

Policy and Procedure Statement 2.16
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Reviewer: Director, Distance and Extended Learning
& Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs

Distance Education Courses
and Programs
(56 paragraphs)

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Texas State University (Texas State) is committed to maintaining a well-designed and effective process for developing and implementing academic courses and programs, regardless of instructional modality. This process is guided by policies and procedures found in [Academic Affairs PPS 2.01, Academic Credit Courses: Additions, Changes and Deletions](#), and [Academic Affairs PPS 2.05, Academic Programs: Additions, Changes and Deletions](#). The purpose of this PPS is to provide definitions, expectations, and support for the development of courses and programs to be delivered via distance education.
2. Faculty members have primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum as implemented in a variety of instructional modalities. In conjunction with faculty, academic program coordinators, department chairs, school directors and college deans, the Division of Academic Affairs is responsible for coordinating the development and implementation of distance education at the university, maintaining compliance with federal, state, institutional policies and regulations related to distance education, identifying new distance education opportunities, and coordinating with units to ensure quality and continuous improvement.
3. This PPS conforms to the rules and regulations of The Texas State University System Board of Regents (BOR), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

DEFINITIONS

4. **Academic Program Coordinator:** For each major within a degree program, the academically qualified faculty member responsible for ensuring that each program contains essential curricular components, has appropriate content and pedagogy, and maintains currency in the field. The academic program coordinator for a distance education program should also have experience with distance education.
5. **Best Practices Checklist:** A self-assessment based on the *Principles of Good Practice for Academic Degree and Certificate Programs and Credit Courses Offered Electronically*, as well as on established quality measures for distance courses affirmed by national best practices, SACSCOC, and THECB. The Best

Practices Checklist must be completed every three years by faculty members teaching distance education courses and serves as an indicator that the highest quality instructional materials and services are delivered to students.

6. **Distance Education:** The formal educational process that occurs when students and faculty members are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50 percent) of instruction (interaction between students and faculty members and among students). Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. In Texas, online distance education, aka “electronic to individuals,” is divided into two categories, fully online and hybrid/blended.
7. **Distance Education Course:** An academic credit course in which a majority (more than 50 percent) of the instruction occurs when the student(s) and instructor(s) are not in the same physical setting. An online distance education course may be delivered synchronously, asynchronously, or a combination of the two. The two categories of online distance education courses are coded in the schedule of classes:
 - a. Fully Online Course: A course in which mandatory face-to-face sessions total no more than 15 percent of the instructional time and where 85 to 100 percent of the content is delivered online. Examples of face-to-face sessions include orientation, laboratory, exam review, or an in-person test.
 - b. Hybrid/Blended Course: A course in which more than 50 percent but less than 85 percent of the planned instruction occurs online.
8. **Distance Education Program** – An academic program in which a student may complete a majority (more than 50 percent) of the credit hours required for the program through distance education courses. Two categories of online distance education programs are defined:
 - a. Fully Online Program: A program in which 85 to 100 percent of the curriculum is delivered online.
 - b. Hybrid/Blended Program: A program in which more than 50 percent but less than 85 percent of the curriculum is delivered online.
9. **Electronic Delivery** – A mode of delivery for distance education courses and programs using electronic telecommunication technology systems. This includes broadcast TV, video, Internet, interactive video, or any combination of these systems.
10. **Faculty Member** - An instructor of record with the responsibility for teaching a particular academic course, regardless of that person’s academic rank, e. g., associate professor, senior lecturer, graduate teaching assistant, or lab assistant.

11. ***Principles of Good Practice for Academic Degree and Certificate Programs and Credit Courses Offered Electronically*** – Principles that define and measure quality in electronic, online and distance education, originally developed by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET), a program of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), which were endorsed by the THECB in 1997 and SACSCOC in 2000. The university’s Best Practices Checklist is largely based on these principles.
12. **Self-Paced Correspondence Course:** A distance education course through which Texas State provides instructional course materials by electronic transmission to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are self-supporting and are ineligible for financial aid.
13. **Self-Supporting Courses and Programs** - Academic credit courses and programs (formerly defined as extension courses or programs) whose semester credit hours are not submitted for formula funding.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND COMMITMENT

14. Distance education courses and programs are developed within the context of the university’s mission, goals, shared values, and University Plan.
15. Distance education at Texas State is guided by the following policies and best practices:
 - a. SACSCOC policy statement for [*Distance and Correspondence Education*](#);
 - b. THECB policy [*Approval of Distance Education, including Off-Campus Courses and Programs*](#);
 - c. [*Principles of Good Practice*](#) as defined by the Southern Regional Education Board for the Electronic Campus (SREC) and the THECB;
 - d. [*Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education Programs \(Online Learning\)*](#) adopted by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) and THECB; and
 - e. Online Learning Consortium’s [*Quality Scorecard for the Administration of Online Education Programs*](#).
16. Texas State provides training and other learning opportunities to enhance the additional skills required of faculty members teaching distance education courses. Training incorporates best practices and technology tools often used in distance education.

