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Lincoln University Distance Learning Policy

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Institutional Policy

- I. Institutional Policy
 - A. Purpose:

The purpose of Lincoln University Distance Learning Policy is to assure the highest quality delivery of distance learning instruction and that the procedures for approval of courses, selecting faculty, and assessment are designed accordingly.
 - B. Procedure for Approval:

The Curriculum, Bylaws and Educational Policies Committees will bring this document to the Faculty for approval followed by approval of the President and Board of Trustees.
 - C. Standards and Best Practices:

Distance learning activities must comply with best practices and standards as set forth by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (*Appendix A*) and that the courses and programs offered via distance learning meet the same quality standards as those that apply to campus based instruction.
 - D. Definition Distance Learning:

Distance learning is a formal educational process by which student and instructor are separated by time and/or location for some regularly scheduled instructional activities. It includes Synchronous Distance Learning in which instructor and student interact simultaneously but are separated by location, and Asynchronous Distance Learning in which instructor and student interact at different times. Hybrid courses that involve some regularly scheduled distance learning classes and some face-to-face classes are considered distance learning courses. Classes that utilize distance learning technologies but where all classes are face-to-face are not considered distance learning courses.

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Distance Learning includes interaction of instructor and student through the use of 1) the INTERNET and the University's course management system such as Desire2Learn, 2) interactive teleconferencing and videoconferencing, 3) audio/video media, and iv) emerging technologies . (*Appendix D*)

E. Oversight of Distance Learning Policy:

The Distance Learning Committee (*new ad hoc committee to be approved as a standing committee*) shall advise the Educational Policies Committee, the Curriculum Committee, the Assessment Committee, Technology Committee, and academic administration concerning distance learning courses and policies. It shall be composed of the Director of Academic Technology Support Center and two members of the Faculty with expertise in distance learning.

II. Curriculum and Instruction:

A. Academic Integrity of Distance Learning Courses:

Distance Learning courses must be equivalent to campus face-to-face courses in terms of 1) syllabi, 2) textbooks, 3) grading, 4) methods of assessment, and 5) expected student learning outcomes. Distance learning courses are subject to the same academic policies as campus-based courses.

B. Course and Program Approval:

The Vice-President for Academic Affairs and academic deans are responsible for overseeing the administration of distance learning activities; the Curriculum Committee reviews courses proposed for distance learning, the Assessment Committee reviews the assessment of distance learning courses, and the Educational Policies Committee reviews proposals for distance learning educational programs. The Distance Learning Committee is consulted for any review involving distance learning courses and programs and all proposals are submitted to the Faculty for final approval.

The process for approval of courses for distance learning is as follows: for new courses, the department submits a proposed course to the dean of their school. The dean reviews the course proposal with the school curriculum advisory committee and forwards it to the Curriculum Committee and the Distance Learning Committee. The Curriculum Committee jointly reviews the course with the Distance Learning Committee and submits it to the Faculty for final approval.

For existing courses seeking approval as distance learning courses, the department submits the course to the dean and Distance Learning Committee. The dean approves the course based on the recommendation of the Distance Learning Committee.

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New distance education programs are submitted to the dean of the school. The dean reviews the program proposal and forwards it to the Educational Policy and the Distance Learning Committee. These two committees jointly review the program and submit it to the Faculty for final approval.

C. Course Review:

Distance learning courses are reviewed annually by the dean through examination of course assessment reports (*new*). Results of this review are discussed with the Departments to ensure that appropriate changes are made where needed. The dean is responsible for ongoing monitoring of all courses in terms of faculty evaluation, student satisfaction, meeting student learning outcomes, and student retention. If necessary, the dean may submit a course to the Curriculum Committee/ Distance Learning Committee for review.

D. Faculty Interaction With Students:

Instructors are required to maintain office hours or to otherwise have planned interaction with students through other methods such as e-mail, phone, fax, chat, or discussion board. The specific requirements for planned interaction must be specified in the course syllabus and online, and must be equivalent to availability for face-to-face office consultations.

E. Faculty Responsibility:

The instructor is responsible for the course content, delivery of instruction, grading papers and exams, reporting grades, reviewing course materials and content, and all other matters related to the delivery of distance learning courses just as with campus face-to-face courses. The instructor is also responsible for timely communication with students and review of course effectiveness in a distance learning format.

F. Accessibility:

Students taking distance learning may request accommodations to meet their individual needs as a learner. Special arrangements may be made to deliver the course in an alternative format as needed.

G. Intellectual Property:

(Courses and course modules are often purchased and/or sold between Universities. Ownership of courses and course modules raises collective bargaining issues and so this matter is subject to LUC-AAUP and University negotiation).

H. Academic Integrity:

The University policy concerning academic integrity applies to distance learning courses. The University Policy on Academic Integrity is attached (*see Appendix C*). The academic integrity policy must be posted prominently on the course homepage.

I. Copyright Compliance:

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Instructors are expected to adhere to U.S. Title 17 copyright law. This includes the posting of copyrighted material on course management systems such as Desire2Learn or other online sites. Under the TEACH Act, it is permissible to make copyrighted materials available to students, providing that such materials (1) do not exceed an amount or duration comparable to that typically displayed in a live classroom setting; (2) are directly related to the course content; (3) are an integral part of the teaching content; (4) are intended solely for and are available only to students enrolled in the course; and (5) are retained only for the class session. Students must be notified that the materials may be subject to copyright protection.

