



Southeastern Louisiana University

Distance Education Policy

Purpose Statement

Consistent with the university mission to lead the educational development of southeast Louisiana ([Vision 2017](#)), the University recognizes that new approaches to instruction must meet the same high quality standards that exist for traditional classroom-bound education. Southeastern Louisiana University recognizes the advantages of providing learning opportunities that are not restricted by time, place, or method of delivery. In an effort to meet and ensure that these standards exist in distance education at the University, the purpose of this document is two-fold:

1. To provide a faculty guide for developing and implementing distance education.
2. To communicate quality standards for the delivery and assessment of distance education at Southeastern Louisiana University.

This document is not intended to supplant any existing policies set forth by the University. The development, delivery, and evaluation of distance education courses and programs take place in the context of the policies and procedures of all existing academic programs.

What is Distance Education?

Distance education is defined as a planned teaching/learning experience in which teacher and students are separated by physical distance and teacher-student interaction occurs through multiple modalities of existing and evolving media.

Distance education requires special techniques of course design, instructional techniques, assessment, and methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organization and administrative arrangements.

Modes of Delivery

A variety of electronic instructional delivery modes are available at Southeastern, including:

1. Online: Courses offered via the internet using a Learning Management System (LMS)
2. Blended or Hybrid: Combines face-to-face classroom instruction with distance education activities.
3. Telecourse: The Southeastern Channel produces and airs telecourses from a variety of academic disciplines for broadcast on the regional television channel and over the web via "Video on Demand" through the LMS.
4. Compressed Video: Occurs in real time and allows the instructor to communicate with remote site sections of the class via two-way audio/video. Instructors and students hear and see each other live from each site.

The University schedule of classes indicates what courses are being offered via distance education and the delivery format (Internet, compressed video, or telecourse). Alpha characters

attached to the section number of distance education courses also indicate information about the course.

Online courses are designated as:

- “I” - courses taught partially on campus in a classroom and 50% or more (but less than 100%) of instructional contact hours by Internet
- “XI” - courses taught partially in an off-campus classroom and 50% or more (but less than 100%) of instructional contact hours by Internet;
- “NT” - courses taught 100% Internet. (NOTE: These courses will NEVER meet)
- “IC” - course taught 50% or more by Internet and a portion taught as compressed video

Telecourses are designated as:

- “TV” - courses taught through the Southeastern Channel.

Compressed video courses are designated as:

- “C” - a compressed video course taught on campus,
- “XC” - a compressed video class taught off campus.
- “IC” - course taught 50% or more by Internet and a portion taught as compressed video.

Instructional Technology Unit (ITU)

The Instructional Technology Unit (ITU) consisting of administrative, academic, and technological personnel, coordinates the scheduling, infrastructure and delivery of distance learning courses and works closely with the academic department to ensure the quality of distance education at Southeastern. Appropriate members of the ITU or their designees are responsible for posting all electronically delivered courses on the ITU website and submitting course information to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) for publication on the SREB’s [Electronic Campus website](#).

The Center for Faculty Excellence, in coordination with appropriate members of the ITU, provides additional support in the area of distance education by providing the following services:

- Professional development opportunities in the areas of teaching and learning
- Workshops, info sessions, discussions, and webinars on a variety of distance education topics
- Instructional and technical support for electronic learning
- The production of audio, video, photographic and graphic media for instructional use
- Assistance with the appropriate pedagogical use of technologies

Requirements and Expectations for Distance Education Faculty

As with traditional courses, Southeastern’s faculty assumes primary responsibility for and exercises oversight over distance education instruction, ensuring both the rigor of courses, curriculum, and the quality of instruction. Blended courses offered less than 50% via distance education may be required to follow the Distance Education Policy at the discretion of the department head. With noted differences between teaching distance education courses and teaching courses using “traditional” methodologies, the decision to use distance learning must be made on a course-by-course basis, with consideration given to the content of the course, the needs of the learners, and the flexibility of the delivery mechanism.

Faculty are encouraged to align distance learning and e-learning with operational outcomes in the relevant organizational context of their specified fields. Instructional design should reflect best practice quality standards, and provide for a consistent environment and learning experience for students.

