Distance Education Policies
(draft) May 2015

Distance Education Policies

1. Mission Statement for Distance Education (DE)
2. Definition of Distance Education (SACSCOC)
3. SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation for Distance Education
4. Responsibilities: Academic
   4.1 Students
      4.1.1 Admission to DE courses
      4.1.2 Governing documents
   4.2 Faculty
      4.2.1 First-time DE course petition
      4.2.2 Time requirements
   4.3 Chairs
      4.3.1 Selecting and approving the department’s DE courses
      4.3.2 Identifying DE courses
   4.4 Academic Deans
   4.5 Summer School Director
   4.6 Provost
5. Responsibilities: Technology
   5.1 Students
   5.2 Faculty
      5.2.1 Instructional Design
      5.2.2 Preparing to Teach a DE Course
      5.2.3 Technology Needs Assessment
      5.2.4 Training Opportunities
6. Class size, Enrollment, and Faculty Compensation
   6.1 Fall and Spring semesters
   6.2 Maymester / Summer School
7. Legal Issues
   7.1 TEACH Act
   7.2 Disability Services
   7.4 Intellectual property rights
   7.5 FERPA
   7.6 Final authority on legal issues

APPENDIX

A SACSCOC Distance Education Policy Statement
B SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation Standards which apply to DE
Distance Education

1. COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON MISSION STATEMENT FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (DE):

The Distance Education program provides leadership, coordination, management, and support to distance and online activities of the College of Charleston by collaboratively working across the college community. The program seeks to extend the College of Charleston campus across the state of South Carolina and beyond, provide an environment where learning can take place any time and any place, and share the knowledge and expertise of College of Charleston faculty to benefit society and support the economic vitality of South Carolina.

Distance education courses must comply with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) Principles of Accreditation. The policies below from this document also apply to both degree and certificate programs and their respective courses.

2. DEFINITION OF DISTANCE LEARNING:

SACSCOC: For the purposes of the Commission’s accreditation review, distance education (hereafter referred to as DE) is defined as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not physically located in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course can employ correspondence study and/or audio, video or computer technologies. (See the SACSCOC DE policy in Appendix A.)

3. ACCREDITATION STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

The College of Charleston follows the principles and standards of its regional accrediting body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC). There are two pertinent SACSCOC publications:

- The SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation: Distance education courses must comply with all current SACSCOC standards including those outlined in the Appendix that are specifically applicable to distance education.

- The SACSCOC Distance Education Policy Statement: The SACSCOC policy on distance education states (from the SACSCOC distance Education Policy Statement, which may be found in its entirety in Appendix A):

“Institutions must ensure that their distance education courses and programs comply with the Principles of Accreditation (see Appendix B). The referencing of the particular requirements listed in Appendix B does not imply that they are the only requirements of
the Principles that apply to distance education. This policy applies to degree and certificate programs and their courses."

Please note that the standards outlined in the SACSCOC Distance Education Policy Statement have been adapted from the SACSCOC Principles specifically to address distance education concerns. Distance Education courses must adhere to both sets of standards.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES: ACADEMIC

4.1 Students:

4.1.1 All new and continuing College of Charleston students are eligible for admission into DE courses (with the exception of students residing in states with which the College does not have a State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement). Each student, whether degree or non-degree seeking, must meet the admission requirements for the College of Charleston and the prerequisites set by the appropriate department for the specific DE course. Students are expected to have mastered knowledge and competencies required in the pre-requisite courses.

4.1.2 DE students are also governed by the College of Charleston Student Handbook, the College of Charleston Undergraduate Catalog, and all other student regulations at the College of Charleston (e.g. Honor Code, Code of Conduct, etc.). See the College of Charleston Student Handbook: http://www.cofc.edu/generaldocuments/handbook.pdf.

4.2 Faculty:

4.2.1 Faculty who teach a class online must first complete the DE Readiness Course

4.2.2 Time Requirements for DE classes

A synchronous three-hour lecture class should meet at least 2100 minutes just as a face-to-face class would meet.

