

ELIZABETH CITY STATE UNIVERSITY

Distance Education Policy

Preamble

Online and off-campus distance education is an integral part of the mission of Elizabeth City State University (hereinafter "University"). The creation and delivery of online and off-campus distance education courses and programs raise specific questions about roles, responsibilities, ownership, technology use, access, as well as other rights and responsibilities. The purpose of this policy is to address these issues.

Scope

This policy covers credit-bearing approved online distance education programs, off-campus distance education, and online courses that are not taught as part of an approved online program. Online distance education for this policy is defined as a formal educational process in which 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. An online course uses internet-based technologies such as the university learning management system (hereinafter "LMS"), web conferencing and lecture capture software to provide instruction to students.

A distance education program is a program for which all the required coursework for program completion is authorized to be completed via distance education courses. For the purposes of tuition and fees, an online student is defined as a student whose major is one of the online programs of study. A student can enroll in courses in a program, however and not be in the major. Online and off-campus distance education courses follow existing policies in these areas; that is, all current policies and services that apply to on-campus education will apply in the domain of online and off-campus distance education, unless otherwise specified.

UNC Policy 400.1.1[R](II)(b) defines distance education and off-campus programs: For fee-charging purposes, a distance education program is one designed to deliver 80 percent or more of the direct instruction through distance education or off-campus, as defined in UNC Policy 400.1.1[R](II)(b). There may be a requirement for the student to attend the main campus for a portion of the program, but that requirement is minimal. Students enrolled in distance education programs as defined above will be assessed the Campus Security, Education & Technology, and Association of Student Government fees, and will not have access to other services and activities supported by the other Board-approved mandatory fees unless they pay the appropriate additional mandatory fee. Students not enrolled in distance education programs will be assessed all mandatory fees regardless of how their courses are delivered in a given semester.

This policy addresses specific concerns regarding:

- A. University Role and Responsibilities
- B. Academic Department Role and Responsibilities

- C. Faculty Role and Responsibilities
- D. Student Responsibilities
- E. Learning Management System Use
- F. Accessibility for Course Design

A. University Role and Responsibilities

The university will foster online education in support of the University's mission and in compliance with state and federal laws, as well as accreditation principles and requirements. The university will design and implement operational procedures and policies that support the online educational experience for students and faculty. The university is responsible for complying with UNC System Office authorization policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures for offering online and off-campus distance education.

Courses in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs may be offered online, if feasible, when this does not represent a substantive change for an academic program; otherwise, the appropriate approvals must be sought prior to offering the course in an online modality. The University Semester Schedule of Classes must indicate which sections of courses will be delivered by online or off-campus distance education. However, these courses will not be distinguished on transcripts from sections of these courses delivered on campus. Credit hours granted for courses delivered online or off-campus will be the same as the credit hours for the same courses delivered on campus.

Decisions to offer courses or programs online or off-campus will reflect student needs and availability of resources. If a degree program is designed to be offered entirely online, the enrolled student must be able to satisfy all course-based requirements of that degree program through online courses. The university will have processes in place to assure that the student who registers for the online or off-campus distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives academic credit.

Online courses and course materials are to be delivered using internet-based technologies such as the university learning management system, web conferencing and lecture capture software. The university will provide technical, pedagogical, and instructional design support services to faculty and students as appropriate. The university will provide training for faculty to obtain sufficient technical and pedagogical skills to design and deliver their online course content. The university will ensure compliance with accessibility standards for students with disabilities is adhered to. Copyright of online or off-campus distance education course materials are subject to the university's Patent and Copyright Procedures (ECSU Policy 900.1.1).

The Division of Information Technology provides support for all user accounts and login issues. The Division of Information Technology will enforce the Acceptable Use of Technology Policy for University Employees and the Computer Use Policy for Students

establish standards, procedures, and protocols in support of the policy. Violations of these policies may result in suspension or termination of access to computing accounts, the network and networked resources, the LMS and/or other University-owned technology devices.

B. Academic Department Role and Responsibilities

The academic department will ensure that all on-campus academic policies will be adhered to in the domain of online and off-campus distance education unless otherwise specified in this policy. The academic department offering online or off-campus distance education will approve the curriculum and adhere to policies regarding faculty workload. New courses, whatever their planned mode of delivery, must be approved by the appropriate committees. The academic department chair must approve faculty requests to offer an online distance education course. The academic department delivering online or off-campus distance education will be responsible for maintaining the same high standards for all courses and for ensuring that the instruction is comparable in quality and content to the corresponding on-campus instruction. The academic department will be responsible for adhering to all ECSU and UNC System Office policies regarding the selection and approval of the off-campus distance education facility including but not limited to filing required approval paperwork and for ensuring that the facility meets the instructional requirements and needs of both faculty and students.

C. Faculty Role and Responsibilities

Faculty who teach online or off-campus distance education courses are responsible for acquiring sufficient technical and pedagogical skills to design and deliver their course content and related material effectively. Faculty must meet the requirements of the Online Teaching Policy as it relates to completion of required professional development and having previous online teaching experience to be eligible to teach online. Faculty must design and develop online courses using the university Online Course Design Framework which is based on the Quality Matters Rubric. Communication between online faculty and students is critical for student success and retention. Faculty who teach online courses are required to develop a communication plan at the beginning of the semester and post the plan in their online course or syllabus.

D. Student Responsibilities

The Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy applies to all students regardless of whether courses are taught traditionally or through online or off-campus distance education. Students seeking accommodations will need to follow the procedures to request those accommodations from the Office of Student Accessibility and Testing. Students are notified at the time of enrollment in an online course, within the Banner system, that Elizabeth City State University does not impose any additional charges specifically related to verification of student identity.

Student attendance in online courses is defined as active participation in the course as described in the individual course syllabus. Online courses will, at a minimum, have weekly mechanisms for student participation. Students are required to log in to each online course on the first day of the semester, or the day enrolled during late registration to complete the initial introductory assignment/posting required in the course. A student's initial login and completion of assignments is used to capture attendance data. Thereafter, it is recommended that students log in daily. Distance Education students use the same means of verification of identity, as do all students. Distance Education students are provided an account with a unique username and password to access the learning management system. The accounts with usernames and passwords are supervised by the Division of Information Technology.

E. Learning Management System Use

The university's computing and telecommunication networks, computing equipment and software are owned by the University and are provided to support the academic and administrative functions of the University. Federal and state law and University policies and procedures govern the use of this equipment and technologies.

All faculty, staff, and students have access to use the university's learning management system. An LMS is defined as software for delivering, tracking, and managing course instruction that contains personal student data (e.g., name, ID number, email address), regardless of how these data are populated in the LMS. The Office of Distance Education is vested with the day-to-day operations of the LMS.

All users of the LMS must access the system through a designated account and authenticate with unique user credentials provided by the Division of Information Technology. All users of the LMS must adhere to the Acceptable Use of Technology Policy for University Employees or the Computer use Policy for Students. The Office of Distance Education shall remove illegal content or content that is in violation of university policies or contractual agreements from a course account if requested by the instructor of record or other appropriate university official. Courses shall be retained on the LMS for a minimum of three academic years. Banner is the sole repository of official course grades and rosters. While roster and gradebook information in the LMS is confidential, the LMS is not the official record of course grades and rosters.

F. Accessibility for Course Design

The university is committed to providing access to the educational environment for all persons by using the most accessible version of course materials available and providing appropriate accommodations in accordance with federal and state laws. This policy is enacted pursuant to Section 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADAAA), the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 and the North Carolina General Statute 168A-7. Faculty and student concerns about accessibility should be communicated to the Office of Student Accessibility and Testing.