17. Texas State provides a course management system, technology infrastructure, and related services to support distance education, faculty, and students.
18. Texas State demonstrates that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using a number of methods: a secure login, pass code, proctored examinations, video verification, etc.
19. Texas State has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs, including [University PPS 01.04.31, Access to Student Records Pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974](#).
20. Texas State does not implement additional student fees associated with verification of student identity. Texas State implements an electronic course fee for students enrolled in fully online and/or hybrid/blended courses. A portion of this fee is distributed to academic units that teach online and hybrid/blended courses.
21. Texas State provides support services appropriate for distance learners, such as academic advising, career counseling, library and other learning resources, tutoring and financial aid.
22. Advertising, recruiting, and admissions information adequately and accurately represent the distance education programs, requirements, and services available to Texas State students.
23. Texas State is responsible for funding faculty, staff, services, and technological infrastructure to support distance education.
24. Texas State provides accurate enrollment figures for distance education courses and programs as required by the THECB and SACSCOC.
25. Texas State implements [Academic Affairs PPS 4.11, Instructional Contact Time and Academic Credit](#) to ensure that a credit hour associated with a distance education course represents the equivalent amount of student work and instructional time as a credit hour in any other modality. Expectations for a credit hour remain the same regardless of instruction mode:
 - a. For distance education faculty: Time spent online in direct instruction with asynchronous or synchronous online learning activities, computer-assisted lectures and lessons, multimedia interaction, discussions, and/or engagement for exams and assessments, combined with on-campus

meetings and other personal interaction, requires the same amount of engagement and work as expected of a faculty member teaching an equivalent on-campus course.

- b. For distance education students: Time spent online with assigned readings, discussion boards, tests, group work, recorded lessons, and other course components, combined with offline textbook readings, homework, papers, projects and other activities, requires the same amount of engagement and work as expected of a student in an equivalent on-campus course.

CURRICULUM AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

26. Texas State's faculty members have the primary role in the design, development, implementation and revision of distance education courses and programs.
27. Before being offered, distance education courses and programs are on the university's inventory of approved courses and programs.
28. The approval of distance education courses and programs follows standard processes used at Texas State.
29. Distance education courses and programs are appropriately integrated with the academic unit administering the corresponding on-campus courses and programs.
30. Distance education courses and programs are designed to meet the same quality standards and learning outcomes applicable to on-campus courses and programs.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF FACULTY

31. Faculty members who teach distance education courses are selected in the same manner as those teaching on-campus courses.
32. Faculty members for graduate-level distance education courses are approved in the same manner as graduate faculty for on-campus courses.
33. Academic program coordinators are assigned to distance education programs in the same manner as coordinators assigned to oversee on-campus programs. Typically, one academic program coordinator is assigned to a program delivered both on-campus and via distance education.
34. Faculty members who teach through distance education technologies are responsible for acquiring the skills necessary to present course subject matter

and related material effectively and to engage students on a regular and substantive basis.

35. Faculty members who teach distance education courses implement [Academic Affairs PPS 4.05, Maintenance and Improvement of Quality in Teaching](#) by completing a professional development program approved by the Distance and Extended Learning Steering Committee and a self-assessment of assigned distance education courses every three years using the university's Best Practices Checklist rubric.
36. Faculty members ensure that each distance education course and program results in collegiate-level learning outcomes appropriate and equivalent to on-campus courses and programs as demonstrated by syllabi, learning outcomes assessment, and related documentation.
37. Faculty members provide regular and substantive interaction with students enrolled in a distance education course. This interaction is instructor-driven, frequent, and consistent throughout the semester. Courses that do not meet this standard are considered self-paced correspondence courses. Faculty members use a variety of methods and resources appropriate to the course and discipline to facilitate contact with students. Among other strategies, interactions typically include:
 - a. Providing feedback to students
 - b. Making weekly announcements
 - c. Leading and facilitating discussion boards
 - d. Posting instructional materials
 - e. Moderating group work
 - f. Facilitating student-to-student communication
 - g. Providing real-time audio or video conferencing
 - h. Holding office hours
 - i. Sending emails
 - j. Holding review and tutoring sessions
 - k. Meeting face-to-face
38. In order to satisfy financial aid regulations associated with "last day of attendance," faculty members regularly monitor academically related activity of students enrolled in distance education courses, not just attendance, via log-ins to the course.
39. Faculty members ensure that distance education students are aware of the university's [Honor Code](#) and its applicability to distance education courses.
40. Academic units provide appropriate support for faculty members engaged in distance education course(s). Support may include course releases, training and development, hardware and software and other services and resources.