An asynchronous class must be sustained long enough for the students to complete the course in a reasonable amount of time. The course must adhere to the same standards of quality found in the traditional classroom and must result in collegiate level learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the course offered in a face-to-face setting.

Non-credit courses may carry time requirements.

4.3 Chairs:

4.3.1 Chairs must approve the department’s DE courses.

4.3.2 Chairs are responsible for ensuring that the online courses are clearly designated in the system as online courses.
4.4 Academic Deans: Academic deans have oversight over DE courses taught in their respective schools.

4.5 Director of Maymester/Summer Sessions: The Director of Maymester/Summer Sessions is responsible for enforcing the Summer School guidelines as they pertain to online courses.

4.6 Faculty Coordinator for eLearning and Distance Education: The Faculty Coordinator is responsible for enforcing Fall and Spring guidelines for online courses and works closely with the Director of Maymester/Summer Sessions for summer courses.

4.7 Provost: The Provost is the final authority in matters concerning online courses.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES: TECHNOLOGY

5.1 Students: Students are expected to meet minimum proficiency requirements and possess a knowledge of DE course requirements, including operation of appropriate technology equipment (i.e., not merely a smartphone) and required technical skills. The student readiness survey is used to assess these competencies.

   5.1.1 Access to Equipment and Technical Skills: To enhance success in DE courses, students must demonstrate minimum competencies for effectively using technology tools and applications presented by faculty to access resource materials, to actively interact with faculty and other students and to produce required assignments.

5.2 Faculty: Instructional strategies for distance education (DE) and traditional teaching models are different. Faculty are expected to have a working knowledge of DE and the ability to design strategies and implement effective DE practices.

   5.2.1 Instructional Design: Faculty are expected to identify measurable learning outcomes and objectives that meet the goals of the DE course. They should also assure that the quality and quantity of student interaction with the professor and other students is comparable to traditional teaching methods. Attention is given to the personalized faculty/student interactions, characteristic of the College of Charleston.

   5.2.2 Training: Faculty will attend, as mandated and/or as needed (prior summer, fall, and spring semesters), a training / orientation program to achieve mastery of selected technology tools that correspond to instructional outcomes and goals expressed in the needs assessment. Depending on funding, the following will be provided.

      • A $500 stipend will be paid for participation in the required DE Readiness course. Recommended topics include identification of teaching behaviors and learner outcomes, teaching selected technology tools that match desired instructional behaviors/outcomes, and comprehensive application of technology tools for specific DE courses.
• Individual or small group in-service sessions will also be provided for specialized/infrequent tool requests. These sessions will be offered during the semesters prior to the DE course being taught.

5.2.3 Technology Needs Assessment: This assessment will match a faculty member’s teaching objectives, goals, activities with technology tools/applications that can be supported by the College. Faculty will describe teaching objectives and corresponding student behaviors appropriate to the content and level of the course. Based on the results of the assessment, the DE Readiness instructor will recommend appropriate technology tools/applications that support the best practices of DE. Faculty are permitted to use other technologies, provided they do not require IT support or infrastructure beyond the scope of College IT standards, pose a risk to the network, or breach security of sensitive college data. Faculty electing to use technologies not supported by the College or IT assume all responsibility for student support and directed use of such technologies.

6. CLASS SIZE, ENROLLMENT, FACULTY COMPENSATION

6.1 Department chairs approve the scheduling of online courses and bear responsibility for understanding all DE Policies and for proper coding of courses.

6.1.1 Online courses are assumed to be wholly asynchronous unless specifically listed by the Registrar with dates and times for synchronous elements (e.g., live guest speakers, live group exams/presentations).

6.1.2 Instructors may not use the syllabus to introduce assignments that potentially create conflicts with on-the-ground (live) courses.

6.1.3 Unavoidable conflicts are always settled in favor of the face-to-face course, via make-up exams and alternative assignments.

