



## Memorandum

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To: Provosts and Chief Academic Officers

From: Paul Sampson, Faculty Review/Revision Panel Lead, Ohio Transfer Module Natural Sciences Statewide Faculty Panel

Date: April 25, 2017

Subject: Announcement of the Endorsed Revised Guidelines for Ohio Transfer Module Natural Sciences Laboratory Courses

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Over the past several years, the Ohio Transfer Module (OTM) Natural Sciences Faculty Panel has extensively explored the nature of the natural sciences laboratory experience within the OTM. Widespread input from faculty across the state, both individually and through two statewide laboratory summits, ultimately led to the development by the OTM Natural Sciences Faculty Panel of revised language governing the laboratory requirement within the OTM natural science guidelines. Following support from the Ohio Articulation and Transfer Network Oversight Board in late 2016, these guidelines were distributed to the 36 public colleges and universities for possible endorsement. The panel appreciated the detailed feedback provided by many institutions and were pleased to see endorsement of the proposed language by ~70% of schools. Several minor editorial revisions have now resulted in finalized revised language governing the OTM Natural Science requirements (see attachment). Revisions include the reworking of Guideline 12 for added clarity and the addition of Guideline 13.

The OTM Natural Sciences panel carefully considered feedback from those schools who expressed not to endorse the new language. Among the 4 four-year institutions in this category, all four schools based their decision (in whole or in part) on their opposition to the use of virtual labs in satisfying the OTM Natural Sciences lab requirement (either broadly or in some disciplines). Among the 7 two-year institutions in this group, two schools opposed the use of virtual labs (in line with the four-year schools above), while the other five of these two-year institutions felt that the requirements for “synchronous safety feedback” and “effective interaction with the instructor at several points during each lab activity” were too restrictive. The panel’s assessment was that this divisive issue was never likely to garner complete consensus. However, over two-thirds of schools endorsed the proposed language. Of those who opposed it, there was an even split between schools who felt the guidelines were too restrictive and schools who felt they were too permissive. Thus, the panel believes that it has found the “sweet spot” and would not find better consensus through additional changes or discussion – changes in language that would satisfy one group would lead others to more strongly oppose those guidelines. Concerns remain that the language might be interpreted by some in an overly flexible manner. However, the ultimate authority of the panel members to approve or disapprove a submission based on their assessment of the submitted course materials should ensure that the spirit of the guidelines is met in all approved OTM courses.

As the OTM Natural Sciences Panel analyzed the new Guideline 13, the panel also noticed that Guideline 12 needed additional clarity that is consistent with the definition of a semester credit hour and the length of a semester term. The definition is available as part of the Ohio Articulation and Transfer Policy at <https://www.ohiohighered.org/transfer/policy/directives> (See Directive 2010-016).

Some important issues raised in the institutional feedback on the revised guidelines, including the need to develop clear writing expectations for OTM Natural Sciences courses and the desire to see the OTM Natural Sciences requirements assessed by Learning Outcomes, will be considered in the next phase of the panel's work.

I wish to express my thanks for the dedicated work of the OTM Natural Sciences Revision/Review Panel and for their leadership in revising and finalizing the proposed criteria.

The faculty members of the OTM Natural Sciences Revision/Review Panel included: Paul Sampson (Revision/Review Panel Lead, Kent State University), Suzanne Seleem (Central State University), Geza Varhegyi (Cuyahoga Community College), Harry Kestler (Lorain County Community College), Susan Hoffman (Miami University), Thomas Carr (Northwest State Community College), Virginia York (Rhodes State College), Claudia Bartley (Stark State College), Andrew Heckler (The Ohio State University), Robert Joel Duff (The University of Akron), Don Stierman (The University of Toledo), and Eva Enkelmann (University of Cincinnati).

### **Next Steps**

Courses which previously were approved as OTM Natural Sciences courses, and in which the laboratory component of the course will continue to be taught only via the delivery mode(s) described in the working syllabus included in the originally approved course submission, will retain their approval status. However, any previously approved OTM Natural Sciences courses in which the laboratory component will be taught via a different delivery mode will need to be submitted for re-approval. From this point, all OTM Natural Sciences courses that include a laboratory component will be submitted to the OTM Natural Sciences Faculty Panel for review whenever a new delivery mode (e.g., Distance Learning (DL) or virtual delivery) is planned. A separate detailed syllabus specific to each proposed new delivery mode should be provided for review. A cover memo provided by the institution should explicitly address how each specific version of the laboratory component of the course will satisfy all the OTM Natural Sciences laboratory requirements laid out in the revised guidelines, since this is likely to differ significantly depending on delivery mode. There are some disciplines (e.g., chemistry, microbiology) where there is strong faculty consensus across the state that traditional hands-on laboratory courses are difficult to replace with effective virtual or distance-learning (DL) experiences. The panel will consider the discipline in which a proposed DL/virtual lab course falls when evaluating whether it meets the OTM expectations for a lab course. In some areas, arguments provided in support of using an alternate delivery mode will need to be particularly compelling.

Should you have any questions about the revised guidelines or the information described in the next steps section, please feel free to contact me at [psampson@kent.edu](mailto:psampson@kent.edu) or (330) 672-0034.

### **Submission Tips for Your Faculty and OTM Coordinator from the OATN Team**

The first submission deadline under these revised guidelines will be October 2, 2017. Based on the above criteria, if your institution needs to resubmit a currently approved OTM Natural Sciences laboratory course, in order to be able to submit a new match through Course Equivalency Management System (CEMS), your faculty and OTM coordinator will need to: 1) verify the accuracy of course information in CEMS; 2) upload a relevant working syllabus for each mode of lab delivery that reflects on the revised guidelines while creating a new match; 3) upload a cover memo explicitly addressing how each specific version of the laboratory component of the course will satisfy all the OTM Natural Sciences laboratory requirements laid out in the revised guidelines; and 4) obtain descriptions/evidence on how students meet each of the OTM criteria from your faculty experts and enter it into CEMS during the match creation process. If you are resubmitting, please DO NOT create a new course in CEMS unless it is necessary. OATN would like you to reuse what's already in the system in order to maintain clean data. In order to update your course in CEMS, please complete a Course Inventory Template that is available under OTM Natural Sciences on our OTM website at <https://www.ohiohighered.org/transfer/transfermodule/learningoutcomes>. On the same site, you will find a submission preparation template as well. Once you complete the forms, please send the course inventory template to Michelle Blaney, Administrator for Articulation and Transfer Policy, at [mblaney@highered.ohio.gov](mailto:mblaney@highered.ohio.gov), along with a working syllabus, a cover memo/memos, and pre-req/co-req syllabus. She will update the course information on your behalf. Once you email her the course information, please proceed with the creation of a new OTM match in CEMS.

Attachment 1