SUPPORT AND EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

41. Students enrolled in distance education satisfy requirements for admission to the university, to the program, and to academic credit courses, as are required of regular on-campus students applying to the same program. Some exceptions may occur with self-supporting courses and programs.
42. Students enrolled in distance education are provided with clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, technological competence and skills, availability of support services, and other policies. Students have the opportunity to assess their readiness for online learning by completing the university's [Online Learning Readiness Self-Assessment](#) instrument.
43. Students in distance education courses and programs are aware of the university's [Honor Code](#) and its applicability to distance education.
44. Students have access to specific 24/7 technical support, hardware, software and other services that support distance education.
44. Students have access to support services appropriate for distance learners, such as academic advising, career counseling, library resources, tutoring, and financial aid.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

45. Students enrolled in education courses have the opportunity to evaluate courses and provide feedback for course improvements.
46. Students in distance education programs have access to a procedure for resolving complaints, as noted in [University PPS 7.10.06, Procedures for Students Seeking or Reporting University-Related Complaints](#) and on the [Distance and Extended Learning website](#).
47. Faculty members who teach distance education courses are evaluated by equivalent standards, review, and approval procedures used by the institution to evaluate faculty members responsible for on-campus courses.
48. Academic program coordinators for a distance education program are evaluated by equivalent standards used by the institution to evaluate academic program coordinators for on-campus programs.
49. Programs offered through distance education are evaluated in the same manner as on-campus programs through the periodic academic review process outlined in [Academic Affairs PPS 2.13, Academic Program Review](#) or through

accreditation standards and processes, as appropriate.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION

50. Faculty members interested in the development of distance education courses should consult with the appropriate department chair/school director and curriculum committees. All new and revised courses are developed using the forms and process described in [Academic Affairs PPS 2.01, Academic Credit Courses: Additions, Changes and Deletions](#) and supported by this policy.
51. Faculty members interested in the development of distance education programs should consult with the appropriate department chair/school director, curriculum committees and the Office of Distance and Extended Learning. The development of program proposals is guided by this policy and [Academic Affairs PPS 2.05, Academic Programs: Additions, Changes and Deletions](#).
52. Distance education program proposals are prepared according to the:
 - a. expectations contained in this policy;
 - b. current format available from the Office of Distance and Extended Learning; and
 - c. current rules and expectations of THECB and SACSCOC.

PROGRAM PROPOSAL ROUTING

53. Depending on the scope of the proposed addition, change, or deletion, distance education program proposals require the following reviews:
 - a. Faculty
 - b. Office of Educator Preparation (for Educator Preparation Programs)
 - c. Department/School Curriculum Committee or Department/School Faculty
 - d. Department Chair/Program Director/School Director
 - e. College Curriculum Committee
 - f. College Council
 - g. College Dean
 - h. Dean of The Graduate College (if applicable)
 - i. Distance and Extended Learning Steering Committee
 - j. Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
 - k. University Curriculum Committee
 - l. Faculty Senate
 - m. Council of Academic Deans
 - n. Provost

- o. President
- p. Texas State University System Board of Regents
- q. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- r. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (if applicable)

54. After a program proposal has been fully approved, the Curriculum Coordinator makes all necessary additions, changes, and deletions in the undergraduate catalog and Student Information System. The Graduate College staff members make all necessary additions, changes, and deletions in the graduate catalog and Student Information System. The Curriculum Coordinator, undergraduate advising centers, and The Graduate College staff work with the Degree Works Coordinator to make all necessary additions, changes and deletions in the Degree Works system for degree programs.

55. In the event that a program proposal receives a negative vote or is denied at any level, the proposal will be returned to the originating faculty for review and possible revisions, and may be resubmitted for future consideration.

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

56. This PPS has been approved by the reviewer listed below and represents Texas State's Division of Academic Affairs policy and procedure from the date of this document until superseded.

Review Cycle: _____ Review Date: _____
 Reviewer: _____ Date: _____
 Approved: _____ Date: _____

Gene Bourgeois
 Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

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