J. Exam Policies:

Exams will normally be proctored by instructors or an authorized member of the faculty. Exams may instead be given via a course management system such as Desire2Learn but only if the process has been reviewed and approved by an academic dean in consultation with the Distance Learning Committee.

Exams are given as scheduled. The instructor is not obligated to repeat or remind students of tests, exams, and assignment dates. Students are responsible for acquiring notes and assignments from class or online.

K. Proctored exams for distance learning courses must meet the following requirements:

- Students must present a valid ID to the instructor or proctor of exams taken off-campus.
- Students must sign a register before receiving their test.
- Textbooks, cell phones, other electronic devices must be deposited in an area designated by the proctor of instructor and picked up after the exam.
- Students must sit in the area or seats designated by the instructor or proctor.
- Tests and exams must be completed in one session.
- Students must not talk with other students during the exam.
- Students are not allowed to leave the testing area during the test, unless approved by the instructor or proctor.
- Tests, exams, and all related materials must be turned in at the end of the exam session.
- Students must sign out after completing their test.

L. Rules for Proctors:

- Proctors shall not be degree-seeking students at Lincoln University.
- Proctors must remain in the room and cannot be relieved when monitoring an exam for the entire duration of the exam. Exceptions include safety and health emergencies.
- Proctors shall not be a social acquaintance of the student taking the exam.
- Proctors shall not be a co-worker or subordinate of a student taking the exam.

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- Proctors shall report cheating and all other forms of academic misconduct known to them as a result of their role as exam proctor.
- Proctors shall not assist students in any way during the exam.
- Proctors shall make all efforts to maintain an environment conducive to concentration during an exam.
- Proctors shall not allow any persons in the exam room except those taking the exams.
- Proctors and students may be monitored with cameras.

Faculty:

A. Faculty Qualifications:

Faculty members who teach distance learning courses must meet the same qualifications as other instructors at the University but must also be trained as indicated in part B.

B. Faculty Training:

Training for distance learning instruction includes training in Desire2Learn, teleconferencing and video conferencing technology, and other distance learning technologies. In addition, faculty training includes information on effective distance learning pedagogy. In order to teach distance learning courses, faculty members must be appropriately trained, as determined by the Distance Learning Committee. The Academic Technology Support Center is responsible for and oversees faculty training.

C. Faculty Evaluation:

Online or in class course evaluations are completed for distance learning courses just as they are for campus-based courses. The results are used to guide revision of courses. The results of these evaluations are given to the academic dean in the instructor's school and to the department chairperson.

D. Faculty Teaching Load:

Subject to LUC-AAUP negotiation.

E. Faculty Users Group:

Instructors in distance learning courses will meet periodically to share information and discuss ideas to enhance the effectiveness of courses being taught. This interaction may be online or face-to-face, or a combination of both.

F. Faculty Supervision and Support:

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Distance learning instructors are supervised by their department chairperson and dean, and distance learning programs and courses are integrated into the management framework of the University.

Student Support Services:

A. Student Services:

Students apply for admission, financial aid, and register for classes as do traditional students. Distance learning students receive real-time remote academic advising and distance learning orientation sessions. All academic support services offered to on-campus students are also offered to distance learning students at hours convenient for the non-resident student.

B. Student Activities:

Distance learning students may participate as part of the Student Government Association as well as in other student activities, clubs, and organizations.

C. Student Grievance Procedure:

Students may make formal complaints to the University through the same procedure as is indicated in the Student Handbook. A link to the University's Student Handbook will be posted on the course homepage.

D. Library Resources:

The University ensures that students participating in distance learning courses have access to adequate and appropriate learning resources. Students have access to the University Library and to online databases of the library. Distance learning students are given an access login and password for library services.

E. University Bookstore:

The University bookstore carries materials needed for distance learning courses and delivers all materials to non-resident students by mail at a reasonable cost and in a reasonable timeframe.

Distance Learning Facilities and Support Services:

A. Distance Learning Equipment and Facilities:

The University will ensure access to the necessary distance learning equipment and facilities, including adequate server space, necessary software and hardware, and two-way classroom facilities as required.

B. Institutional Technology Responsibility:

The University Institutional Technology Department provides the technical expertise necessary to maintain distance learning equipment and networks, including an online helpdesk for technical support for students and faculty.

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C. Academic Technology Support Center Responsibility:

Academic Technology Support Center Support provides training for faculty, staff, and students on a periodic basis, as needed and determined by the Distance Learning Committee. This training may be delivered online, face-to-face, through self-directed modules, or in a combination as appropriate to need and subject.

Planning and Evaluation:

A. Institutional Planning:

Distance learning is included in the overall planning process for the University as addressed in the University mission, strategic initiatives, goals, and objectives. Distance learning is assessed on the basis of the same guidelines as on-campus instructional activities. The results of assessment are used to make appropriate changes in distance learning courses, programs, and policy.

B. Educational Effectiveness:

Distance learning courses and programs are assessed to ensure their comparability with face-to-face campus programs. They are included in the University annual assessment as part of departmental and school assessment.

