



# **South Carolina State University**

Distance Education Administrative Procedure Manual

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## Introduction

Distance and online education are critical components of South Carolina State University's strategic priorities. The primary goal of distance and online education at SC State University is to increase student diversity by providing more flexible course delivery options including online and off-campus instructional formats. These extended campus options create opportunities for adult learners and non-traditional students to obtain a college credential.

This manual includes administrative procedures governing online and distance education at SC State University. It is produced and maintained by the Center for Online and Distance Education (CODE). The manual is updated as new procedures are developed or revised.

## Definitions

Distance education is referred to at SC State in various ways. Some of these references include "online", "hybrid", and of course, "distance education". This section includes the official university definitions for distance education courses in order to facilitate a common language of understanding.

### Distance Education

Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of instruction is delivered via technology, and students and instructors are not in the same place. Distance education technologies may include two-way interactive video conferencing, online asynchronous or synchronous interaction, electronic-based discussion, and video/audio streaming.

### Distance Education Course

The definition of a distance education course may vary depending upon the college or university. At South Carolina State University, a distance education course is defined as a course in which 51% or more of the instruction is delivered via technology, and the students and instructor are not in the same place.

### Categorization of Distance Education Courses

At South Carolina State University, distance education courses are classified in three categories based on the extent to which technology is used to deliver instruction. The categories are **(1) Entirely at a Distance** and **(2) Partially at a Distance**. These categories allow students to determine to what extent they would be required to come to campus for any class meetings during the semester.

1. **E-Entirely at a Distance** -All course sessions and instructional activities are delivered through technology. No visits to the main campus in Orangeburg, off-campus center or other instructional site is required in order to complete the course. Often these courses are referred to as "online classes".
2. **P-Partially at a Distance** - Fifty-one (51%) or greater of the course sessions and instructional activities are taught via technology; however, students are required to travel to the main campus in Orangeburg, off-campus center, or other instructional site for

certain required course activities. These required course activities may include lab sessions, in-person proctored exams, selected lectures, or course orientations. Courses offered via interactive videoconferencing systems fall into this category of distance education courses.

## **Hybrid Courses**

Hybrid or blended courses may use Blackboard or other forms of technology to deliver instruction, but they are not included in the definition of distance education at South Carolina State University.

Hybrid courses are those in which fifty percent (50%) or less of the class is taught online in Blackboard, and the remainder of the class is taught on campus in Orangeburg or at an off-campus instructional site.

## **University Distance Education Committee**

The purpose of the University Distance Education committee is to develop recommendations governing distance and online education policies and procedures. The committee is comprised of faculty representatives and is chaired by the Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the Executive Director of, the Center for Online and Distance Education.

## **Verification of Student Identity in Fully Online Courses**

SC State utilizes the secure username and password access to the Learning Management System to ensure that the student who registers for an online course is the same student that participates in and receives credit for the course. Students are expected to comply with the University's Username and Password policy which prohibits the sharing of passwords. Designated fully online courses may require students to complete a proctored exam to confirm identity. Students must present a university issued photo ID prior to taking the exam. Proctored exams are administered in the Assessment Center is located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Belcher Hall.

## **Notification of Charges Related to Verification of Student Identity**

Currently, the university does not charge students a fee for verification of identity for proctored exams administered in the Assessment Center.

## **Scheduling Distance Education Courses in Banner**

The Department Chair is responsible for scheduling distance education courses in Banner. All distance education courses offered each semester should be entered into Banner using the appropriate code to indicate whether the course is offered entirely online, partially at a distance, or as a hybrid course. Department Chairs are given instructions on which distance education course code to use for scheduling in Banner. Entirely-at-a-distance courses should not have an assigned room and building number because these courses are taught completely online.

Online and distance education courses scheduled in Banner must meet the Quality Matters standards as described in the section below “Development of New Online Courses and Programs”.

## **State Authorization for Distance Education**

South Carolina State University is a member of the National Council on State Authorization and Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). This membership permits the University to enroll students in distance and online courses who live outside the state of South Carolina.

