was 249 students. Provided below are samples of the 25 questions asked to evaluate the opinion of the students on their online course experience.



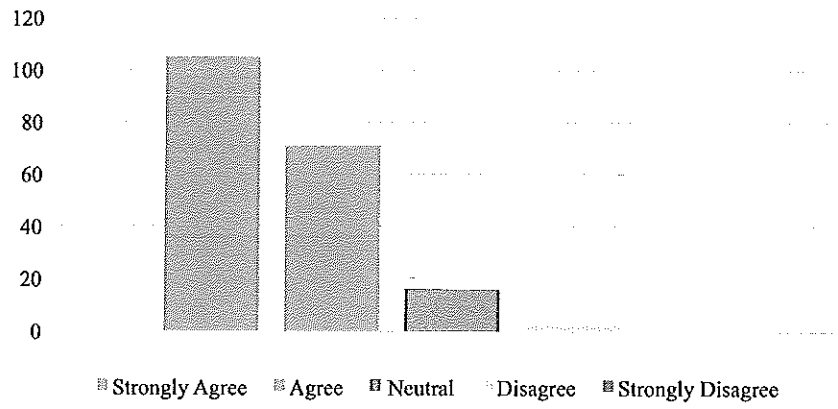
If yes, how effective were the recordings/videos in helping you understand the material?



Overall, I consider this course was equivalent in terms of content to courses I have taken on ground.



Overall, I consider that the course's LMS was easy to use and served the course well.



Appendix B: Timeline for online course creation

Online Course (totally online):	Decide on the "Go Live" date
<i>Months Prior to "Go Live"</i>	<i>Action</i>
<p>12 months prior Check for Training Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review Course Goals (Develop if new) <input type="checkbox"/> Collect Course Content (Develop if new) <input type="checkbox"/> Develop activities <input type="checkbox"/> Look at possible Teaching Methods <input type="checkbox"/> Review (OER, Khan Academy, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Develop your own screencast or demonstration using lecture capture <input type="checkbox"/> Seek Training on the use of technology for lecture capture
<p>6 months prior Follow-up with additional Training, if needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop Syllabus/Course Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Develop teaching methods and tools <input type="checkbox"/> Develop Assessment/Evaluation Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Develop lesson plans or lecture notes <input type="checkbox"/> If materials are needed for your course (videos, library journals, software) be sure to place the appropriate requests <input type="checkbox"/> Contact your Instructional Technology and Instructional Design teams to make sure that your needs are covered <input type="checkbox"/> Review Library Resources <input type="checkbox"/> Contact guest speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange field trips and other activities
<p>3 months prior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review your course policies <input type="checkbox"/> Finalize course Syllabus <input type="checkbox"/> Refine lesson plans <input type="checkbox"/> Check with bookstore about your orders
<p>During and After</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take notes after every class session (what went well and what went wrong.) Write suggestions for improvement. <input type="checkbox"/> Go over the student evaluations <input type="checkbox"/> Improve course design based on your student feedback and your own evaluation

Appendix C: Options for Student Identity Verification

Charter Oak State College currently uses a commercial product called Acxiom. It relies on the same database used to verify identity for other online transactions (e.g. names of relatives, past addresses and employers, loans, vehicles, etc.). It can be utilized in two ways. Because it can be used to verify addresses, it can verify a student's in-state status for purposes of payments. In terms of student identity, it can be used randomly during an online course as many times as the institution is willing to pay for. The student is randomly asked three questions as a pop-up during a session in which they are logged into their online course shell. If they cannot answer the question, they are contacted by the Registrar's Office, who verifies their identity through other questions using Acxiom. The cost per verification of ID can vary from 90 cents to \$1.70 per check depending on the sophistication of the question. COSC currently budgets about \$10,000 a year for the system. Because it relies on a domestic database it does not work well for international students. The system is not foolproof, but COSC is in general satisfied with the product. COSC would be willing to host a company demo on their site for people from other campuses to come and see all that the program can do.

While Acxiom does meet the three criteria listed above, there are other packages available. A sample alternative, and related annual costs (approx.) are given here. The example product is available from Respondus, a current vendor of software to CCSU. *Respondus is only an illustration, not a recommendation, and will need additional benchmarking with similar products in the market.*

The first product is called Respondus lockdown browser. As per the vendor "Respondus LockDown Browser™ is a custom browser that locks down the testing environment within Blackboard. When students use Respondus LockDown Browser they are unable to print, copy, go to another URL, or access other applications. When an assessment is started, students are locked into it until they submit it for grading." It is available via a campus wide license, and costs are related to student FTE. With CCSU FTE in 7,000+ range (CHECK), it would cost \$3,995 per year. However, there are economies of scale with large numbers, given that annual costs at 10,000 student FTE are \$5,995. If the BOR negotiates a system wide cost, it would enable economy of scale. A companion product, Respondus Monitor "enables institutions to protect the integrity of non-proctored, online exams. Students use their own computer and a webcam to record assessment sessions, all without leaving the institution's learning management system." At small numbers, it is free with the above browser. At our current enrollment in Online courses, which was 257 online courses* taken in the Academic year Summer 2015 through Spring 2016, this would cost \$3,950. However, this cost would continue till the use reaches 1,000 courses. With both these products, the cost would reach **\$7,945 per year**. At the current usage, where 257 online courses are taken, this would cost CCSU in the range of \$31 per course. In view of stronger authentication via Respondus like products, it is worthwhile to study the benefits and costs of alternatives.

The Board of Regents (BOR) was contacted to inquire if they would be willing to cover the cost. It was suggested that if a program were to be agreed upon by the majority of the institutions a bundled package could be bought, which would come out of the BOR budget rather than the

university. In the short term, the Provost's Office would be the most likely source of funding, although shifting it to the BOR as soon as possible would be the desired course of action.

At any rate, the BOR should be able to negotiate lower costs in view of large FTE of CSCU as a whole. Future growth in online course usage would also lower the cost per course, given that Respondus Monitor costs are valid up to 1,000 courses. These 'Respondus like' products appear to be 'state of the art' in Online Education space, and can provide assurance to accreditation institutions for some time.

* Data Source: OIRA Course Census files, includes courses with 1 or more credit hour

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