

**\*Disclaimer: This document was adopted prior to the Academic Partnership programs. It will be revised to include all current distance education programs at Lamar University.**

***Lamar University  
Policies and Procedures  
for  
Distance Education***

## **Overview**

Distance education is a means of providing increased higher education access to students with geographic or time restraints.

## **Purpose**

### **1. Access to Lamar University and its Education Programs**

Distance education provides increased educational opportunities for individuals. Working students, students with family responsibilities, and students who are geographically restricted have the opportunity to participate in higher education through increased access to Lamar University, its courses and programs.

### **2. Enhancement of Academic Programs**

Distance education also provides a mechanism for part-time or campus-based students to access additional courses to become full-time students or to enable them to complete a degree in a reasonable amount of time.

## **Definition of Distance Education**

Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction in a course (*i.e., interaction between students and instructors and among students*) occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place or are away from the main campus. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous.

### **1. Types of Courses**

- **Online courses** are delivered through the Internet and are accessible anywhere, anytime.

- **Web-supported face-to-face courses** utilize the Internet to deliver course materials or activities with no reduction in face-to-face class time.
- **Dual-credit courses** are delivered to area high schools through the South East Texas Technology Education Network (SETTEN). Students receive high school and college credit for these courses.

## 2. Types of Delivery Methods

- **Interactive video courses** are offered in real time through interactive television.
- **Online courses** are delivered via the World Wide Web through the Blackboard learning management system.
- **Off-campus courses** are delivered by university faculty at several off campus sites.

## Institutional Context

1. **Policies:** Unless specifically addressed in distance education policy, all Lamar University and Texas State University System policies, standards, and guidelines apply to distance education.
2. **Campus involvement:** All academic units of Lamar University are encouraged to participate in distance education with appropriate courses and programs to meet student needs.
3. **The Center for Distance Education** is the central administrative unit for distance education. The Center coordinates schedules, facilities and support services, and takes general administrative responsibility for all distance education courses and serves as the liaison with outside entities collaborating with Lamar University for distance education. The Center and its staff work closely with academic departments to provide appropriate distance education offerings.
4. **The Distance Education Committee** reviews courses, programs, and policies related to distance education at Lamar University and forwards recommendations to the appropriate persons.
5. **The University** provides a technology infrastructure that is secure and reliable, providing students with consistent 24/7 access to course material.

6. **Distance Education administrative and support** functions align with the University Strategic Plan.
7. **The University recognizes and supports:**
  - Monitoring the quality and effectiveness of distance education programs
  - Distance classroom scheduling
  - Comprehensive planning and budgeting for distance education facilities
  - Registration of distance education students
  - Promoting and marketing the distance education programs offered through the Center
8. **The costs of maintaining and upgrading Distance Education facilities and technology** are built into purchasing and acquisition decisions.
9. **The University supports and encourages inter-institutional arrangements** that further the mission of Lamar University.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

### **Academic Responsibility**

1. The academic faculty and instructional leaders are responsible for the academic integrity and content of all courses and programs via distance education.
2. Academic units retain control of all distance education courses and programs including academic content, curriculum approval, and faculty assignment.
3. The Center for Distance Education coordinates the licensing of commercially available distance education resources.
4. Distance education faculty is knowledgeable in both subject matter and distance learning delivery methods.
5. The size of distance educational classes is consistent with the demands of the content, instructional strategies, and the objectives of the course. Enrollment levels are set by the academic department.
6. All distance education courses and programs are coherent, comprehensive and developed with appropriate discipline-based pedagogical rationale.
7. Courses taught via distance education give particular attention to:

- Facilitating teacher-student and student-student interaction
  - Developing appropriate media to enhance content presentation
  - Utilizing the capabilities of the technology
  - Incorporating multiple and regular communication throughout the course
8. Technology selections for use in distance education are based upon:
    - Course content
    - Student characteristics
    - Instructional delivery environment
    - Availability of and support for hardware and software
  9. Faculty consider the level of technology available to distance students when designing instructional materials including:
    - Hardware
    - Network connections
    - Software availability
  10. In addition to elements of regular syllabi, those developed for distance learners include:
    - Procedures for submitting course assignments
    - Procedures for obtaining course handouts and support materials
    - Procedures for dealing with technical problems and receiving technical support
    - Appropriate methods for distance learning students' interaction and participation
    - Clear faculty contact information

## **Course Approval**

### **Courses Proposed for Distance Delivery**

1. New courses proposed for distance delivery are subject to the same approval processes as all new courses on campus.
2. Existing courses proposed for distance education delivery submit an approval form with appropriate signatures to the Distance Education committee.