Faculty Qualifications

All faculty requesting to teach a 100% online or blended online/face-to-face course in the Fall 2014 and/or subsequent semesters are required to show competence in online instruction by (1) completing the *Quality Matters at Southeastern* online training course OR (2) providing evidence of delivering a previous online class certified through *Quality Matters at Southeastern*, or (3) has completed another online course delivery course deemed equivalent to *Quality Matters at Southeastern* as recommended by the *Quality Matters at Southeastern* trainer and the faculty member's department head and as approved by the faculty member's dean. In addition, department heads must consider other factors such as the following in determining whether a faculty member is qualified to teach an online or blended online/face-to-face course:

- Prior annual evaluations of teaching
- Other faculty development or training in teaching online
- Skills associated with teaching online (e.g., basic computer skills, database management, file management, word-processing, presentation software, e-mail, internet, social networking, learning management systems)

Based on national standards of best practice, research and instructional design principles, Quality Matters™ (QM) is a faculty-centered, peer review process that is designed to certify the quality of online and blended online/face-to-face courses. *Quality Matters at Southeastern* employs a modified version of the national QM™ rubric, specific to institutional needs, to guide the review of all distance learning courses. The *Quality Matters at Southeastern* rubric addresses course quality in the following categories:

- Course Overview and Introduction
- Learning Objectives
- Assessment and Measurement
- Resources and Materials
- Learner Engagement
- Course Technology
- Learner Support
- Accessibility
- Professional Communications

Prior to building the Fall 2014 schedule of classes, department heads must continue to consider factors such as the following in determining whether a faculty member is qualified to teach an online or blended online/face-to-face course:

- Prior annual evaluations of teaching
- Proficiency in the online course technology and design
- Preparatory skills associated with teaching online (e.g., basic computer skills, database management, file management, word-processing, presentation software, e-mail, internet, social networking, learning management systems)
- Other faculty development or training in teaching online or teaching via distance education

In determining whether a faculty member is qualified to teach using other distance education technologies, department heads must continue to consider factors such as the following:

- Prior annual evaluations of teaching
- Faculty development/training for teaching using the specific distance education technology
- Faculty development/training for teaching via distance education
- Preparatory skills associated with the distance education technology (e.g., prior experience as a television show host – for telecourses or compressed video)

Training

For online distance education courses, the Center for Faculty Excellence provides training regarding course design and implementation. Training is provided online, in onsite workshops, and through individual consultations in a format that prepares faculty to develop courses that are in accordance with *Quality Matters at Southeastern* review.

For telecourses and compressed video courses, Southeastern Channel personnel provide information on any technical requirements and guidance on providing effective televised presentations

Course Load, Compensation, Ownership of Materials, and Copyright

Distance learning courses are typically part of the faculty member's regular teaching load, with the same rate of compensation as traditional courses. Distance learning courses may also be taught as an overload, at the same rate of compensation as traditional courses taught as an overload. Any exceptions (e.g., reassigned time for developing courses using new distance technologies) are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and as per current procedure, must be approved by the department head, the dean, and the provost. See [Southeastern's Teaching Loads policy](#).

Southeastern follows the guidelines outlined by the University of Louisiana System (ULS) with regard to ownership of materials and utilization of revenues derived from the creation and production of intellectual property found in the ULS [Intellectual Property and Shared Royalties Policy](#) and in [Southeastern's Intellectual Property and Shared Royalties Policy](#).

Faculty must keep in mind copyright, trademark and licensing issues when designing distance education courses and therefore should be familiar with [Southeastern's Copyright Policy](#). Examples include the use of copyrighted photographs, graphics, text selections, audio clips from a song, or video clips from a movie. As Southeastern's policy states, the usual permissions must be acquired and documented by the faculty member. When in doubt about copyright ownership, it is preferable to be overly cautious. If copyright permission cannot be obtained or if ownership is questionable, faculty should substitute other resources where copyright permission is clear and obtainable, or substitute resources that are in the public domain.

