1.0 Introduction

Although the College of Charleston is not primarily an online education institution, through guidance, leadership and direction from the Online Education Steering Committee, the College of Charleston provides exceptional, high-quality, and flexible online education.

Distance (online) education courses must comply with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Principles of Accreditation. The relevant SACSCOC policy statements apply to both degree and certificate programs and the courses associated with those programs.

2.0 SACSCOC Definition of Distance (Online) Education

The following definition of distance/online education (hereafter, “OE”) is provided in the SACSCOC Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education: “For the purposes of SACSCOC’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 other digital media if used as part of the distance education course or program". Additional information on the SACSCOC definitions for distance education and correspondence education is available in the most recent version of the SACSCOC Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education and at https://sacscoc.org/.

3.0 SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation for Distance (Online) Education

The College of Charleston (hereafter, “College”) follows the principles and standards of SACSCOC, its regional accreditor, as published in the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, in the SACSCOC Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education, and in such other relevant policy statements or accreditation standards as may be promulgated by SACSCOC.

The standards outlined in the SACSCOC Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education have been adapted from the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation specifically to address OE concerns. OE courses must adhere to both sets of standards.

4.0 Types of Online Courses

https://registrar.cofc.edu/course-offerings/online-course-types.php

Online Asynchronous (ONL)

These asynchronous online courses do not require any scheduled class meeting times, either virtually or face-to-face. These courses may require that examinations be completed in an online proctored environment. There may be an additional cost for online proctoring.

Online + Scheduled Online Meetings (OSM)

These online courses require students to be available for scheduled synchronous virtual class meetings. For these scheduled meetings, students will be expected to participate in real-time. These courses may require that examinations be completed in an online proctored environment. There may be an additional cost for online proctoring. Some courses may offer other proctoring options (e.g. on campus or at an approved testing center).

Online Course + Scheduled Campus Meetings (OCM)

These courses will include a combination of online instruction and scheduled face-to-face class meeting times when students will be expected to be present in an on-campus classroom. The proportion of online and face-to-face meetings will differ by course and by instructor and may vary at the instructor’s discretion. Students will find these dates in the course offerings schedule. These courses may require that examinations be completed in an online proctored environment. There may be an additional cost for online proctoring. Some courses may offer other proctoring options on campus.

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1 See the current SACSCOC Policy Statement at DistanceCorrespondenceEducation.pdf (sacscoc.org).
5.0 Academic Responsibilities for Online Education

5.1 Students
All new and continuing College of Charleston students are eligible for enrollment in OE courses for which course prerequisites have been met. Each student, whether degree- or non-degree seeking, must meet the admission requirements for the College of Charleston and the approved prerequisites for the specific OE course.

All students are highly encouraged to complete the online student readiness assessment available at https://cofc.edu/student-resources/readiness-assessment and https://blogs.cofc.edu/sits to know the general requirements and expectations of taking an online course, and to best understand their readiness for taking an online course.

OE students are also governed by the College of Charleston Student Handbook, the College of Charleston Undergraduate Catalog, the Graduate Catalog, and all other student regulations at the College of Charleston (e.g., Honor Code, Code of Conduct). See the College of Charleston Student Handbook at College Policy 13.1 on the policy website (https://policy.cofc.edu/)

5.2 Faculty
Faculty members who teach a class online must first complete the College’s OE Readiness course or meet alternative requirement qualifications approved in writing by the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (hereafter, “Provost”) and with the recommendation of the relevant Dean.

An online course must adhere to the same standards of quality found in the face-to-face classroom and must result in collegiate-level learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the course (or to comparable courses) offered in a face-to-face setting. A three-credit-hour online course should engage students for the time equivalent to what would be spent in a face-to-face class (2,100 minutes). Additional information about the meaning of credit hours at the College of Charleston is available at College Policy 12.1.5, “Assignment of Credit Hours,” published at https://policy.cofc.edu/

Non-credit courses may carry time requirements, consistent with any applicable divisional or school policy and subject to the review and determination of the relevant Dean(s) or Provost.

Faculty teaching OE course sections must comply with all applicable College policies, including those concerning information security and the protection of student privacy.

5.3 Department Chairs and Program Directors

2 State Authorization restrictions may apply in certain cases.
Department Chairs and Program Directors must approve the offering of OE course sections for their relevant unit. Working in consultation with the Office of the Registrar, Department Chairs and Directors are responsible for ensuring that their online course offerings are clearly designated (ONL, OSM, OCM) and include any scheduled meeting dates in all applicable College software systems.

5.4 Academic Deans
Academic Deans have oversight over OE courses taught in their schools. Deans should work in consultation with the relevant Programs Directors, Department Chairs, and other Deans (e.g., Dean of the Honors College, Graduate Dean) as needed when considering OE course offerings.

5.5 Director of Maymester/Summer Sessions
The Director of Maymester/Summer Sessions is responsible for enforcing the Summer School guidelines as they pertain to online and other OE courses, subject to the review and determination of the Provost.

5.6 Online Education Steering Committee and Faculty Coordinator for Online Education
The Online Education Steering Committee, chaired by the Faculty Coordinator for Online Education, addresses issues related to Online Education including developing and promoting best practices of online education, guiding faculty with online teaching and learning, and other duties as outlined in the committee’s by-laws found at https://online.cofc.edu/.