Additionally, membership authorizes SC State to enroll students in Out-of-State Learning Placements. Examples of Out-of-State Learning Placements includes internships, clinical experiences and student teaching appointments. Membership in NC-SARA must be renewed on an annual basis. The Center for Online and Distance Education is responsible for completing the annual renewal application with approval from the Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) authorizes the renewal with subsequent acceptance by NC-SARA.

## **NC SARA Enrollment Reports**

During the spring of each year, NC SARA member institutions are required to submit a report of fall semester distance education enrollments to NC SARA. The CODE Executive Director is responsible for submitting the report for SC State University. The following procedure applies to reporting for NC SARA:

1. NC SARA notifies the Institutional Representatives via email when the reporting portal opens. For SC State, the Institutional Representatives are the Provost and VP of Academic Affairs and the CODE Executive Director.
2. The CODE Executive Director requests the Fall IPEDS distance education data from the Director, Institutional Research.
3. The CODE Executive Director requests the Fall Out-of-State Learning Placements from the Department Chairs via email.
4. The CODE Executive Director submits the NC SARA Enrollment Report for SC State University by the specified deadline date.

## **Assessment of Student Support Services for Online Learners**

The Center Online and Distance Education conducts an annual survey of students enrolled in fully online courses to measure satisfaction with various student support services for

online learners. The survey is conducted during the fall semester with results reported to the Distance Education Committee in the spring. The following procedure shall apply to the assessment of student services:

1. The CODE Executive Director shall request the fall semester course list from the Registrar's Office after the Drop/Add period.
2. Courses with a campus code of "E" (Entirely online) will be identified for the survey.
3. The CODE Executive Director shall notify faculty teaching the targeted courses of the survey, dates for data collection, and purpose. Faculty will be asked to post an announcement inside the course to alert students to the survey.
4. The Academic Technology Support Specialist shall create the Enterprise Survey form based on questions provided by the Executive Director.

## **Approval to Teach Online**

Faculty at South Carolina State University must provide evidence of training in online teaching, online course design, and basic instructor training in the Blackboard Learning Management System as a requisite to teach online. These requirements can be satisfied by the successful completion of the eFellows Online Teaching Certificate course (or completion of a comparable online teaching course offered by an external provider), the Online Course Development Labs and Blackboard Essentials. The external provider course must be approved by the Center for Online and Distance Education

The eFellows Online Teaching Certificate course is offered through the Center for Online and Distance Education. The course is taught fully online in SC State's Blackboard LMS over a five-week period. Faculty explore best practices in online pedagogy using a variety of instructional techniques.

The Center for Online and Distance Education offers group and individualized training on Blackboard.

## **Faculty with Previous Online Teaching Experience**

Faculty who have completed training in online teaching offered by an approved organization (college, university, Quality Matters, Online Learning Consortium, etc) and declare themselves to be proficient in using Blackboard for instruction, are given permission to teach online at SC State by virtue of their credentials. This exception is particularly relevant to new faculty who have previous online teaching experience at other colleges and universities. However, all faculty, regardless of previous online teaching experience and training are required to complete the **Teaching Online at SC State** orientation module. This module covers policies and procedures relative to teaching online at SC State. The module is included as a topic in the eFellows course and is also available as a stand-alone online module in Blackboard. To enroll

new faculty in the Teaching Online at SC State module, the Department Chair should send a request to [code@scsu.edu](mailto:code@scsu.edu). Include the name, email address and hire date for the new faculty.

## Quality Matters Review of Online Courses

All fully online courses must achieved a Quality Matters® “Met” rating prior to being scheduled in Banner for instruction.. The “Met” rating is achieved based on an overall score of 85% or higher of the possible points.

## Development of New Online Courses and Programs

The Faculty Handbook outlines the process for proposing new courses and programs (Faculty Handbook, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 54). The following procedure is consistent with this policy as it pertains to proposals for development of new curriculum content delivered 50% or more online. The procedure begins with the review of proposals by the Department Curriculum Committee, College Curriculum Committee and the Educational Policies Council. Other governing committee approvals may be required as described in the Faculty Handbook.