Evaluation of Faculty Teaching Distance Learning Courses

As indicated in the Approval Process for Distance Delivery, academic department heads ensure that faculty have the requisite skills necessary to deliver distance education courses. It is also the responsibility of department heads to perform annual evaluations of their faculty whether they teach using a traditional format or a distance delivery format. Faculty are evaluated in accordance with the guidelines and procedures outlined in the [Evaluation of Faculty](#) policy.

Availability and Communication with Students

Office Hours

As indicated in Southeastern's [Office Hours policy](#), each faculty member is expected to maintain a minimum of ten office hours a week during a regular term and six hours during a summer session to accommodate student consultations. These hours are posted on the syllabus, the learning management system, on the faculty member's door, and kept by the department head. Up to five online office hours shall be kept by faculty engaged in 100% online courses. Up to five online office hours may be kept by faculty engaged in other course designations. If online office hours are utilized, the faculty must be available via some mode of synchronous online communication (e.g., online chat, instant messaging, FaceTime, Skype, email, etc.).

Response time

Faculty engaged in 100% online courses shall maintain a 48-hour maximum response time (excluding weekends, holidays, or extenuating circumstances) for returning student emails and are expected to display high levels of social and cognitive presence as well as high quality writing skills.

High quality social presence is defined as the following:

Instructor accesses forums, etc., several times a week. Instructor posts numerous times a week. Postings are directed toward learners. Instructor demonstrates professional behavior and evidence of respect for diversity and the views of others.

High quality cognitive presence is defined as the following:

Instructor stimulates discussion. Postings are clear, original, and relevant. Reasoning shows well-developed analytical skills and critical thinking. Instructor encourages students to higher achievement. Instructor always provides adequate supporting details and examples. Instructor engages in peer teaching.

High quality writing skills are defined as the following:

All postings are well written and demonstrate accurate spelling and grammar, good organization, careful editing, conciseness and clarity.

Credit Hour Policy

All courses, including those using a distance education delivery method, must adhere to Southeastern's [Credit Hour Policy](#).

Requirements and Expectations for Distance Education Courses

All distance education courses at Southeastern are considered comparable to traditional courses and adhere to the same course standards, prerequisites, and requirements as traditional sections of identical courses.

Approval Process for Distance Delivery

Notes:

- Effective beginning with Fall 2014 course offerings:
 - To teach any course in a 100% online format or a 50-99% online format, the faculty member must have completed the *Quality Matters at Southeastern* course for *faculty* certification or has completed another online course delivery course deemed equivalent to *Quality Matters at Southeastern* as recommended by the *Quality Matters at Southeastern* trainer and the faculty member's department head and as approved by the faculty member's dean.
 - To teach a course not previously offered through a particular distance delivery format, the course as taught by the individual faculty member must be approved via the following procedures.
- Effective beginning with Fall 2015 course offerings:
 - To continue to teach a course that has already been offered by the individual faculty member using a particular distance delivery format, the course as to be taught by the faculty member must be reviewed and approved in accordance with the following procedures.

To encourage high quality course offerings, proposals for creating new distance education courses and proposals for converting existing courses to a distance format are given careful review. Not only must distance education courses meet the same quality standards as traditional face-to-face courses, but additional review is necessary to ensure the appropriateness and feasibility of the chosen e-learning medium. Distance education courses should be approved in the semester prior to the semester of delivery, to allow for sufficient instructor training and course development. The process for developing a distance education course is outlined below:

1. Faculty reviews and accepts requirements and expectations outlined in Distance Education Policy.
2. Faculty Requests Approval to Develop Course for Distance Delivery
 - a. To ensure alignment with strategic goals regarding delivery and quality of degree programs, faculty requests department head approval to develop course for distance

