

Final Exam Scheduling Policies for On-line and Hybrid Courses at Ohio Faculty Council Institutions

Executive Summary

During the months of May, June and July, 2018 representatives of the Ohio Faculty Council were asked if their institution schedules “final exams in time blocks determined by the meeting time for a class? If so, then when do students taking courses that do not meet at specific times or whose meeting times overlap with the time that other classes meet (e.g. 100% on-line or hybrid courses) take the final exams for those courses? How are conflicts in final exam schedules resolved?”

There can be valid reasons for most if not all students in some classes to take the final exams for those classes in a specific block of time. For instance, some graduate/professional schools require that exams for some classes be administered to students in person even if the class is offered as an on-line or hybrid course. Also, the integrity of some exams may be compromised if all students do not take them at approximately the same time – this is particularly a concern for classes with large numbers of students.

Historically, this issue has been addressed for most institutions (Miami University being an exception) by offering final exams for classes in a way that has been directly linked to the days and times that classes met during the course of a semester. However, on-line and hybrid courses often do not have designated meeting times or have meeting times that overlap with those of other courses. As offerings of on-line and hybrid courses increase the potential for conflicting exam times should be expected to also increase.

None of the public four-year universities in Ohio appear to have developed policies that completely solve this emerging problem. At present, most rely upon students and faculty to resolve final exam scheduling conflicts on a case-by-case basis as they arise. Some institutions are contemplating establishing time blocks during final exam weeks that are set aside for just on-line and/or hybrid courses (but which would not necessarily resolve scheduling conflicts for students taking two or more on-line courses).

Summaries of institution-specific answers to questions about final exam scheduling policies for on-line and hybrid courses:

Akron

The University of Akron has no policies regarding the scheduling of final exams for on-line courses.

Bowling Green

Central State

Central State uses course scheduling blocks to schedule final exam times. No special exam times are scheduled for courses such as on-line or hybrid courses that meet outside of the standard class meeting times.

Cleveland State

Cleveland State's final exam schedule

(<http://www.csuohio.edu/enrollmentservices/registrar/calendar/>) allots exam times based on the day and time an on-campus class was taught. There are also two slots available for off-grid or large class exams. Summer is an exception – those final exams are to be held on the last scheduled meeting day for the course unless otherwise noted by the instructor. The Registrar's Office does not formally advise on the timing of final exams for online classes or classes that do not meet at specific times.

In cases where a conflict in the exam schedule arises, the Registrar's Office typically tries to facilitate discussion between the instructors of the classes, enlisting advisor, department chair or college dean's office support as needed in finding a solution. A couple of these occur every semester and there has not yet been a situation that was intractable. The most obvious solution is to let the student take one of the exams at a different time. Last semester a situation arose in which a student was concerned about the lack of a break between exam slots in the evening and they were allowed to start their second exam 15 minutes later.

Kent State

Kent State's final exam schedule includes the following language: "Courses that are taught primarily online under the following conditions: meeting times are not regularly scheduled for the duration of the full term; final exam is not scheduled online" are to take have their final exam during one of a number of specifically designated times during the final exam week. While it might still be possible for a student taking more than one online course to encounter a circumstance where there was a conflict between the final exam time for two online courses there would be no opportunity for there to be a conflict between an online and a regular in person course.

Miami

The exam schedule is prepared by the Registrar's Office and does not align with class meetings. There are 'group' exams (ex. all General Chemistry classes take their exams at the same time) for those departments asking for such, often because of common exam questions. Other class exams are scheduled in two-hour time-blocks throughout the exam week. Evening class exams are given at the time that the class would regularly meet. Students with conflicts are required to contact the faculty members involved and resolve the conflict (the 3-letter department code is the determining factor regarding which exam must be rescheduled).

Ohio State

Ohio State has four course delivery modes: 1) 100% on-line (DL: Distance Learning); 2) 75-99% on-line (DH: Distance Enhanced); 3) 25-74% on-line (HY: Hybrid); and 0-24% on-line (P: In-Person). Final exam schedules are based off of meeting times and places for each course. Since DH, HY and P courses all have specific meeting times and places they are all associated with specific final exam times that do not conflict.

Since DL courses are not delivered with structured meeting times they are outside of the final exam scheduling process that applies to DH, HY and P courses. DL class final exams are given at a time chosen by the course's instructor. There is no stated policy about final exam/projects for DL courses.

Ohio University

Shawnee State

Shawnee State has no policy or procedure for scheduling final exams for on-line courses but does require a final exam for hybrid courses. Very few conflicts with final exam scheduling have occurred but some occasionally arise regarding exam locations. To date, such conflicts have been resolved through discussions between faculty and/or department chairs.

University of Cincinnati

At the University of Cincinnati final examinations for hybrid classes that meet in a room for part of the term follow the normal exam schedule. There is no university policy for exams in 100% on-line courses. The University's Registrar reports that he receives two to three requests each semester from colleges/departments for a room to hold a final exam for 100% on-line courses.

University of Toledo

At the University of Toledo hybrid courses are scheduled for final exam times that correspond to the in-person meeting time of the course. Completely on-line courses do not have pre-determined exam times but individual courses can set their exam times through the institution's learning management system (Blackboard).

Wright State

Final exams are scheduled at times that are based on the meeting time of the course. Final exams for courses, such as 100% on-line courses, that do not have specific meeting times are given at a time chosen by the instructor for the course. The university's Faculty Senate is considering the development of guidelines for the timing of final exams for 100% on-line courses. One possibility is the designation of specific time blocks for on-line courses in the university's final exam schedule.

Youngstown State

Youngstown State has no policy regarding the scheduling of final exams for on-line and hybrid courses.