# University of New Orleans
# Distance Learning Policy & Guidelines

## Definition of Distance Learning

SACS Guidelines define 'distance learning' 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 in the same place"[1]. According to SACS, a distance education course may employ the internet, broadcast, audio, video, or recordings. At UNO, the vast majority of distance education courses are asynchronous online courses. The remaining types of distance learning courses at UNO are synchronous Compressed Video courses, synchronous Web Conference courses (Adobe Connect), and synchronous courses through the UNO Virtual Campus (Second Life.)

## Policies

Faculty and administrators of the University of New Orleans will ensure that their distance learning courses and programs comply with the SACS *Principles of Accreditation.*[2] This policy applies not just to degree and certificate programs, but to all distance learning courses (DL).

To this end, the primary key areas of oversight are:

1. Curriculum, Instruction, and Class Enrollment,
2. Faculty Support,
3. Student Support, and
4. Student Learning Outcomes.

### DL Curriculum, Instruction, and Class Enrollment Policy

Academic departments and their faculty will ensure that the University has appropriate curricula and design of instruction to offer quality courses through distance learning.

### *Guidelines*

To accomplish this key area of oversight, faculty will ensure that each distance learning program results in collegiate-level learning outcomes appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded by the University, and that such programs include general education requirements.

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[1]
http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Guidelines%20for%20Addressing%20Distance%20and%20Correspondence%20Education.pdf
[2] http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf

Federal guidelines[3] require that when the majority of the instruction takes place when the instructor and student are not collocated, procedures shall be instituted to verify that the student registering in the course is the individual who participates in required coursework and exams.

- The university approved Course Management System (CMS) is Moodle. The approved CMS should be used as the basic gateway for the delivery of any DL course. Course announcements, the course syllabus, course schedule, assignment guidelines, links to lectures, assignments, discussion boards ("forums"), and external sites should be available through the approved CMS. In no case should students in any DL course be *required* to submit graded assignments via email rather than through the CMS.
- The Course Curriculum for DL courses shall be posted in a format accessible from the public internet and indexed by search engines[4].
- When face-to-face and online courses share the same course number, though the delivery of course content and instruction will vary, they ought to share the same student learning outcomes.
- Academic departments shall ensure that online class enrollment *does not exceed the limit* required for quality online instruction and interaction. Class sizes for online courses will not exceed the class sizes for comparable face-to-face sections.
- Each DL course must have a clearly defined policy to ensure that the student who enrolls in the course is the person participating in the course, completing coursework, and taking exams. This can be achieved by proctored exams where an ID is checked, or by using university approved technologies listed in Appendix I. Attendance in online classes should be monitored.
- Each DL course should have a clearly defined policy for plagiarism prevention and will specify the technology used for detecting plagiarism. The university should ensure the availability of plagiarism detection tools for faculty in all courses and take steps to integrate them in the online learning environment. Appendix II presents a list of plagiarism detection tools.
- Lectures created for online courses can be created by and delivered through a variety of technologies. Instructors in online courses may use different teaching methods, including: short, focused recorded lectures; longer audio lectures synced with slides of text; synchronous and asynchronous discussions; text, voice, and video chats; wikis, interactive quizzes or web-based external sources. Every effort should be made to make multimedia lectures for delivery in online courses. However, multimedia lectures should not be directly uploaded into the CMS. If using the UNO media server is not practical, as is currently the case,[5] faculty may use free third-party services such as iTunes U or YouTube to deliver multimedia lectures.
- Instructors of online courses shall ensure that their course curriculum demonstrates the instructional time of a face-to-face course (15 X 2.5 = 37.5 hours).
- Accessibility and Copyright. The course should meet universal design principles, Section 508[6] standards and W3C[7] guidelines to ensure access for all students. Permission should be obtained for use of copyrighted material and all materials used in the course should be appropriately cited.

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[3] http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-110publ315/html/PLAW-110publ315.htm, Part H- Program Integrity, 20 U.S.C. 1099b amended - Section 496, 1 B (ii)

[4] Moodle content is password protected. A university website for DL courses with curriculum information should be available for unrestricted web access to DL course offerings and search engine indexing.

[5] The current restrictions on file types and access to the UNO media server render it almost useless to faculty delivering DL courses. The university must address this issue.