- delivery. Courses that fulfill major degree requirements for multiple degree programs require approval from the department head of each of those degree programs.
- i. According to Southeastern's [Substantive Change Procedures](#), the department head of each degree program is responsible for determining if the addition of a course offered via distance delivery results in 50% or more of the degree program being available via distance education. If so, SACSCOC notification and/or approval may be necessary due to a substantive change.
 - b. For each degree program for which the course fulfills a major degree requirement, the department head of the degree program recommends approval or disapproval to the Dean of the degree program. The department head recommendation will include data from Institutional Research regarding the percent of courses required for the major(s) that would be in distance format if the course in question were approved for distance delivery.
 - c. The dean of each degree program for which the course fulfills a major degree requirement will review the recommendation and either approve or disapprove the request. The decision will be communicated to the dean of the faculty member if different from the faculty member; the dean of the faculty member will communicate to the department head who will then communicate it to the faculty member.
3. Faculty Distance Education Delivery Training Upon Approval to Develop Course for Distance Delivery
- a. For a course to be delivered online:
 - i. Faculty member completes *Quality Matters at Southeastern* training for faculty certification (course certification comes later in the process) or has completed another online course delivery course deemed equivalent to *Quality Matters at Southeastern* as recommended by the *Quality Matters at Southeastern* trainer and the faculty member's department head and as approved by the faculty member's dean.
 - Faculty *Quality Matters at Southeastern* certification is valid until there are substantive changes in the *Quality Matters at Southeastern* standards.
 - ii. Faculty member meets with Instructional Designer in the Center for Faculty Excellence to discuss feasibility, begin course mapping, and determine technical needs – enlisting appropriate contacts with the Office of Technology (OT), Southeastern Channel, and Library, as needed
 - b. For a course to be delivered via compressed video or as a telecourse:
 - i. Faculty member meets with Southeastern Channel personnel to discuss feasibility, begin course mapping, and determine technical and communication/presentation needs
4. Development and Review of Course Proposal
- a. For a course to be delivered online:
 - i. Faculty prepares Course Proposal (see Appendix A) to submit to appropriate departmental committee which shall include at least one QM *Quality Matters at Southeastern*-trained faculty member to verify *Quality Matters at Southeastern* components.
 - ii. Distance Education Course Proposal is forwarded to faculty member's department head for verification of faculty *Quality Matters at Southeastern* certification and approval/disapproval.
 - b. For a course to be delivered using other distance technology (e.g., telecourse; compressed video):
 - i. Faculty prepares Course Proposal (see Appendix A) to submit to appropriate departmental committee.
 - ii. Distance Education Course Proposal is forwarded to faculty member's department head for approval/disapproval.
5. Course Development, Approval, and Delivery
- a. Faculty member works with the designated e-Learning support team (Office of Technology, Southeastern Channel, Library) and, in the case of an online course, the

- Instructional Designer, to design and develop the course.
- b. Faculty member completes Course Information Sheet (see Appendix B) outlining prerequisites and technical needs of student.
 - c. Appropriate members of Instructional Technology Unit and/or designees review the completed course (applying the *Quality Matters at Southeastern* standards to an online course) and the Course Information Sheet. The ITU will notify the dean of the faculty member when the course has met the *Quality Matters at Southeastern* course requirements for delivery. The dean will forward the information to any other deans, as appropriate, and to the department head(s) as appropriate. The faculty member's department head will notify the faculty member. Course information is posted to the web by the appropriate ITU member(s) or designee(s).
 - d. Course is delivered with continued support, as needed, by the Center for Faculty Excellence, Office of Technology, Southeastern Channel, and Sims Library.
 - e. After being delivered for two semesters, online courses must be officially reviewed for *Quality Matters at Southeastern* certification within the following academic year. If the certification requirements are met, the course as taught by the faculty member is so certified.

The ability of the faculty member to continue to offer the course using the approved distance delivery method depends on factors including but not necessarily limited to (a) the results of the faculty member's annual evaluations of teaching, particularly with regard to teaching the course in question and the delivery method in question, (b) student needs, (c) department/college/university goals concerning distance versus face-to-face delivery of individual courses and degree programs, and (d) resource availability. The department head has primary responsibility for overseeing the scheduling of courses offered through the department each semester and summer, and that includes the scheduling of the course delivery format.

Course Design

Faculty will work with the Instructional Designer (for online courses) and the designated e-Learning support team (e.g., Office of Technology staff, Southeastern Channel, Library) to design either an online course that reflects the components of *Quality Matters at Southeastern* or a telecourse or compressed video course that reflects presentations appropriate for televised delivery. To provide a consistent online experience for the student, faculty shall follow the university's LMS template for online course layout.