Appendix A

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

The most important item to consider when determining a school's credibility is to make sure that the school is accredited by appropriate organizations. Degrees from unaccredited schools do not have the same status that degrees from accredited schools do, something that many students discover too late.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), a division of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSACS), provides accreditation to universities and colleges in the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S., as well as in a few other select locations. States that the MSCHE serves include Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, New Jersey, and Maryland; it also serves Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The MSCHE, and other accrediting organizations, serve multiple purposes: to foster educational progress, to act as gatekeepers to maintain educational standards, and to provide a consistent yardstick by which to gauge an institution's effectiveness. The MSCHE evaluates schools as a whole, not merely programs within a school.

"The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that defines, maintains, and promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources."

The MSCHE enforces strict standards when it comes to accrediting degree-granting institutions, thereby reinforcing public trust in its evaluations. The organization is a voluntary membership association; colleges and universities are assessed through peer-to-peer reviews based on a dedication to continuous improvement.

The MSCHE defines educational excellence within the context of each member institution's mission; these vary depending on the types of degrees granted as well as other factors. The primary focus is on student learning and effective teaching, as well as each institution's responsiveness to evolving global and societal needs. The MSCHE is committed to maintaining a transparent accreditation process, wherein each member institution's status is clearly defined.

Through the accreditation process, colleges and universities are able to regulate and improve upon their offerings, as well as benefit from interactions with peer institutions. Students who make sure their school of choice is accredited will benefit from this drive to improve educational effectiveness.

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools is recognized by the United States Department of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.

Sources and Further Information:

<http://www.guidetoonlineschools.com/accreditation/regional-accreditation#ixzz1LZu87rjt>

<http://www.msche.org/publications/Guidelines-for-the-Evaluation-of-Distance-Education>

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Appendix B

APPLICATION FORM FOR THE APPROVAL OF A DISTANCE LEARNING COURSE

Course Prefix: _____

Course Title: _____

School: _____

Submitted by:

Department: _____

Instructor: _____

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____

Submission Checklist:

___ Course Syllabus

___ Completed Application Form

Submit the completed application and a copy of the proposed syllabus to the dean of your school. Make sure all questions are answered.

1. Is this a new course? Yes No
2. Is this an existing course converted to distance learning format? Yes No
3. Will students have an orientation for the course? Yes No
4. Will the orientation include the following?
 - ___ An explanation of the technological requirements for the course? Yes No
 - ___ An explanation of the student learning outcomes for the course? Yes No
5. Is an outline of the information provided to students attached? Yes No
6. Will the technological requirements for the student be fully explained? Yes No
7. Briefly explain what are the technological requirements for the students (for example, INTERNET access and broadband internet connection):

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8. Is the course homepage established in Desire2Learn? Yes No
9. What items are included in the course home page?
10. Is the syllabus included on the homepage? Yes No
11. Are student learning outcomes for the courses included on the syllabus? Yes No
12. Is the content of the online course the same as the content of the on-campus course?
Yes No
13. Are the course assignments feasible, useful, and appropriate for this course as a distance learning course? Yes No
14. Briefly explain how timely feedback will be provided to students.
15. Will there be opportunities for student-to-student interaction such as chat rooms, bulletin boards, etc.? Yes No (if No, explain why such interaction is not needed).
16. What evaluation methods will be used?
17. Are these methods appropriate to distance learning? Yes No
18. How will students evaluate the course?
19. Does the method of course evaluation preserve student anonymity? Yes No
20. What will assure that students are doing their own work?
21. List the instructor's distance learning training (workshops, courses, seminars, mentoring sessions).
22. How will the course be assessed?

Appendix C

Academic Integrity

FACULTY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Approved by the Faculty of Lincoln University

Students are responsible for proper conduct and integrity in all of their scholastic work. They must follow a professor's instructions when completing tests, homework, and laboratory reports, and must ask for clarification if the instructions are not clear. In general, students should not give or receive aid when taking exams, or exceed the time limitations specified by the professor. In seeking the truth, in learning to think critically, and in preparing for a life of constructive service, honesty is imperative. Honesty in the classroom and in the preparation of papers is therefore expected of all students. Each student has the responsibility to submit work that is uniquely his or her own. All of this work must be done in accordance with established principles of academic integrity.

1. Acts of Academic Dishonesty (Cheating)

Specific violations of this responsibility include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Copying, offering and/or receiving unauthorized assistance or information in examinations, tests, quizzes; in the writing of reports, assigned papers, or special assignments, as in computer programming; and in the preparation of creative works (i.e. music, studio work, art).
- The fabrication or falsification of data, results, or sources for papers or reports.
- The use of unauthorized materials and/or persons during testing.
- The unauthorized possession of tests or examinations.
- The physical theft, duplication, unauthorized distribution, use or sale of tests, examinations, papers, or computer programs.
- Any action which destroys or alters the work of another student.
- Tampering with grades, grade books or otherwise attempting to alter grades assigned by the instructor.
- The multiple submission of the same paper or report for assignments in more than one course without the prior written permission of each instructor.

2. Plagiarism

If a student represents "another person's ideas or scholarship as his/her own," that student is committing an act of plagiarism. The most common form of plagiarism among college students is the unintentional use of others' published ideas in their own work, and representing these ideas as their own by neglecting to acknowledge the sources of such materials. Students are expected to cite all sources used in the preparation of written work, including examinations.

