

# Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

## Standard Two: Educational Program and Its Effectiveness, Policy 2.6

(Adopted 1996/Revised 1998 by NWCCU)

### Policy 2.6: Distance Delivery of Courses, Certificate, and Degree Programs

**Introduction.** This policy is intended to apply to the broadest possible definition of distance delivery of instruction, including telecommunications technologies — audio, video, and computer-based technologies — used for instruction in either live or stored modes. The degree program and credit courses may or may not be delivered exclusively via telecommunications; for example, the course may include a print component and a degree program may include an on-campus requirement.

The existence of these requirements for instruction via telecommunications does not relieve an accredited institution of the obligation to meet the Eligibility Requirements, standards, and policies of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The institution's programs with specialized accreditation meet the same requirements when offered through distance delivery. Applicable institutional accreditation standards and the Commission's substantive change policy apply regardless of when, where, or how instruction takes place, or by whom taught.

**Application of Requirements.** These requirements are to be addressed in the periodic review — self-study and peer evaluation — conducted for reaffirmation of accreditation by every accredited institution that engages in distance delivery through telecommunications. For the institution that proposes to initiate distance learning through telecommunications, these requirements will form the framework for a substantive change review by the Commission.

**Definition.** Distance education is defined, for the purposes of accreditation review, as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ correspondence study, or audio, video or electronically mediated technologies. Institutions offering courses, certificate and degree programs at a distance for academic credit are expected to address in their self-studies and/or proposals for institutional change (Policy A-2 Substantive Change). The following requirements will be reviewed as appropriate by the Commission.

### Requirements

#### *Approval and Purpose*

- a. The institution's distance delivery programs have a clearly defined purpose congruent with institutional mission and purposes.
- b. Each program has been approved through established institutional program approval mechanisms.

#### *Curriculum and Instruction*

- c. Programs provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty, and among students.
- d. The institution's faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight over distance education, ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction.
- e. The institution ensures that the technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the programs.
- f. The institution ensures the currency of materials, programs and courses.

- g. The institution's distance education policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses or other media products.
- h. The institution provides appropriate faculty support services specifically related to distance education.
- i. The institution provides appropriate training for faculty who teach in distance education programs.

### *Library and Information Resources*

- j. The institution ensures that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources.
- k. The institution monitors whether students make appropriate use of learning resources.
- l. The institution provides laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs.

### *Faculty Support*

- m. Training is provided for faculty who teach via electronic delivery.
- n. The institution has faculty support services specifically related to teaching via electronic delivery.

### *Student Services*

- o. The institution provides adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling.
- p. The institution provides an adequate means for resolving student complaints.
- q. The institution provides to students advertising, recruiting and admissions information that adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available.
- r. The institution ensures that students admitted possess the knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed in the program, and provides aid to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology.

### *Facilities and Finances*

- s. The institution possesses the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education.
- t. The institution's long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education program.

### *Commitment to Support*

- u. The institution offering the program demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable enrolled students to complete the degree or certificate.

### *Evaluation and Assessment*

- v. The institution assesses student capability to succeed in distance education programs and applies this information to admission and recruitment policies and decisions.
- w. The institution evaluates the educational effectiveness of its distance education programs (including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction) to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.
- x. The institution ensures the integrity of student work and the credibility of the degrees and credits it awards.

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