[6] http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?fuseAction=stds

[7] http://www.w3.org/

## DL Faculty Policy

Academic departments and their faculty will ensure that those individuals engaged in offering distance learning are proficient in the development and delivery of distance education courses, and have adequate resources, compensation, facilities, equipment, and support services for both the development and the delivery of distance learning courses.  This policy applies to full time and adjunct faculty.

### *Guidelines*

The University will provide an ongoing program of technology, design, and production support for instructors. They will also provide orientation and training to those participating in a distance learning program to help them become proficient in using the program's technology. Faculty involved in instruction, evaluation, and grading of distance education programs and courses shall be academically and/or experientially credentialed.

Online Instructional Qualifications:

- All faculty teaching online courses shall be required to attend a Global UNO or department approved training session.  New online faculty will be required to attend training prior to the start of the semester when the course will be offered. Current online faculty may be required to renew their training.
- Campus & Online Presence: Faculty teaching online courses will be required to maintain campus office hours during the semester the course is offered[8].  Faculty teaching online courses should be available for office hours on-line and in person.  Faculty may specify the technology for online access; university e-mail, chat within the CMS, or other platform that is available at no charge to students.
- Technology support: Technology support for DL faculty includes the provision of tools to create effective DL course material and instructional sessions to develop DL courseware.  This includes recorded lectures, animations, interactive applications (quizzes, games, chats), and other technologies.   The university shall provide a convenient hosting service to manage multimedia course material. Appendix III presents a list of recording tools.

## DL Student Support Policy

The University will ensure adequate and appropriate support for all students in a distance learning environment. They will see that needed advising, equipment, on-campus learning and testing facilities, and instructional materials to pursue distance learning are made available and will seek to ensure the integrity of student work.

### *Guidelines*

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[8] Many online students attend campus classes, and face to face office hours benefit student success and retention.

Outcomes in this key area will be realized by providing students full disclosure of all program requirements, including any components of the program that cannot be completed via distance learning, and reasonable technical support[9].  Students will be assessed prior to enrollment in a distance learning course to ensure that they have the skills and competencies to succeed in a distance learning environment. Students will ensure their off-campus access to the necessary hardware and software. Faculty will ensure that the design of the distance learning program develops a sense of community through study groups and other activities, and that programs and courses are actively engaging and provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty and among students.

- Student pre-assessment:  Distance learning courses require a high level of motivation and a good grasp of the pre-requisite material.  Pre-requisites will be strictly enforced in all online courses.
- Course Behavior Guidelines:  Students shall be provided with guidelines for etiquette in online courses. Guidelines shall include safe online classroom behavior and plagiarism rules.
- Feedback and Motivation:  Ongoing and frequent assessments shall be conducted in DL courses to verify each student's readiness, where appropriate, for the next unit. Appropriate feedback on course performance shall be provided to the DL student throughout the semester. The Grade-book and learning outcomes features of the CMS are recommended feedback tools.
- Student Complaints:  Federal regulations and SACS guidelines require the establishment of a complaint and response center for online students, preferably one that is manned 24 by 7[10]. This includes help for technical connectivity and course related complaints.  The university will set up and manage a help desk for DL students.
- Student Community:  A critical aspect of the learning process and the value of a college degree is the strong community built in a campus environment. While this community is weaker in a commuter college, it can be completely missing in a poorly managed DL program.  The university should develop an online community using social media and all DL programs should integrate in this community, and take efforts to build community activities into the curriculum.

## DL Student Learning Outcomes/Course Effectiveness Policy

Academic departments and their faculty will maintain a comprehensive system of evaluation to measure the effectiveness of distance learning courses and programs in attaining an acceptable level of student learning outcomes and to provide evidence that the university is meeting its accreditation goals.

### Guidelines

Student performance outcomes shall be clearly identified for distance learning programs and courses.  This will help departments and faculty compare the effectiveness of distance learning and traditional format courses and programs with similar subject matter and objectives. Academic departments and their faculty will ensure that each instructor specifies in the course syllabus, at the

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[9] http://www.chea.org/pdf/mono_1_accred_distance_02.pdf
[10] http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/commadap.pdf, Section 4c

beginning of the course, the expected knowledge, skills, and competency levels that students will achieve in a distance learning course or program[11]. Academic departments and their faculty will also monitor completion, placement and licensing exam pass-rates for the distance learning program to ensure that they are comparable to site-based programs.