It is each student's responsibility to find out exactly what each of his/her professors expects in terms of acknowledging sources of information on papers, exams, and assignments. It is the responsibility of each faculty person to state clearly in the syllabus for the course all expectations pertaining to academic integrity and plagiarism. sanctions peculiar to the course should also be explained in the syllabus.

3. Sanctions

A: Warning

A written notice that repetitions of misconduct will result in more severe disciplinary action. The warning becomes part of the student's file in the Office of the Registrar and, if there is no other example of misconduct, is removed at the time of graduation.

B: Failure for project (exam, paper, experiment).

C: Failure of course.

For serious and repeat offenses, the University reserves the right to suspend or expel.

Imposition of Sanctions

First Offense - A and/or B

Second and Subsequent offenses - B or C

Expectations and sanctions will be explained in every syllabus. Students failing a course because of an instance of academic dishonesty may not drop the course. The student may appeal a charge of academic dishonesty within ten days of receiving notice of same. The appeal will be heard by an Academic Hearing Board (AHB) consisting of the chairs of each division of study (or their designees). Files on violations of this academic integrity code will be kept in the Office of the Registrar.

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Appendix D
Best Practices for Distance Learning

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**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730

Voice: (781) 271-0022

Fax: (781) 271-0950

Web: <http://cihe.neasc.org>

**Statement of
Best Practices for
Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs**



Introduction

These *Best Practices* have been developed by the eight regional accrediting commissions in response to the emergence of technologically mediated instruction offered at a distance as an important component of higher education. Expressing in detail what currently constitutes best practice in distance education they seek to address concerns that regional accreditation standards are not relevant to the new distributed learning environments, especially when those environments are experienced by off-campus students. The *Best Practices*, however, are not new evaluative criteria. Rather they explicate how the well-established essentials of institutional quality found in regional accreditation standards are applicable to the emergent forms of learning; much of the detail of their content would find application in any learning environment. Taken together those essentials reflect the values which the regional commissions foster among their affiliated colleges and universities:

- that education is best experienced within a community of learning where competent professionals are actively and cooperatively involved with creating, providing, and improving the instructional program;
- that learning is dynamic and interactive, regardless of the setting in which it occurs;
- that instructional programs leading to degrees having integrity are organized around substantive and coherent curricula which define expected learning outcomes;
- that institutions accept the obligation to address student needs related to, and to provide the resources necessary for, their academic success;
- that institutions are responsible for the education provided in their name;
- that institutions undertake the assessment and improvement of their quality, giving particular emphasis to student learning;
- that institutions voluntarily subject themselves to peer review.

These *Best Practices* are meant to assist institutions in planning distance education activities and to provide a self-assessment framework for those already involved. For the regional accrediting associations they constitute a common understanding of those elements which reflect quality distance education programming. As such they are intended to inform and facilitate the evaluation policies and processes of each region.

Developed to reflect current best practice in electronically offered programming, these *Best Practices* were initially drafted by the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (www.wiche.edu/telecom/), an organization recognized for its substantial expertise in this field. Given the rapid pace of change in distance education, these *Best Practices* are necessarily a work in progress. They will be subject to periodic review by the regionals, individually and collectively, who welcome comments and suggestions for their improvement.

Overview to the *Best Practices*

These *Best Practices* are divided into five separate components, each of which addresses a particular area of institutional activity relevant to distance education. They are:

1. Institutional Context and Commitment
2. Curriculum and Instruction
3. Faculty Support
4. Student Support
5. Evaluation and Assessment

Each component begins with a general statement followed by individual numbered paragraphs addressing specific matters describing those elements essential to quality distance education programming. These in turn are followed by protocols in the form of questions designed to assist in determining the existence of those elements when reviewing either internally or externally distance education activities.

* Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools – info@msache.org; Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, New England Association of Schools and Colleges – cihe@neasc.org; Commission on Technical and Career Institutions, New England Association of Schools and Colleges – rmandeville@neasc.org; Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools – info@ncacihe.org; Commission on Colleges, The Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges – pjarmold@cofnasc.org; Commission on Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – webmaster@sacscoc.org; Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges – accjc@aol.com; Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges – wascsr@wascsenior.org.

The Best Practices and Protocols

1. Institutional Context and Commitment

Electronically offered programs both support and extend the roles of educational institutions. Increasingly they are integral to academic organization, with growing implications for institutional infrastructure.

1a. In its content, purposes, organization, and enrollment history if applicable, the program is consistent with the institution's role and mission.

- What is the evidence that the program is consistent with the role and mission of the institution including its goals with regard to student access?
- Is the institution fulfilling its stated role as it offers the program to students at a distance, or is the role being changed?

1b. It is recognized that a healthy institution's purposes change over time. The institution is aware of accreditation requirements and complies with them. Each accrediting commission has established definitions of what activities constitute a substantive change that will trigger prior review and approval processes. The appropriate accreditation commission should be notified and consulted whether an electronically offered program represents a major change. The offering of distributed programs can affect the institution's educational goals, intended student population, curriculum, modes or venue of instruction, and can thus have an impact on both the institution and its accreditation status.

- Does the program represent a change to the institution's stated mission and objectives?
- Does the program take the college or university beyond its "institutional boundaries," e.g., students to be served, geographic service area, locus of instruction, curriculum to be offered, or comparable formally stated definitions of institutional purpose?
- Is the change truly significant?

1c. The institution's budgets and policy statements reflect its commitment to the students for whom its electronically offered programs are designed.