5.7 Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
The Provost is the final authority for academic policy and resolving academic disagreements concerning online and other OE courses. Certain matters of institutional policy may require consultation by the Provost with the General Counsel, the President of the College, and/or various standing and ad hoc faculty or administrative committees.

The Provost and all other academic administrators should be attentive to the relationship between expanded OE course offerings and College Policy 7.6.8, “Substantive Change.”

6.0 Responsibilities for Online Education Preparation

6.1 Student Expectations
Students are expected to navigate the learning management system and acquire other technical skills required by each OE course. The College of Charleston’s Student Readiness Survey can aid students in determining technical skills they may need to develop to be successful in OE courses.
6.2 Faculty and Instructional Strategies
Instructional strategies for OE differ from those strategies recommended by more traditional (face-to-face) teaching models. Faculty teaching OE courses should have working knowledge of OE, including the ability to design appropriate strategies and implement effective OE practices. Faculty members are expected to provide students tutorials on any additional applications needed to succeed in the course.

Faculty are expected to identify and provide students with measurable learning outcomes and objectives that meet the goals of their OE course. These learning outcomes and course objectives should be consistent with the course’s official description and learning outcomes, as approved by the Faculty Senate.

6.3 Faculty Training
Faculty will complete a training program (Online Education Readiness Course) to learn best practices for teaching online and to select and become proficient in using any technology specific to the goals and learning objectives of the course. A stipend, subject to the approval by the Provost, may be paid to adjunct faculty for participation in the required Online Education Readiness course. These sessions will be offered prior to the scheduled OE course.

6.4 Protection of Student Privacy
Faculty teaching OE courses are expected (a) to use the College’s learning management system to ensure security of student work and grades; (b) to use the College’s Secure Share web-based application for sharing all confidential information; (c) to keep student work and grades confidential; (d) to keep passwords secure, to avoid sharing of passwords, and to instruct students and instructional support staff to keep passwords secure and to avoid sharing of passwords; and (e) to follow all applicable FERPA policies and procedures (see 7.4 below).

All College policies addressing student privacy and institutional security apply to OE courses. Faculty teaching OE course sections must comply with these policies.

6.5 Course Accessibility
Faculty teaching OE courses are expected to design and deliver courses that are accessible to all learners. This requires designing for accessibility using the AEM Center’s POUR principles (https://aem.cast.org/create/designing-accessibility-pour), including closed captions/transcripts for all audio and videos and alt text for all images.

6.6 Course Conflicts
Online and other OE instructors may not use the syllabus to introduce assignments that potentially create conflicts with face-to-face courses (e.g., the scheduling of final exams). Unavoidable conflicts are always settled in favor of the face--to--face course, via make-up exams and alternative assignments.
7.0 Legal and Policy Issues

As with traditional, face-to-face classes, online and other OE courses also must be designed and delivered in accordance with certain legal and policy constraints and obligations. All web addresses listed below are subject to change.

7.1 TEACH Act and Use of Copyrighted Material
For specific information regarding the TEACH Act and Fair Use of copyrighted materials, seek out materials involving copyright guidelines at the relevant College of Charleston website. Those guidelines currently are housed at https://libguides.library.cofc.edu/copyright/cofguidelines

7.2 Disability Services
Approved accommodations apply regardless of mode of delivery. For answers to specific questions, contact the Center for Disability Services (3-1431 or SNAP@cofc.edu) or https://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/index.php.

7.3 Intellectual Property Rights
The College does not claim ownership of online or digital course content when the development of that content does not make substantial use of College resources and facilities or the receipt of a stipend for the development of OE Teaching Material. The controlling authority on this topic is College Policy 9.1.13, “Intellectual Property Policy,” available at policy.cofc.edu. College Policy 9.1.13 includes specific information about OE Teaching Material and other topics relevant to OE.

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

7.4 Privacy and FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974)
The College is committed to protecting the privacy of students enrolled in DE courses. Specifically, FERPA applies to all students, without regard to the mode of delivery for the courses in which they are enrolled. For details on FERPA, see https://registrar.cofc.edu/ferpa/index.php or contact the Office of the Registrar by email at registrar@cofc.edu.

7.5 Final Authority on Legal Issues
The College of Charleston Office of Legal Affairs is the final authority on legal issues germane to the subject matter of this Policy.

8.0 Policy Manager and Responsible Department or Office

Provost (or Provost’s Designee), Office of the Provost
9.0 **Departments/Offices Affected by this Policy**

Office of the Provost  
Office of the Academic Experience  
Office of Institutional Effectiveness  
Office of Institutional Research  
Office of the Registrar  
Division of Information Technology  
All Deans, Departments, and Academic Programs

10.0 **Procedures Related to this Policy**

None

11.0 **Related Policies, Documents or Forms**

*Faculty/Administration Manual*
Policy 7.6.8, “Substantive Change”  
Policy 7.6.10, “Policy on Course Syllabi”  
Policy 11.1, “Privacy Policy and Procedure”  
Policy 12.1.5, “Assignment of Credit Hours”  
Divisional Policy on Instructors of Record and Faculty Credentials  
Online Education Steering Committee Bylaws

12.0 **Review Schedule**

*Approved:* July 2016  
*Revised:* August 2017  
*Revised:* December 2018  
*Revised:* November 2021  
*Next Review Date:* September 1, 2026

Signed: ___________________________
Suzanne Austin, Executive Vice President and Provost