1. The proposal submitted to the Educational Policies Studies Council shall include the following information in reference to courses and programs that will be delivered 50% or more online:
  - a. The projected start date (semester/year) in which the first courses will be offered.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Names of faculty who will teach the online course(s) and evidence that said faculty have completed the following:
    - \_\_\_ Instructor training for the University’s Learning Management System
    - \_\_\_ eFellows Online Teaching Certificate course or the equivalent
    - \_\_\_ Training in designing quality online courses.
  - c. Programs-List of courses in the program currently developed for online delivery.
  - d. Programs -List of courses in the program that must be developed for online delivery.
  - e. Programs -Preferred sequence for development of new online courses.
  - f. Indicate whether the proposed course(s) will result in 45% or more of any degree or certificate program offered at SC State being available online.<sup>2</sup>
2. The Department Chair, with approval of the Dean, shall complete the [Blackboard Course Shell Request](#) form and submit to the Center for Online and Distance Education to create a Blackboard course shell with the standard content template, to

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<sup>1</sup> Departments should estimate that it will require at least 6-8 months to develop a fully online 15-week, quality academic credit course, if the faculty member does not receive release time for course development.

<sup>2</sup> Programs in which 50% or more of the courses are available online must be approved by the SC Commission on Higher Education and may be considered a SACSCOC Substantive Change.

commence the online course development process.<sup>3</sup>

3. Faculty will work with CODE instructional designers in developing online courses. Content shall be submitted to CODE for review using the Content Organizer tool. Departments may use the services of a consultant instructional designer or a third-party content vendor; however, such parties must comply with these procedures.
4. Prior to scheduling courses for instruction in Banner, The Department Chair shall confirm the courses have been reviewed by CODE and achieved a Quality Matters® “Met” rating. The “Met” rating is achieved based on an overall score of 85% or higher of the possible points.
5. Upon scheduling the course in Banner, the Department Chair shall notify CODE to copy the course content from the Blackboard test server into the Blackboard course shell that has been created in the Blackboard production server. Students will access the course on the Blackboard production server.

## Procedure for Development of Existing Courses for Fully Online Delivery

Departments shall follow the same procedure to develop an online version of an existing course as previously described for the development of new online courses and programs, with the exception that approval by the department and college curriculum committees and the Educational Policies Council is not required.

## Temporary Waiver

In certain extenuating circumstances, it may be necessary for the department to offer a course online in response to an emergency instructional need. Examples of these situations include the death or sudden resignation/dismissal of an instructor, natural disasters and the replacement instructor is only available to teach the course online. Quite often these cases occur after the start of the term or even in the middle of the semester, when time constraints do not allow for the department to follow the normal course development procedures. In such cases, the following procedure shall apply:

1. The Department Chair, with approval from the Dean, shall submit the [Online Instructor Temporary Waiver](#) form to the Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Approval of this request shall waive the normal online course development process. A copy of the waiver shall be provided to the Executive Director, Center for

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<sup>3</sup> The content template is aligned with Quality Matters standards for online course design.



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2. If a replacement instructor is hired to teach the course online, the instructor shall be required to complete the *Online Teaching at SC State* module.<sup>4</sup> CODE will enroll the instructor in the module and provide access.
3. The waiver may be renewed for a maximum of one semester for the same course.
4. Waivers should be used in extenuating circumstances and not considered routine in nature.

## Creating Blackboard Guest User Accounts

Guest user accounts are created for non-SC State faculty and staff who require access to the university's Blackboard LMS. The following procedure shall be followed to create guest user accounts.

1. Guest user accounts are created in the Blackboard test environment unless otherwise authorized by the Center for Online and Distance Education Executive Director.
2. The Department Chair, Dean, Director, or Vice-President shall complete the [Blackboard Guest User Account Request](#) form and submit to the Executive Director, Center for Online and Distance Education. This form shall be submitted at least one week in advance of the date by which the account will be needed.
3. The CODE Executive Director shall approve or deny the request and notify the requestor.
4. If the request is approved, the CODE Executive Director shall forward a copy of the request form to the Academic Technology Support Specialist who shall create the guest user account according to procedures described in the Blackboard Administrator Manual.
5. The Academic Technology Support Specialist shall notify the guest user with the login credentials and URL to the Blackboard test server.
6. The completed request form with action, shall be archived on the CODE Sharepoint site by the Program Assistant.
7. The Academic Technology Support Specialist shall ensure the Blackboard guest user account is removed when the account expires.