- How is the student assured that the program will be sustained long enough for the cohort to complete it?
- How are electronically offered programs included in the institution's overall budget structure?
- What are the institution's policies concerning the establishment, organization, funding, and management of electronically offered programs? Do they reflect ongoing commitment to such programs? (See also item **1e** below.)

1d. The institution assures adequacy of technical and physical plant facilities including appropriate staffing and technical assistance, to support its electronically offered programs.

- Do technical and physical plant facilities accommodate the curricular commitments reviewed below, e.g., instructor and student interaction (2e), and appropriateness to the curriculum (2a)?
- Whether facilities are provided directly by the institution or through contractual arrangements, what are the provisions for reliability, privacy, safety and security?
- Does the institution's budget plan provide for appropriate updating of the technologies employed?
- Is the staffing structure appropriate (and fully qualified) to support the programs now operational and envisioned in the near term?

1e. The internal organizational structure which enables the development, coordination, support, and oversight of electronically offered programs will vary from institution to institution. Ordinarily, however, this will include the capability to:

- ❖ Facilitate the associated instructional and technical support relationships.
- ❖ Provide (or draw upon) the required information technologies and related support services.
- ❖ Develop and implement a marketing plan that takes into account the target student population, the technologies available, and the factors required to meet institutional goals.
- ❖ Provide training and support to participating instructors and students.
- ❖ Assure compliance with copyright law.
- ❖ Contract for products and outsourced services.
- ❖ Assess and assign priorities to potential future projects.
- ❖ Assure that electronically offered programs and courses meet institution-wide standards, both to provide consistent quality and to provide a coherent framework for students who may enroll in both electronically offered and traditional on-campus courses.
- ❖ Maintain appropriate academic oversight.
- ❖ Maintain consistency with the institution's academic planning and oversight functions, to assure congruence with the institution's mission and allocation of required resources.
- ❖ Assure the integrity of student work and faculty instruction.

Organizational structure varies greatly, but it is fundamental to the success of an institution's programs. The points above can be evaluated by variations of the following procedure and inquiries:

- Is there a clear, well-understood process by which an electronically offered program evolves from conception to administrative authorization to implementation? How is the need for the program determined? How is it assigned a priority among the other potential programs? Has the development of the program incorporated appropriate internal consultation and integration with existing planning efforts?

- Track the history of a representative project from idea through implementation, noting the links among the participants including those responsible for curriculum, those responsible for deciding to offer the program electronically, those responsible for program/course design, those responsible for the technologies applied, those responsible for faculty and student support, those responsible for marketing, those responsible for legal issues, those responsible for budgeting, those responsible for administrative and student services, and those responsible for program evaluation. Does this review reveal a coherent set of relationships?
- In the institution's organizational documentation, is there a clear and integral relationship between those responsible for electronically offered programs and the mainstream academic structure?
- How is the organizational structure reflected in the institution's overall budget?
- How are the integrity, reliability, and security of outsourced services assured?
- Are training and technical support programs considered adequate by those for whom they are intended?
- What are the policies and procedures concerning compliance with copyright law?
- How does program evaluation relate to this organizational and decision-making structure?

1f. In its articulation and transfer policies the institution judges courses and programs on their learning outcomes, and the resources brought to bear for their achievement, not on modes of delivery.

- What are the institution's policies concerning articulation and transfer? What are decisions regarding transfer of academic credit based upon?
- Is the institution internally consistent in its handling of articulation and transfer issues, or do different divisions have different policies and procedures?

1g. The institution strives to assure a consistent and coherent technical framework for students and faculty. When a change in technologies is necessary, it is introduced in a way that minimizes the impact on students and faculty.

- When a student or instructor proceeds from one course or program to another, is it necessary to learn another software program or set of technical procedures?
- When new software or systems are adopted, what programs/processes are used to acquaint instructors and students with them?

1h. The institution provides students with reasonable technical support for each educational technology hardware, software, and delivery system required in a program.

- Is a help desk function realistically available to students during hours when it is likely to be needed?
- Is help available for all hardware, software, and delivery systems specified by the institution as required for the program?
- Does the help desk involve person-to-person contact for the student? By what means, e.g., email, phone, fax?
- Is there a well-designed FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) service, online and/or by phone menu or on-demand fax?

1i. The selection of technologies is based on appropriateness for the students and the curriculum. It is recognized that availability, cost, and other issues are often involved, but program documentation should include specific consideration of the match between technology and program.

- How were the technologies chosen for this institution's programs?
- Are the technologies judged to be appropriate (or inappropriate) to the program(s) in which they are used?
- Are the intended students likely to find their technology costs reasonable?
- What provisions have been made to assure a robust and secure technical infrastructure, providing maximum reliability for students and faculty?
- Given the rapid pace of change in modern information technology, what policies or procedures are in place to keep the infrastructure reasonably up-to-date?

1j. The institution seeks to understand the legal and regulatory requirements of the jurisdictions in which it operates, e.g., requirements for service to those with disabilities, copyright law, state and national requirements for institutions offering educational programs, international restrictions such as export of sensitive information or technologies, etc.

- Does institutional documentation indicate an awareness of these requirements and that it has made an appropriate response to them?

2. Curriculum and Instruction

Methods change, but standards of quality endure. The important issues are not technical but curriculum-driven and pedagogical. Decisions about such matters are made by qualified professionals and focus on learning outcomes for an increasingly diverse student population.