- Certification exams:  DL programs should have a recommended certification exam to be completed after the program. DL student performance on this certification exam will be tracked and monitored for DL program evaluation.
- Performance on subsequent courses:  The University will monitor and report on the performance of students in courses that have an online course as a pre-requisite.
- Enrolled hours/work:  Since DL courses have no specified meeting times, students may enroll in an excessive number of online courses.  Policies on work and course hours per semester shall be reviewed by departments offering DL courses, and enforced at enrollment.

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[11] http://www.chea.org/pdf/mono_1_accred_distance_02.pdf

# Appendix I: Technologies to ensure that the DE student taking the course is the enrolled student

Federal guidelines require universities to ensure that the student obtaining credit for the course (the individual enrolled in the course) is the student who completes coursework, including exams. The problem with fully online courses is that instructors have no chance of verifying the online student as the one who is actually enrolled in the course.

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``(ii) the agency or association requires an institution that offers distance
education or correspondence education to have processes through which
the institution establishes that the student who registers in a distance
education or correspondence education course or program is the same student
who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic
credit;''[12]
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SACS accreditation provides a guideline which allows institutions to establish a standard to ensure student verifications. Many universities claim that the use of ID/password access to course testing ensures that only the student can complete the course requirements. While the use of secure ID/password access prevents unauthorized access to the online test, it does not in any way prevent a student from handing over the ID/password information to another individual to complete coursework, including the exam. Proctored exams with photo ID checking are the best solution available at present. While this will add an additional expense to the student, the university will ensure test reliability and more importantly, the credibility of its degrees. Under the same Federal guidelines, the university needs to clearly reveal all fees associated with the online program. In a scenario where the instructor requires many proctored exams, the fee can add substantially. Hence, a university wide guideline on proctored testing needs to be developed for online courses. *One option is for the university to contract with nationwide testing centers and provide all online courses with two proctored exams included as part of the online course fee.*

Technologies such as 360 degree view cameras, webcam based apps, and keystroke pattern recognition have been offered by vendors as technology solutions to the student verification problem. One remote proctor security option[13] uses a special camera providing a 360 degree view of the testing location, which could be the student's home or remote center. The output of the camera is monitored by a service that highlights probable cause events and presents them to the instructor. This technology is expensive and may be excessively intrusive in a home environment. Other services offer a cheaper, webcam based app[14] that limits what the student can do during the exam. A different approach is technology that monitors the student's keystroke pattern during the course and uses that to authenticate the test taker[15]. This technology works in exams where students type a lot of text and their keystroke patterns are observed during the entire course and in other courses monitored by the company. Many of these are nascent technologies and the university should wait until technology maturation before selecting one option for all online courses. It is expensive for students to purchase any specialized equipment

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[12] http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-110publ315/html/PLAW-110publ315.htm, Part H- Program Integrity, 20 U.S.C. 1099b amended - Section 496, 1 B (ii)

[13] http://www.softwaresecure.com/solutions/online-proctor.html

[14] http://www.proctoru.com/howitworks.php

[15] http://www.kryteriononline.com/

before it becomes a widely accepted standard.  In addition, it is uneconomical for the online program to have individual instructors selecting different technologies for courses.

# Appendix II:  Plagiarism Detection Technologies

TurnItIn with Moodle is available as part of the LMS provided by the university.  The technology has limitations and is recommended as a preliminary screening tool to deter plagiarism.  Moodle settings allow the instructor to permit students to check the TurnItIn score of their document prior to submission.  It is recommended that students be allowed to check their work prior to submission.

# Appendix III: DL Courseware Development Tools

Online courses complete globally and students in these programs can select from globally competitive delivery systems.  Lectures and other recordings produced for an online course should have good audio, video, and animation quality.  While standards for recording quality are subjective, faculty can use approved courseware development tools and techniques to ensure that their work meets student needs and expectations.  Faculty may choose other tools based on their suitability for the course.