Courses designed for distance education delivery must reflect contact hours and instructional time commitments in accordance with Southeastern's Credit Hour Policy and expected student learning outcomes that are equivalent to those for the same courses delivered through traditional formats.

The Syllabus

The course syllabus must contain the same information as traditional courses (see Welcome Back Memo posted each semester on the [Provost's website](#)) along with the following components.

- Instructor's virtual office hours
- Technological requirements for the course including any special software requirements
- Procedure for resolving technical complaints including contact information for technical support
- Preferred method for contacting instructor, e.g. email, phone, text message.
- Netiquette expectations
- Instructor's response time for student communications [Faculty engaged in 100% online courses are required to maintain a 48 hour maximum response time (excluding weekends, holidays, or extenuating circumstances) for returning student emails].]
- Procedure for determining attendance
- Student participation/interaction requirements
- Information on Distance Learning Library Services

Student Interaction

Distance education courses must provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty and among students. All students are expected to participate regularly. Multiple means of student-instructor interaction and student-student interaction are expected. This can include instructors requiring and monitoring students' regular participation, scheduling regular group meeting times, and encouraging students to: post messages to one another about the coursework, attach documents to email messages, visit peer websites, and participate in on-going listserv groups and synchronous chat rooms. Increased interaction among students and between students and the instructor promotes involvement leading to discovery, student-driven episodes, and student-defined questions.

Communicating high expectations explicitly and efficiently keeps students on-task and involved. Distance education instructors expect regular connections with students using a variety of interactive modes. Student-instructor interaction may unfold synchronously, during face-to-face meetings, telephone conferences, video conferencing, and online chat rooms; or asynchronously, with regular mail, taped audio-video broadcasts, email, and the Internet.

Faculty should strive to meet the diverse needs of students and insure active learning in distance education coursework by incorporating a variety of course experiences that address diverse learning styles.

Course Materials

As previously outlined in the Approval Process for Distance Delivery, academic departments, through a committee and the department head, must review distance education course proposals for currency of materials. Designers of distance education courses at Southeastern are encouraged to explore creative ideas for best practice through research, communicating with colleagues, and contacting content providers.

Southeastern utilizes textbook rental and retail systems to provide academic texts and supplemental materials. Textbook Rentals accommodates any required hardbound textbooks, which have a useful life of two or more academic years. Books not eligible for adoption by the rental system and support materials such as workbooks, reference manuals, or dated materials are sold by the University bookstore. Instructors communicate their needs to the appropriate personnel in the same manner as for traditional courses. Departments and faculty adhere to the [Selection of Textbooks Guidelines](#) for textbook adoption. When students are required to purchase books and/or materials, faculty should make this information available as soon as possible so that students may purchase from any source they choose.

Supplementary materials can be made available in printed or electronic form. Library personnel can assist faculty with electronic reserves, inter-library loans, and online databases that can be accessed electronically. Instructors provide students with directions on how to access library materials such as books, periodicals, journal articles, etc.

Course Assessment

Southeastern evaluates the educational effectiveness of its distance education courses and programs to ensure comparability with face-to-face courses and programs.

Individual courses are expected to adhere to approved course descriptions and have similar expected student learning outcomes, regardless of the course delivery format. Student satisfaction is assessed through the Student Opinion of Teaching surveys administered in each class during the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters, regardless of the delivery format of the class. The Office of Institutional Research provides the President and Provost with an annual report on student retention and grade distributions for each course, disaggregated by delivery format.

For academic programs that provide students with different delivery options for the entire program (e.g., entirely face-to-face; hybrid – 50% to 99% of required programs offered via a particular distance technology; 100% via a particular distance technology), the expected student learning outcomes and measures of those outcomes are identical across all delivery options. In addition, the results of those measures are compared across the different delivery formats.

Requirements and Expectations for Distance Education Students

Prerequisites and Readiness

The ability of a student to succeed in a distance education class depends on his or her ability to understand the class structure and technology. Informing students of what skills and technology are needed for particular distance education courses allows them the opportunity to do a self-assessment of their capability to succeed in the course.