2a. As with all curriculum development and review, the institution assures that each program of study results in collegiate level learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded by the institution, that the electronically offered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete, and that such programs leading to undergraduate degrees include general education requirements.

- What process resulted in the decision to offer the program?
- By what process was the program developed? Were academically qualified persons responsible for curricular decisions?
- How were “learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded” established? Does the program design involve the demonstration of such skills as analysis, comprehension, communication, and effective research?
- Is the program “coherent and complete?”
- Are related instructional materials appropriate and readily accessible to students?

2b. Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decisions concerning program curricula and program oversight. It is recognized that traditional faculty roles may be unbundled and/or supplemented as electronically offered programs are developed and presented, but the substance of the program, including its presentation, management, and assessment are the responsibility of people with appropriate academic qualifications.

- What were the academic qualifications of those responsible for curricular decisions, assessment, and program oversight?
- What are the academic qualifications of those presenting and managing the program?
- If the principal instructor is assisted by tutors or student mentors, what are their qualifications?
- Are these qualifications considered appropriate to the responsibilities of these persons?

2c. In designing an electronically offered degree or certificate program, the institution provides a coherent plan for the student to access all courses necessary to complete the program, or clearly notifies students of requirements not included in the electronic offering. Hybrid programs or courses, mixing electronic and on-campus elements, are designed to assure that all students have access to appropriate services. (See also **2d** below, concerning program elements from consortia or contract services.)

- How are students notified of program requirements?
- If the institution relies on other providers to offer program-related courses, what is the process by which students learn of these courses?
- Is the total program realistically available to students for whom it is intended? For example, is the chosen technology likely to be accessible by the target student population? Can target students meet the parameters of program scheduling?

2d. Although important elements of a program may be supplied by consortial partners or outsourced to other organizations, including contractors who may not be accredited, the responsibility for performance remains with the institution awarding the degree or certificate. It is the institution in which the student is enrolled, not its suppliers or partners, that has a contract with the student. Therefore, the criteria for selecting consortial partners and contractors, and the means to monitor and evaluate their work, are important aspects of the program plan. In considering consortial agreements, attention is given to issues such as assuring that enhancing service to students is a primary consideration and that incentives do not compromise the integrity of the institution or of the educational program. Consideration is also given to the effect of administrative arrangements and cost-sharing on an institution's decision-making regarding curriculum.

Current examples of consortial and contractual relationships include:

- ❖ Faculty qualifications and support.
- ❖ Course material:
 - Courses or course elements acquired or licensed from other institutions.
 - Courses or course elements provided by partner institutions in a consortium.
 - Curricular elements from recognized industry sources, e.g., Microsoft or Novell certification programs.
 - Commercially produced course materials ranging from textbooks to packaged courses or course elements.
- ❖ Course management and delivery:
 - WebCT, Blackboard, College, etc.
- ❖ Library-related services
 - Remote access to library services, resources, and policies.
 - Provision of library resources and services, e.g., online reference services, document delivery, print resources, etc.
- ❖ Bookstore services.
- ❖ Services providing information to students concerning the institution and its programs and courses.
- ❖ Technical services:
 - Server capacity.
 - Technical support services, including help desk services for students and faculty.
- ❖ Administrative services:
 - Registration, student records, etc.
- ❖ Services related to orientation, advising, counseling, or tutoring.
- ❖ Online payment arrangements.
- ❖ Student privacy considerations.

Evaluation of contract services and consortial arrangements requires a review of pertinent formal agreements. Note, for example:

- Are performance expectations defined in contracts and agreements? Are conditions for contract termination defined?
- Are there adequate quality control and curriculum oversight provisions in agreements concerning courseware?
- Are there appropriate system reliability and emergency backup guarantees in agreements concerning technology services?
- What are the provisions for protection of confidentiality and privacy in services involving personal information?
- What are the assurances concerning qualifications and training of persons involved in contact with students? These services may range from help desk to tutoring or counseling.
- Consortial agreements introduce additional elements to be evaluated:
 - How are curriculum-related decisions made by the consortium, noting the requirement that “Academically qualified persons participate fully in the decisions regarding program curricula and program oversight?”
 - Is the institution fully engaged in the consortial process, recognizing the decision-making responsibilities of shared ownership?
 - What are the financial arrangements among the parties to the consortial agreement? What are the implications of these arrangements for institutional participation and management?
 - What entity awards the certificates and degrees resulting from the consortial program?
 - What articulation and transfer arrangements are applicable to courses offered via the consortium? Did these arrangements involve specific curricular decisions by the academic structures of the participating institutions? Were they prescribed in a state or system decision?
 - To what extent are the administrative and student services arrangements of the consortium focused on the practical requirements of the student?

2e. The importance of appropriate interaction (synchronous or asynchronous) between instructor and students and among students is reflected in the design of the program and its courses, and in the technical facilities and services provided.

- What provisions for instructor-student and student-student interaction are included in the program/course design and the course syllabus? How is appropriate interaction assured?
- Is instructor response to student assignments timely? Does it appear to be appropriately responsive?
- What technologies are used for program interaction (e.g., email, telephone office hours, phone conferences, voicemail, fax, chat rooms, Web-based discussions, computer conferences and threaded discussions, etc.)?
- How successful is the program’s interactive component, as indicated by student and instructor surveys, comments, or other measures?

