**Office Hours Policy**

Custodian of Policy: Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs

Relevant Policy: CFR Title 34.B.VI.600.2 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/>) and HLC Glossary

Effective Date: Spring 2026

Last Review: Fall 2025

Next Review:

**Rationale and Scope**

Office hours are an integral part of how Minnesota State University Moorhead supports our students, and effective office hours promote student retention and graduation. The processes related to office hours should be consistent across the institution and, as much as possible, consistent with the modality of the course. This policy sets minimum standards for the frequency, modality, location, scheduling, and publishing of office hours. It also makes it clear that office hours must allow for the possibility of real-time interaction with the student at their request, even for asynchronous courses. Office hours that adhere to this policy also meet some of the requirements for regular and substantive interaction, as required by the federal policy referenced above.

**Definitions:**

**Office hours:** Office hours are times that faculty members reserve during the week to interact with individual students about academic matters outside of classroom time. All faculty members hold office hours, including fixed term and adjunct faculty members. Office hours can include responding to emails or other electronic messages from students, but office hours also include real-time interaction either in person or by electronic means if the student requests it. Office hours are held in every academic session, regardless of length, including summer and winter sessions.

**Policy**

**Frequency of office hours**

As indicated in the IFO Master Agreement, full-time faculty members are responsible for 10 office hours weekly for assisting students, at times and approved locations, posted at the faculty member’s office for faculty members with assigned offices. Approved locations include electronic or other modes of contact. A faculty member who is assigned to work from a remote location maintains equivalent interactive availability to students through electronic means, and if a faculty member’s assignment includes teaching at an off-campus site, a portion of the office hour obligation can be at that off-campus site.

At Minnesota State Moorhead, part-time faculty members who are teaching full-semester classes are responsible for office hours on a weekly basis that matches their overall credit load, up to a maximum of 10 hours a week. As an example, if a faculty member is teaching 6 credits a semester in full-term courses, they are responsible for holding 6 office hours a week.

Faculty members teaching shorter sessions are responsible for holding weekly office hours that are commensurate with the above guidelines and with the amount of material covered in a week, up to a maximum of 10 office hours a week. This includes sessions outside of the traditional academic year, such as Summer sessions and Winter sessions. To determine the minimum amount of office hours, the comparison is to a full-term traditional semester which is 15-16 weeks long. Some examples are given below.

* A faculty member teaching 3 credits in an 8-week session is responsible for holding 6 office hours a week.
* A faculty member teaching 6 credits in an 8-week session is responsible for holding 10 office hours a week.
* A faculty member teaching 3 credits in a 5-week session is responsible for holding 9 office hours a week.
* A faculty member teaching 3 credits in a 4-week session is responsible for holding 10 office hours a week.
* A faculty member teaching 3 credits in a 3-week session is responsible for holding 10 office hours a week.

**Modality and location of office hours**

Faculty members are encouraged to be flexible with the modality of their office hours to meet the needs of their students. However, at least 50% of the scheduled office hours must match the modality of the course when the course is either entirely on campus or entirely online (synchronous or asynchronous). For courses that have mixed modalities, including hybrid and hyflex, the modality of the office hours should meet the needs of the students enrolled in the class.

Regardless of modality, office hours must include the opportunity for real-time interaction with the student at the student’s request, including for students enrolled in asynchronous classes. This may include electronic means such as meeting on Zoom or Teams, or by telephone.

For in-person office hours, office hours must be scheduled in the faculty member’s office or another related location on campus, such as a lab or studio space.

**Emails or other electronic messages from students**

Responding to emails or other electronic messages from students is included in office hours. Such responses must be accomplished within two business days of the student’s email or message. Emails or electronic messages received from students during scheduled office hours should be responded to immediately unless the instructor is working in real time with other students during those office hours.

**Scheduling and publishing of office hours**

Office hours must be scheduled on a predictable basis. Office hours can not be by appointment only.

As indicated above, they are to be published at the faculty member’s office if the faculty member has an assigned office. As indicated in the Course Syllabus Policy, they must also be published on the course syllabus, and as indicated in the Course Online Presence Policy they must also be published in the campus Learning Management System (D2L Brightspace).

If office hours are updated during the semester, the updated information must be announced to the students and posted to the campus LMS and, if applicable, the faculty member’s office.

The published office hours must indicate the modality of the office hours.