Faculty complete the Distance Education Course Information Sheet (Appendix B) outlining general information about the class, including specific skills a student should possess, hardware and software requirements necessary to participate in the course, and faculty contact information. At the time of course registration, students are required to review the Course Information Sheet, which also includes an online student readiness assessment (e.g., SmarterMeasure). Registration for the course constitutes the student's acceptance of the requirements necessary to participate in the course.

Student Integrity and Authentication

Southeastern uses the SACSCOC-suggested secure login and pass code student identification method as an attempt to ensure that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the associated credit for the course or program. At the time of enrollment, students receive a unique username/W# (secure login) and password (secure pass code). This username/W# and password is used for student identification/authentication purposes for distance education course work at no extra cost to the student, with both the username/W# and password used for work submitted online.

In addition to the secure login and pass code method, faculty may use other means or technologies to authenticate the work of distance education students (e.g., proctored exams, special software, web cameras). If a faculty member chooses to use additional means of authenticating the work of distance education students, students must be informed in writing at the time of course registration of any actual and/or projected associated costs (e.g., cost of specialized software, estimated cost of web camera). Any projected additional student costs associated with verification of student identity/authentication of distance education student work must be approved by the Provost following a recommendation from the department head and dean of the course.

Proctored exams requiring the student to be at a Southeastern facility may be used in hybrid courses but not in 100% distance education courses.

Academic Integrity and the Code of Conduct

Students in all classes, regardless of delivery format, must adhere to Southeastern's Academic Integrity policy as published in the General Catalogue and to all policies and standards published in Southeastern's [Student Handbook](#).

Student Privacy

Student privacy in all courses and programs regardless of delivery format is protected as per the [Policies and Procedures Relating to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act](#) posted on the University's web site.

In addition, at the time of employment, all university employees sign a Confidentiality Agreement,

indicating:

“... a variety of records and information must not be shared with, made available to or accessible by an persons other than professional associates with a need to know in the normal course and scope of work. Confidential information otherwise must not be discussed or shared without appropriate authorization.”

This agreement includes but is not necessarily limited to student course records (e.g., grades, other indicators of student performance), medical and/or personal information revealed by the student.

Appendix A

Distance Education Course Proposal Requirements

Distance education courses should adhere to the same standards, prerequisites, and requirements as traditional sections of identical courses.

Course Proposals for distance education courses must include the following:

- Instructor's name, course prefix and number
- Justification for the proposed distance education course
- Evidence that the proposed distance education format of the course adheres to the University's Credit Hour Policy
- Course Classification [A required course, an elective, a general education course, or a major course in a degree program(s)]
- A full syllabus (in the same format as syllabi for a traditional course - see Welcome Back Memo posted each semester on [Provost's website](#)). Outlining the topics that will be covered in the course and how contact hours will be addressed. The course syllabus must also contain the following components.
 - i. Instructor's virtual office hours
 - ii. Technological requirements for the course including any special software requirements
 - iii. Procedure for resolving technical complaints including contact information for technical support
 - iv. Preferred method for contacting instructor, e.g. email, phone, text message.
 - v. Netiquette expectations
 - vi. Instructor's response time for student communications
 - vii. Procedure for determining attendance
 - viii. Student participation/interaction requirements
 - ix. Information on Distance Learning Library Services
- Delivery mechanism(s) (e.g., LMS, telecourse, compressed video, etc.)
- Interaction methods and how those methods will provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty and among students
- Source of course materials (e.g., created, textbook publisher, etc.)
- Instructor's technological expertise including verification *Quality Matters at Southeastern* certification
- Any proposed student authentication method(s) in addition to the required secure login and pass code method and approval through the Provost

Appendix B

Course Information Sheet

Course: _____

Instructor: _____

Instructor's e-mail address: _____

Instructor's office phone number: _____

Instructor's office number: _____

Hardware Requirements:

Software Requirements:

Specific Skills Students Need for Distance Education Delivery Format:

Link to Online Student Readiness Assessment (provided by University at time of course registration)