1.      Camtasia (http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html) recording software supports the creation of online lectures combined with interactive learning assessments.   The tool offers a range of features for different skill levels, starting from novice online instructors creating a Power Point lecture recording to skilled online instructors creating an interactive learning experience for students.  The software is available on a Windows or Mac platform and the output can be viewed on a wide variety of platforms.   It is recommended as a university provided tool for all online faculty.  The university should offer Camtasia training sessions to enhance faculty competency in creating online material.

2.      Adobe captivate (http://www.adobe.com/products/captivate.html) is a full-fledged tool to create online learning products with an exceptionally rich interface.  However, faculty need to invest significant time and effort to master the complex tool.   Faculty may independently use the tool to create online material.

3.      Screen Capture-Pro (Mac App Store) is a very useful tool for creating narrated video tutorials or short lectures.

4.      GarageBand (Mac App Store) allows instructors to import presentation slides and to record audio synced with those slides to create enhanced podcasts delivered via iTunes U.

5.      iPad and other tablet lecture capture.  Portable tablet computers permit faculty to quickly record a lecture with images, slides and in-class annotations.[16]   The audio and video quality of

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[16] http://www.lecturetools.com/interactive-presentation-tool

many of these recording are of limited quality and faculty using such tools should review the quality of the output before providing the recording to online students.

6.      Video capture in classroom.  Live video capture in a classroom provides a quick solution to creating online material.  There are three issues to be considered in using this approach.  The first issue is the size of the video file, which often becomes very large, even for a fast bandwidth download.  The second issue is the quality of the recording.  While a well-lit studio, with a competent camera handler, and subsequent editing can produce a decent recording, the quality of a live classroom recoding is often unsuitable for online use.   The third issue is lecture delivery. Online media need to be scripted and edited for effectiveness. A single, hour long, continuous lecture is often not sufficiently stimulating for online students.

# Appendix IV: Technologies to Identify D-E Students

Federal and SACS guidelines require identification of students in online programs to ensure that the student receiving credit is the student who enrolled and completed the course.  Many institutions have claimed to meet this guideline by limiting access to an online course to a password protected website. However, it is easy for a student to provide online access codes to another individual and permit them to complete course requirements.  There are many technologies for student identification.  The fees and costs of such requirements should be clearly communicated to students when they enroll in the course.

1. Exam Proctoring: Proctored exams offer control over the testing process and ensure student identity in the proctored exam.  The university provides a list of approved testing centers nationwide.  Courses that require a mid-term and final exam can require proctored exams, ensuring student identity verification and exam security.  Most centers require a fee for proctoring services.  Since many students in online courses live close to campus and choose online courses for convenience, faculty should offer an on-campus testing option that is free of charge. Courses that do not have a written final exam may use other technologies listed in this appendix to ensure the identity of students.

2. Webcam:  One low cost technology for student identification is a webcam based service. Tegrity[17], ProctorU[18], and Kryterion[19] offer webcam based services that collect student data (image, photo ID, screen, and student recording of session) to support student identification.  The service analyzes the recoding for test integrity problems and presents analytics to faculty for further action. The service can be purchased on a fee per student hour basis, or as a per student fee.   The service can be used for exam proctoring as a minimum requirement and extended to ongoing interaction management.  Tegrity can also be used to deliver lectures and monitor student engagement with the lecture.

3.  Typing Biometrics:  Coursera, the MOOC provider has introduced its "Signature Track" technology to online identity verification[20].  The system uses a combination of a photo ID,

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[17] http://www.tegrity.com/products/remote-proctoring

[18] http://www.proctoru.com/howitworks.php

[19] http://www.kryteriononline.com/

[20] http://blog.coursera.org/post/40080531667/signaturetrack

signature phrase and a biometric ID of typing patterns to track the student through a course and in typed essay assignments. The company charges a $ 100 fee, per course, for this technology which is only available for their own MOOCs.

4. Video-chats. Skype and other online video chat technologies can be used to enhance student teacher interaction and capture a log of student video for student identification. Courses that use a student A/V presentation for performance evaluation can require video recordings of the performance and use this for student identification. The university may require online students to post photographs that can be used for identification by online instructors.

5. Custom cameras: While some services such as SoftwareSecure[21] enhance the proctoring intensity by using 360 degree webcams that can monitor the complete student test environment, the technology is more expensive and highly intrusive. Hence it is not recommended at the present time.

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[21] http://www.softwaresecure.com/Main.aspx