## **Program Approval**

### **New Programs**

1. New academic programs are developed and approved through existing university procedures.

2. Existing programs offered via distance education submit approval forms with appropriate signatures to the Distance Education committee.

## **Quality**

All courses and programs adhere to the Rules Principles of Good Practice from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [www.thecb.state.tx.us](http://www.thecb.state.tx.us) and SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools).

The rubric developed by the Quality Matters project is used as a basis for course review.

## **Faculty Issues**

### **Faculty Rights, Role and Responsibilities**

1. All distance education courses have a qualified faculty member approved by the appropriate department head.
2. Faculty retains the primary responsibility and authority for the academic management and oversight of distance education courses.
3. Faculty is expected to adhere to appropriate copyright or literary rights in compliance with the TEACH act. Additional assistance with copyright issues on the Lamar campus can be obtained from the Director of Media Services, Mark Asteris in the John Gray Library.
4. Intellectual property policies are outlined and defined according to the Intellectual Property Policies of the Texas State University System.
5. Assignment of faculty to distance-deliver courses is made with sufficient lead time to allow for preparation and training

### **Faculty Qualifications**

1. All distance education faculty shall meet the same guidelines and credential qualifications as on campus faculty.
2. When internal faculty resources cannot meet the needs of distance education, the Center for Distance Education may identify appropriate faculty and present their academic credentials to the department for approval.

3. Distance Education courses should be taught by tenured or tenure track faculty as part of their regular course load. When this is not possible, courses may be taught as an overload by regular faculty or by adjunct faculty.

### **Faculty Support**

1. Training for courses delivered through technology mediated instruction are provided by the Center for Distance Education
2. Professional development opportunities designed to increase instructional effectiveness and address instructional design issues for distance education are provided by the Center for Distance Education.
3. Department heads support faculty development efforts and encourage participation from individual faculty members involved in distance education.
4. Technical support for individual faculty is available from the Center for Distance Education and the to produce course materials for the delivery of distance education.
5. The New Media Lab is responsible for the creation and conversion of course material into formats appropriate for distance education.

### **Faculty Recognition**

Faculty receive appropriate recognition of teaching and scholarly activities related to distance education programs commensurate with their efforts in traditional activities and programs.

### **Student Information and Support**

1. Student admission requirements are the same as they are for campus-based students.
2. Students are provided with distance education library service information online and within individual course materials as needed.
3. Students have adequate and reasonable access to student services appropriate to support learning and successful completion of their courses or program. Services include (but are not limited to) all of the following:
  - Admissions, cashiers office, student email accounts, payment processing (refunds, billing, payment plans etc.)

bookstore, course catalog, academic advising, technical assistance, registration, withdrawal from courses, reinstatement, financial aid information, academic calendar, student records, library services, student handbook, and campus policies and procedures.

Information is available at <http://lamar.edu>

4. The Center for Distance Education and Lamar University maintain accurate and current information on the World Wide Web for distance education students.
5. A technical support help line for Blackboard is available 24/7 for faculty and students.
6. New student orientation sessions are offered by the Center for Distance Education at the beginning of each semester.
7. Distance students have access to academic support through online tutoring.

## **Library**

John Gray Library appoints and maintains a Distance Education Librarian Liaison to promote and coordinate library services, programs, agreements, and policies/procedures for distance education students and faculty.

## **SWD Accessibility**

1. The Center for Distance Education works closely with the Office of Students With Disabilities to address any accessibility issues in distance education courses.
2. All web-based material shall be tested for ADA compliance
3. Courses provide SWD (Students With Disabilities) information for students in the course syllabi.

## **Financial Aid**

Financial aid application assistance is provided electronically and documents can be submitted electronically.

## **Evaluation and Assessment**

1. Distance education courses are evaluated according to the same online course evaluation procedures and instruments used for campus-based courses.
2. The Center for Distance Education evaluates enrollment figures and maintains 5-year trend reports to assess the effectiveness of distance education courses and programs.