

Dear Account Managers,

Thank you for recently visiting with us about electronic course fees (ECF). Please take time to review some important information regarding appropriate uses of ECF revenue.

Overview

Students in courses that are coded “fully distance education” (INT) or “hybrid/blended” (HYB) pay \$50 per SCH in additional fees. Students supported by certain third-party sponsors may receive a full or partial waiver from the ECF (i.e., blind/deaf students, former foster care students, Hazelwood recipients, etc.).

The Texas State University System Board of Regents approved ECF, in part, to ensure that fully online and hybrid courses receive the same level of support as traditionally delivered courses. Part of this support requires faculty members teaching online to: (1) participate in a professional development/training program; and (2) submit a Best Practices Checklist every three years for each online course taught. More information on professional development/training opportunities can be found on the [Online Teaching Certification](#) page.

Expectations

We encourage you to use your ECF funds in ways that conform to the stated purpose of the fee – specifically to develop, offer, and maintain distance and hybrid courses and programs – and where the use does not unnecessarily duplicate services already provided by the Office of Distance and Extended Learning (ODEL) and other critical stakeholder partners. Academic units that budget for ECF funds are fully responsible for all expenditures and must maintain records that clearly identify the relationship between these expenses and the development, maintenance, and delivery of distance education. ECF are used for faculty salaries and graduate student wages and to purchase computers, hardware, software, equipment, and other resources when directly linked to distance and hybrid courses.

ECF Budgets

In March prior to the start of the new fiscal year, estimates of ECF revenue will be provided by ODEL to those academic units where distance and hybrid courses are offered. Departments will also receive a list of faculty salaries likely eligible for inclusion as part of an ECF budget based on a review of recent historical teaching activity. A budget template will also be made available for use in this process. Using this information and the template, academic units should develop annual ECF expenditure budgets. In addition to expected expenses in the fiscal year, the unit’s ECF budget may include up to a 20 percent contingency line item. For FY21 budgets, the completed budget templates should be submitted to the AVPAA via ODEL by April 17, 2020. This timeline is consistent with the university’s budget development process.

Below are some guidelines to follow as you determine the proper use of ECF funds.

Faculty Salaries

The duties and responsibilities of all faculty paid by ECF funds must be directly tied to fully distance and/or hybrid courses and programs, and the cost distribution of ECF funded positions should align with the percentage of time occupied by those duties. Units should begin by allocating to ECF the faculty expenses of per-course and temporarily funded faculty positions engaged in teaching online and hybrid courses.

Dana R. Willett, Assistant Vice President for Distance and Extended Learning, is the point of contact for all questions related to an ECF. You may contact via email at drw134@txstate.edu or by phone at 512-245-7965.

Travel and Other M&O Expenses

All M&O expenses, including travel, must be directly attributable to the development, maintenance, and delivery of fully distance and hybrid courses. Appropriate expenses can include but are not limited to travel to an online teaching conference, membership in an online teaching or distance education professional organization, fees to complete certification in online teaching, and subscriptions for literature related to online teaching.

Advertising, marketing, and other student recruitment materials and activities may not be funded by ECF. Direct student financial assistance such as a scholarship is also disallowed.

Computer and Classroom Equipment

ECF may be used to purchase computer equipment and software for faculty who teach fully distance and hybrid courses. ECF may also be used to provide software, learning support, and other resources for students enrolled in fully distance or hybrid courses. Additionally, ECF may be used for public use computer equipment if the purchase expands student access to distance courses or improves a department's capacity to provide fully distance or hybrid courses.

Purchases of equipment and other one-time, non-salary expenses where the project cost is in excess of \$15,000 (e.g. DLP classroom enhancements) should be discussed with the AVPAA's office via the Assistant Vice President for ODEL before proceeding to budgeting. An online request form is available on the Distance and Extended Learning website (<https://www.distancelearning.txstate.edu/faculty/ECF-CapExp-Info.html>). Instructions with the form provide additional guidance. All projects of this type must submit the online form and, if approved, be included in the annual budget. This process ensures adequate communication with critical stakeholders such as Information Technology, facilities, and the Office of the University Registrar.

Other Resources

Graduate assistant and teaching assistant positions may be supported by ECF provided that the activities of these graduate students are directly related to the development, maintenance, and delivery of distance education. For example, teaching assistants may be employed to scale distance and hybrid course sections while preserving quality instruction in much the same way as is traditionally done in face-to-face teaching modes.

Funding staff positions using ECF should be treated as an unusual request. Proposed staff tasks should not duplicate the services provided by ODEL and other critical stakeholder partners, including The Graduate College, Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC), Undergraduate Admissions, Testing, Evaluation, and Measurement Center (TEMC), Disability Services, academic advising centers, or the Information Technology Assistance Center (ITAC). This includes support for instructional design, course development, many student support services, and faculty professional development.

Fiscal Year 2020

Regarding fiscal year 2020, we will be recommending faculty salaries that may be paid from ECF revenue. The process for providing feedback and approvals regarding which faculty expenses from your area are most appropriate will also be shared. Formal ECF budgets will begin with fiscal year 2021 as described above. More information is forthcoming.

Thank you for your continued efforts in ensuring high-quality distance education at Texas State! Do not hesitate to contact the Assistant Vice President for ODEL with any questions, and please let us know how we may continue to support your efforts in expanding distance education opportunities in your department.

Please share this email with faculty and staff who provide administrative support or delivery of distance education.

Sincerely,



Dana R. Willett
Assistant Vice President
Office of Distance and Extended Learning