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<sup>4</sup> The module covers various resources to support faculty teaching online at the University in addition to distance education policies and procedures. The Blackboard Quick Start Guide can also be downloaded from the module. The Guide provides step-by-step instructions on many of the common tasks faculty perform in Blackboard. The online teaching module is available in Blackboard and can be completed in 30 minutes.

## End-of-Course Evaluations

Online courses are included in the end-of-course evaluation process. The Office of Institutional Research coordinates the course evaluation process for all courses, including those offered through distance and online delivery. Items included on the end-of-course survey for online classes are listed in Appendix A. The results of the course evaluations are distributed to the individual faculty members in addition to the Director, Center for Online and Distance Education.

## Determining Credit Hours for Asynchronous Online Courses

Asynchronous online courses are those in which the students and instructor do not meet at the same time. Communications is not immediate; teaching and learning activities are separated by time and space. The following procedure should be followed in determining credit hours for asynchronous online courses:

- a. In asynchronous online courses, the traditional face-to-face contact time is redefined as the time **a typical student spends interacting with course content**. For example, time that a student would spend reading text on the course page, viewing a video, listening to audio, posting and responding to a discussion question, posting an entry to a Wiki, completing an online game, etc. This definition excludes student work traditionally done outside of class such as homework, studying, textbook reading assignments, and writing papers.
- b. When faculty plan and develop asynchronous courses they must account for the contact time, as redefined in “a” above, for each credit hour awarded by the course. They must also account for a minimum of two hours of outside student work per credit hour.
- c. During the planning and development of an asynchronous online course, faculty should estimate the time a typical student will take interacting with the course content. This should be equivalent to the number of contact hours normally expected in a face-to-face course and should be documented in the course syllabus. Hours for completing homework assignments, working on projects, studying for examinations, etc., should be considered outside the contact hour requirements for the course.

It is the responsibility of departmental faculty teaching an asynchronous online course to determine if the course content is of sufficient scope and rigor to ensure the amount of material delivered is comparable to the same face-to-face course.

## **Dropping/Adding Students to a Course After the End of Drop/Add**

Students may be added or dropped from a course after the end of the official Drop/Add period. Under normal circumstances, students acquire the Drop/Add form from the Registrar's Office website and obtain approval signatures from various departments on campus. However, students that are enrolled in fully online or distance education courses and live outside the state or Orangeburg area will not be able to walk forms to various offices on campus for signatures. Therefore, the following procedure is used to assist distance education students with processing Drop/Add requests. This procedure is a temporary measure pending implementation of an electronic signature distribution process for Academic Affairs:

1. The student downloads a copy of the Drop/Add form from the Registrar's Office website, completes the form and emails to the instructor.
2. Upon approval, the instructor signs and emails the form to the Center for Online and Distance Education, Online Student Services Manager.
3. The Online Student Services Manager obtains the signatures of the Director of Student Accounts, Department Chair, and Dean on the form.
4. The Online Student Services Manager submits the fully signed form on behalf of the student to the Registrar's Office and emails a copy to the student.

## Appendix A – End-of-Course Survey Questions for Online Courses

1. I logged into my course on a daily basis in order to stay informed of class activities.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
2. The instructor responded to my questions within the communications timeframe specified on the course syllabus.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
3. The first week instructional materials and assignments were posted inside the course on the first day of class.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
4. The course provided opportunities for me to engage in learning activities with fellow students enrolled in the course.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
5. I knew how to contact Blackboard Technical Support when I needed assistance with Blackboard.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
6. It was easy for me to find information in the course.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
7. I had the appropriate level of technical skills to participate in this class.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
8. I was able to track my progress in the course throughout the semester.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
9. The course provided opportunities for me to communicate and collaborate with fellow students in the class on assignments or other learning activities.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
10. The instructor was available to answer questions and made me feel a part of the class.  
a. Strongly Agree      b. Agree      c. Disagree      d. Strongly Disagree
  
11. Please describe the technical problems you experienced during this course. If you did not encounter any technical problems, simply enter “I did not have any technical issues in this course”.