

**SECTION 15**  
**POLICIES PERTAINING TO THE PROVISION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

**General Information:**

Distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the course instruction (interactions between students and instructors and among students) occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Distance education instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous, and may employ correspondence study, audio, video, computer technologies, or any combination of the preceding. To facilitate distance educational activities, the university will maintain a *Distance Education Handbook* which will include expanded definitions and interpretations of the policies below.

Unless otherwise stated, all university policies, standards, and guidelines for on and off-campus instruction apply to distance education.

**UWSP Administrative Responsibilities and Support**

The university acknowledges that distance education, while offering flexibility to students, concomitantly imposes additional instructor responsibilities. To achieve the learning outcomes of each class offering, the university shall assure that the institution's administrative policies and procedures support an effective, equitable, and efficient distance education infrastructure with sufficient resource allocation to maintain the quality of offerings and services.

To provide this support, the university will maintain a central repository for distance education program information and a support structure for facilitating the development and refinement of distance education programs, policies, procedures, and services university-wide.

The university will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the academic and support services provided to instructors in online courses and utilize these results for improvement. Similarly, to facilitate student retention and achievement, the assessment results pertaining to programming and support will also be utilized to improve student services.

**Distance Education Pricing**

Distance education course prices will be determined by the UWSP Distance Education Pricing Policy in accordance with UW System Distance Education Pricing Principle (see: <http://www.uwsa.edu/acss/planning/depricing.htm>) and UW System Tuition and Fee Policies for Credit Instruction (see: <http://www.uwsa.edu/fadmin/fppp/fppp44.htm>).

**Course Approvals, Coding, Delivery, Evaluation, and Ownership**

**Course Approvals**

To ensure compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and to meet Universal Design standards, the distance education course approval process will include a review of course content and methodologies by departments and/or units prior to submission of curriculum proposals to the University Curriculum Committee. Courses (and individual sections of courses offered through

distance education) will meet the minimum requirements detailed in the course development checklist located in the *UWSP Distance Education Handbook*. Additional academic standards and criteria may be established by departments or units.

### **Course Coding**

All distance education courses and sections will be coded and clearly identified in the course catalog and timetable. Consistency of codes will be utilized throughout university documentation. Coding definitions can be located in the *UWSP Distance Education Handbook*.

### **Course Delivery**

All course delivery technologies must comply with all applicable statutes and laws (e.g., FERPA, copyright). To assure compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, all programs, services, and activities offered via distance education must be accessible to, and usable by, persons with documented disabilities who have met the technical and academic standards for admission.

Provision of necessary technologies and pedagogies to ensure course accessibility will be provided by the instructor of the distance education course, with support and leadership by the relevant contact person from Information Technology. All instructors should understand the university can only guarantee technical support for distance education courses that use the current Learning Management System (LMS) adopted by the university system (e.g. Desire2Learn). If an alternative LMS or related programs are utilized, the university cannot ensure technical and design assistance. Additionally, alternative LMS or online tools must not provide storage or distribution of student education records. To ensure FERPA compliance, consultation with the university Information Technology when selecting third-party online tools or programs not currently endorsed by the university is required.

Students engaged in assignments requiring posting of work published online (including blogs and social media) should give consent to this publication and be provided with an alternate assignment if they do not wish to have their work disclosed. A statement identifying this option should be included in the syllabus.

Instructors engaged in distance education shall have academic freedom as teachers and researchers in full accordance with the provisions of the 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure*, including "freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject" and "full freedom in research and in the publication of the results."

Methods of presentation and course materials are to be under the control of the instructor assigned to develop and/or teach the distance education course. Supervision by the instructor's colleagues within the department or program shall be subject to the usual norms and responsibilities of oversight associated with the department.

### **Course Evaluation**

All distance education courses and programs will be assessed and evaluated according to the course evaluation procedures in effect for on-campus courses. Additional departmental course evaluation criteria and procedures established for on-campus courses may be modified and implemented for distance education courses.

Student evaluations in online, hybrid, and Continuing Education courses will be conducted regularly and may be considered in personnel decisions, instructional improvement, and recognition, as outlined in the *University Handbook* (Chapter 4A, Section 2 and Chapter 4B, Section 3). The Student Evaluation of Online Course Instruction Form and supporting information is located in the *University Handbook* (Chapter 4D, Section 15).

### **Course Ownership**

All course content ownership considerations shall be governed by the UW System Copyrightable Instructions Materials Ownership, Use and Control policy (<http://www.uwsa.edu/fadmin/gapp/gapp27.htm>) and campus policies (*University Handbook* Chapter 9, Section 5). Unless mutually agreed upon explicitly in the contract, the university affirms that instructors retain the intellectual property rights for materials produced while under contract, including instructional materials.

## **Instructor Qualifications, Responsibilities, Support and Training, and Compensation**

### **Instructor Qualifications**

All courses and sections offered via distance education shall have a qualified instructor approved and assigned by the appropriate department head. The qualifications, skills, and experience level for distance education instructors should be comparable to instructors engaged in face-to-face instruction. Departments shall ensure that instructors assigned to distance education courses are not only qualified to meet the learning objectives of the course, but also qualified to support the program learning outcomes. Finally, departments shall ensure that instructors assigned to distance education courses possess the necessary technical and pedagogical skills to accomplish excellent distance education instruction.

### **Instructor Responsibilities**

The distance education course instructor shall retain the primary responsibility and authority for the academic management and course content of the assigned course. Current and relevant content and methodologies are expected and the instructor and/or sponsoring program of the course are responsible for regularly reviewing and updating course content. The instructor is expected to deliver accurate information and shall not include in the content of the course anything which the instructor knows to constitute libel, invasion of privacy, infringement of copyright or other literary rights, or otherwise violate the legal rights of any persons.

### **Instructor Support and Training**

Instructors shall be provided sufficient development opportunities, training, services, and resources to ensure an effective and efficient distance education teaching and learning environment. The

university shall provide instructional resources to promote structural consistency across course offerings. This includes providing sample syllabi and course Learning Management System templates.

All faculty and instructional staff providing a distance education course shall be required to complete an online or face-to-face training which will include communication of all applicable federal, state, and university policies which impact distance education courses and instructional technologies and methodologies. All instructors shall complete this training prior to their first distance education instructional assignment, or as soon as practicable.

### **Instructor Compensation**

Calculation of load for instruction of distance education courses will be conducted in the same manner as face-to-face courses, and seat capacities should remain consistent between face-to-face and distance education offerings. Full-time faculty may teach online as part of their teaching load, or may be appointed on overload at the applicable pay rate in accordance with established university policy. Excess enrollment will be considered as an overload, or additional sections with compensation and load reassignment calculated by the same methods used for face-to-face courses. Instructors may be remunerated for additional effort in serving distance education students as consistent with the particular policies set by the individual department or college and in accordance with established university policy.

### **Students and Student Support Services**

#### **IT Help Desk**

Information Technology HELP Desk will provide assistance to all distance education students for IT supported technologies.

#### **Online Distance Education Student Orientation**

Current information regarding on-campus services will be made available online and accessible to the distance education learner and this information will be provided in an online student orientation provided for each registered distance learner. This orientation is designed to familiarize new and prospective students with the online learning environment.

#### **Evaluation of Academic and Support Services for Distance Education Students**

The university will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the academic and support services provided to students in online courses and the results will be used for improvement. Evaluations will examine the scheduling of support services, effectiveness of online orientation, advising, and learning resources.