6.2 Enrollments in an undergraduate online course taught by an instructor for the first time will typically be held to approximately 20; enrollments in graduate online courses may be lower. Typically, with subsequent offerings of this course by the same instructor, the maximum enrollment in Fall and Spring semesters will increase to that normally set for face-to-face sections of the same course. A department that believes that online delivery requires lower than normal enrollments for one or more courses should propose a plan to the dean for accommodating the enrollment caps for those courses within their overall instructional load.

6.3 Stipends
6.3.1 The course development stipend paid is $1000, payable at the completion of both the course and the course quality rubric. A copy of the syllabus must be shared with the Faculty Coordinator for eLearning and DE, prior to the registration of students into the course.

6.3.2 Payments referenced in section 6.3.1 are predicated upon one-time completion of the online DE Readiness course (please see section 5.2.4).

6.3.3 Payments referenced in section 6.3.only apply to regular catalog courses that are fully online (no less than 75 percent of class time). Furthermore, payment for special topics courses is generally limited to one such payment per faculty member.

6.3.4 All stipends are for specific course-level content, irrespective of course renumbering, renaming or reconstitution.

7. LEGAL ISSUES

Like traditional, face-to-face classes, DE/online courses also have certain legal constraints and obligations.

7.1 TEACH Act: Use of Copyrighted material

For specific information regarding the TEACH Act and Fair Use of copyrighted materials, click on “copyright guidelines” at the following College of Charleston website:

http://libguides.library.cofc.edu/content.php?pid=36640&sid=272298
http://www.cofc.edu/library/faculty/index.php

7.2 Disability Services

For answers to specific questions, contact the Center for Disability Services (3-1431 or SNAP@cofc.edu) or see www.cofc.edu/~cds/responsibilities.htm.

7.3 Intellectual Property Rights

7.3.1 The College does not claim ownership of online or digital course content that does not make substantial use of college resources.

7.3.2 The College reserves the right to use online or digital course content for up to one year after the instructor leaves the College.

7.3.3 The exact wording of the Intellectual Property Policy further specifies 7.3.1 and 7.3.2.

7.5 FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974)
For details, see [www.cofc.edu/registrar/FERPA.htm](http://www.cofc.edu/registrar/FERPA.htm) or contact the Office of the Registrar by phone at 843.953.5668 or by email at registrar@cofc.edu

7.6 Final authority on legal issues

The College of Charleston Office of Legal Affairs is the final authority on legal issues.
APPENDIX

A  Southern Association of College and Schools Distance Education Policy Statement

B  Listing of task force members at the College of Charleston
**SACSCOC Distance Education Policy Statement**

*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on Colleges  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097*

**DISTANCE AND CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION**

**Policy Statement**

**Definition of Distance Education**

For the purposes of the Commission on College’s accreditation review, distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD’s, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

**Definition of Correspondence Education**

Correspondence education is a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, 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; courses are typically self-paced.

**Policy Statements**

1. At the time of review by the Commission, the institution 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, at the option of the institution, methods such as (1) a secure login and pass code, (2) proctored examinations, and (3) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

2. At the time of review by the Commission, the institution demonstrates that it has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.

3. At the time of review by the Commission, the institution demonstrates that it has a written procedure distributed at the time of registration or enrollment that notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

4. An institution that offers distance or correspondence education must ensure that it reports accurate headcount enrollment on its annual Institutional Profile submitted to the Commission.

5. Institutions must ensure that their distance and correspondence education courses and programs comply with the Principles of Accreditation. This applies to all educational programs and services, wherever located or however delivered.
Guidelines in the Application of the Principles of Accreditation to Distance and Correspondence Education

With the underlying concept that the Principles of Accreditation apply to all programs of the institution, regardless of mode of delivery, institutions should consider the following guideline statements in implementing and reporting on distance and correspondence education programs.

Mission

If an institution offers significant distance and correspondence education, it should be reflected in the institution’s mission.