3. Faculty Support

As indicated above, faculty roles are becoming increasingly diverse and reorganized. For example, the same person may not perform both the tasks of course development and direct instruction to students. Regardless of who performs which of these tasks, important issues are involved.

3a. In the development of an electronically offered program, the institution and its participating faculty have considered issues of workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property resulting from the program, and the implications of program participation for the faculty member's professional evaluation processes. This mutual understanding is based on policies and agreements adopted by the parties.

- Have decisions regarding these matters been made in accordance with institutional or system processes customarily used to address comparable issues?

3b. The institution provides an ongoing program of appropriate technical, design, and production support for participating faculty members.

- What support services are available to those responsible for preparing courses or programs to be offered electronically? What support services are available to those faculty members responsible for working directly with students?
- Do participating faculty members consider these services to be appropriate and adequate?
- Does the staff include qualified instructional designers? If so, do they have an appropriate role in program and course development?

3c. The institution provides to those responsible for program development the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the program's technologies, including potential changes in course design and management.

- What orientation and training programs are available? Are there opportunities for ongoing professional development?
- Is adequate attention paid to pedagogical changes made possible and desirable when information technologies are employed?
- Given the staff available to support electronically offered programs, are the potential changes in course design and management realistically feasible?
- Do those involved consider these orientation and training programs to be appropriate and adequate?

3d. The institution provides to those responsible for working directly with students the orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the technologies for these purposes, including strategies for effective interaction.

- What orientation and training programs are available? Are there opportunities for ongoing professional development? Do those involved consider these orientation and training programs to be appropriate and adequate?

4. Student Support

Colleges and universities have learned that the twenty-first century student is different, both demographically and geographically, from students of previous generations. These differences affect everything from admissions policy to library services. Reaching these students, and serving them appropriately, are major challenges to today's institutions.

4a. The institution has a commitment – administrative, financial, and technical – to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable all admitted students to complete a degree or certificate in a publicized timeframe.

- Do course and program schedules reflect an appropriate commitment to the program's students?
- Do budget, faculty, and facilities assignments support that commitment?

4b. Prior to admitting a student to the program, the institution:

- ❖ Ascertains by a review of pertinent records and/or personal review that the student is qualified by prior education or equivalent experience to be admitted to that program, including in the case of international students, English language skills.
- ❖ Informs the prospective student concerning required access to technologies used in the program.
- ❖ Inform the prospective student concerning technical competence required of students in the program.
- ❖ Informs the prospective student concerning estimated or average program costs (including costs of information access) and associated payment and refund policies.
- ❖ Informs the prospective student concerning curriculum design and the time frame in which courses are offered, and assists the student in understanding the nature of the learning objectives.
- ❖ Informs the prospective student of library and other learning services available to support learning and the skills necessary to access them.
- ❖ Informs the prospective student concerning the full array of other support services available from the institution.
- ❖ Informs the prospective student about arrangements for interaction with the faculty and fellow students.
- ❖ Assists the prospective student in understanding independent learning expectations as well as the nature and potential challenges of learning in the program's technology-based environment.
- ❖ Informs the prospective student about the estimated time for program completion.

To evaluate this important component of admission and retention, it is appropriate to pursue the following:

- How do potential students learn about the electronically offered program? Is the information provided sufficient, fair, and accurate?
- How are students informed about technology requirements and required technical competence?
- How are students informed about costs and administrative arrangements?
- What information and/or advice do students receive about the nature of learning and the personal discipline required in an anytime/anywhere environment?
- What criteria are used to determine the student's eligibility for admission to the program?
- What steps are taken to retain students in the program?
- What is the history of student retention in this program?

4c. The institution recognizes that appropriate services must be available for students of electronically offered programs, using the working assumption that these students will not be physically present on campus. With variations for specific situations and programs, these services, which are possibly coordinated, may include:

- ❖ Accurate and timely information about the institution, its programs, courses, costs, and related policies and requirements.
- ❖ Pre-registration advising.
- ❖ Application for admission.
- ❖ Placement testing.
- ❖ Enrollment/registration in programs and courses.
- ❖ Financial aid, including information about policies and limitations, information about available scholarships, processing of applications, and administration of financial aid and scholarship awards.
- ❖ Secure payment arrangements.
- ❖ Academic advising.
- ❖ Timely intervention regarding student progress.
- ❖ Tutoring.
- ❖ Career counseling and placement.
- ❖ Academic progress information, such as degree completion audits.
- ❖ Library resources appropriate to the program, including, reference and research assistance; remote access to data bases, online journals and full-text resources; document delivery services; library user and information literacy instruction, reserve materials; and institutional agreements with local libraries.

4c. continued

- ❖ Training in information literacy including research techniques.
- ❖ Bookstore services: ordering, secure payment, and prompt delivery of books, course packs, course-related supplies and materials, and institutional memorabilia.
- ❖ Ongoing technical support, preferably offered during evenings and weekends as well as normal institutional working hours.
- ❖ Referrals for student learning differences, physical challenges, and personal counseling.
- ❖ Access to grievance procedures.

Within the context of the program, the requirements of the program's students, and the type of institution, review each of the services and procedures listed above from the standpoint of a student for whom access to the campus is not feasible.