Curriculum and Instruction

The faculty assumes primary responsibility for and exercises oversight of distance and correspondence education, ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction.

The technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the programs and courses and expectations concerning the use of such technology are clearly communicated to students.

Distance and correspondence education policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products.

Academic support services are appropriate and specifically related to distance and correspondence education.

Program length is appropriate for each of the institution’s educational programs, including those offered through distance education and correspondence education.

For all degree programs offered through distance or correspondence education, the programs embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with the institution’s mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education.

For all courses offered through distance or correspondence education, the institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded and justifies the use of a unit other than semester credit hours by explaining it equivalency.

An institution entering into consortial arrangements or contractual agreements for the delivery of courses/programs or services offered by distance or correspondence education is an active participant in ensuring the effectiveness and quality of the courses/programs offered by all of the participants.

Faculty

An institution offering distance or correspondence learning courses/programs ensures that there is a sufficient number of faculty qualified to develop, design, and teach the courses/programs.

The institution has clear criteria for the evaluation of faculty teaching distance education courses and programs.

Faculty who teach in distance and correspondence education programs and courses receive appropriate training.
Institutional Effectiveness

Comparability of distance and correspondence education programs to campus-based programs and courses are ensured by the evaluation of educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction.

The institution regularly assesses the effectiveness of its provision of library/learning resources and student support services for distance or correspondence education students.

Library and Learning Resources

Students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources.

Access is provided to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs.

Student Services

Students have adequate access to the range of services appropriate to support the programs offered through distance and correspondence education.

Students in distance or correspondence programs have an adequate procedure for resolving their complaints, and the institution follows its policies and procedures.

Advertising, recruiting, and admissions information adequately and accurately represent the programs, requirements, and services available to students.

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

Students enrolled in distance education courses are able to use the technology employed, have the equipment necessary to succeed, and are provided assistance in using the technology employed.

Facilities and Finances

Appropriate equipment and technical expertise required for distance and correspondence education are available.

The institution, in making distance and correspondence education courses/programs a part of its mission, provides adequate funding for faculty, staff, services, and technological infrastructure to support the methodology.

Document History

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2009 Distance Education Committee
Susan Beattie (Information Technology); Merissa Ferrara (Communication); Jannette Finch (Library); Kem Fronabarger (Geology); Sylvia Gamboa (Summer School, co-chair); Debby Jeter (Mathematics); Joe Kelly (English, Speaker of the Faculty); Marie Manning (Teacher Education); Pamela Nieslein (AAPA, co-chair); Bob Perkins (Teacher Education); Sue Sommer-Kresse (President’s Office, Strategic Planning); Myra Whittemore (AAPA)

2012 Distance Education Task Force
Lancie Affonso (Computer Science), David Desplaces (Management/Marketing), Beverly Diamond (AA), Jo Ann Ewalt (MPA), Jannette Finch (Library), Lynne Ford (AA, Co-Chair), Godfrey Gibbison (North Campus, Co-Chair), Beth Goodier (Communication), Zach Hartje (TLT), Deborah Jeter (Mathematics), Joe Kelly (English), Monica Lavin (IT), Amy McCandless (Graduate Dean), Renee McCauley (Computer Science), Rene Mueller (Management/Marketing), Bob Perkins (Teacher Education), Michael Phillips (Summer School), Robin Zemp (Music)

2014 Distance Education Steering Committee
Doug Ferguson, Chair (Communication), Jannette Finch (Library, North Campus), Michael Phillips (Library, Director of Summer School), Zach Hartje (TLT), Amy Ostrom (TLT), Lynne Ford (Associate Vice President for the Academic Experience), Bev Diamond (Senior Vice Provost), Beth Goodier (Communication), David Parisi (Communication), Melissa Thomas (Center for Student Learning), Renee Mueller (International Business), Karen Hakim-Butt (Associate Dean, Health and Human Performance), Robin Zemp (Music), Aspen Olmsted (Computer Science)