- Are the institution's policies and procedures appropriate and adequate from the standpoint of the distant student?
- If not all appropriate resources are routinely available at a distance, what arrangements has the institution made to provide them to distant students?
- Are these services perceived by distant students to be adequate and appropriate?
- Are these services perceived to be adequate and appropriate by those responsible for providing them? What modifications or improvements are planned?

4d. The institution recognizes that a sense of community is important to the success of many students, and that an ongoing, long-term relationship is beneficial to both student and institution. The design and administration of the program takes this factor into account as appropriate, through such actions as encouraging study groups, providing student directories (with the permission of those listed), including off-campus students in institutional publications and events, including these students in definitions of the academic community through such mechanisms as student government representation, invitations to campus events including graduation ceremonies, and similar strategies of inclusion.

- What strategies and practices are implemented by this institution to involve distant students as part of an academic community? By their statements and actions, do administrators and participating faculty members communicate a belief that a sense of academic community is important?
- How are the learning needs of students enrolled in electronically offered programs identified, addressed, and linked to educational objectives and learning outcomes, particularly within the context of the institution's definition of itself as a learning community.
- Do representative students feel that they are part of a community, or that they are entirely on their own?

5. Evaluation and Assessment

Both the assessment of student achievement and evaluation of the overall program take on added importance as new techniques evolve. For example, in asynchronous programs the element of seat time is essentially removed from the equation. For these reasons, the institution conducts sustained, evidence-based and participatory inquiry as to whether distance learning programs are achieving objectives. The results of such inquiry are used to guide curriculum design and delivery, pedagogy, and educational processes, and may affect future policy and budgets and perhaps have implications for the institution's roles and mission.

5a. As a component of the institution's overall assessment activities, documented assessment of student achievement is conducted in each course and at the completion of the program, by comparing student performance to the intended learning outcomes.

- How does the institution review the effectiveness of its distance education programs to assure alignment with institutional priorities and educational objectives?
- How does evaluated student performance compare to intended learning outcomes?
- How is student performance evaluated?
- How are assessment activities related to distance learning integrated into the institution's broader program of assessment?

5b. When examinations are employed (paper, online, demonstrations of competency, etc.), they take place in circumstances that include firm student identification. The institution otherwise seeks to assure the integrity of student work.

- If proctoring is used, what are the procedures for selecting proctors, establishing student identity, assuring security of test instruments, administering the examinations, and assuring secure and prompt evaluation?
- If other methods are used to identify those who take the examination, how is identification firmly established? How are the conditions of the examination (security, time limits, etc.) controlled?
- Does the institution have in place effective policies and procedures to assure the integrity of student work?

5c. Documented procedures assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.

- What procedures assure the security of personal information?
- How is personal information protected while providing appropriate dissemination of the evaluation results?

5d. Overall program effectiveness is determined by such measures as:

- ❖ The extent to which student learning matches intended outcomes, including for degree programs both the goals of general education and the objectives of the major.
- ❖ The extent to which student intent is met.
- ❖ Student retention rates, including variations over time.
- ❖ Student satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys.
- ❖ Faculty satisfaction, as measured by regular surveys and by formal and informal peer review processes.
- ❖ The extent to which access is provided to students not previously served.
- ❖ Measures of the extent to which library and learning resources are used appropriately by the program's students.
- ❖ Measures of student competence in fundamental skills such as communication, comprehension, and analysis.
- ❖ Cost effectiveness of the program to its students, as compared to campus-based alternatives.

Although not all of these measures will be applicable equally at every institution, appropriate evidence is generally available through:

- Evaluations of student performance (see **5a** above).
- Review of student work and archive of student activities, if maintained, in the course of program reviews.
- Results from students' routine end-of-course and -program evaluations.
- Student surveys of overall satisfaction with the experience of electronically offered programs; surveys reflecting student cost trade-offs experienced as they pursued the program.
- Faculty surveys, peer reviews of programs, and discussion groups.
- Documentation concerning access provided to students not previously served, through a combination of enrollment records and student surveys.
- Usage records concerning use of library and learning resources, and instructor assignments that require such usage.
- Assessment of students' fundamental skills in communication, comprehension, and analysis. How have the institution's usual measures of these skills been adapted to assess distant students?
- Documentation of the institution's analyses that relate costs to goals of the program.

5e. The institution conducts a program of continual self-evaluation directed toward program improvement, targeting more effective uses of technology to improve pedagogy, advances in student achievement of intended outcomes, improved retention rates, effective use of resources, and demonstrated improvements in the institution's service to its internal and external constituencies. The program and its results are reflected in the institution's ongoing self-evaluation process and are used to inform the further plans of the institution and those responsible for its academic programs.

- How is the institution's ongoing program of assessment and improvement developed and conducted?
- Does it cover the essential categories of improved learning outcomes, retention, use of resources, and service to core constituencies?
- Does the program appropriately involve academically qualified persons?
- What are the institution's mechanisms for review and revision of existing programs and courses?
- How does program evaluation affect institutional planning?
- What constituencies are actively involved in the ongoing process of planning for improvement?
- Has the process had measurable results to date?

5f. Institutional evaluation of electronically offered programs takes place in the context of the regular evaluation of all academic programs.

- What are the administrative and procedural links between the evaluation of electronically offered programs and the ongoing evaluation of all academic programs?
- How are the respective characteristics of campus-based and electronically offered programs taken into account?



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