



POLICY STATEMENT

NO. 7.07.00

COORDINATED BY: Office of Strategic Initiatives

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<https://www.lsus.edu/offices-and-services/policies-and-manuals/policy-statements>

SUBJECT: DISTANCE LEARNING

I. PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for the successful management and delivery of academic credit through online learning platforms.

II. DEFINITIONS

Online Course: A course in which all required contact hours are completed exclusively via the LMS.

Online Education: An educational environment in which students can access course-related materials, resources, and communicate with other students or a faculty member via synchronous (live interactive) or asynchronous (anytime, anywhere) delivery methods via a Learning Management System (LMS). Generally, faculty instructors are not in the same location as the students they are teaching.

Online Learners: Students who receive entire programs and/or course content virtually via the LMS.

Online Program: An academic program (comprised of online courses) in which the entirety of the program is delivered virtually via the LMS.

SACSCOC – Definition of Distance Education: “For purpose of the Commission on College’s accreditation review, distance education is a formal educational

process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous.” SACSCOC – Policy Statement on Distance and Correspondence Education

III. OPERATING PROCEDURES

Approval of an Online Degree Program

The approval of a new degree program, regardless of modality, at the University level follows the path from faculty member(s) to Department Chair, to College Courses and Curricula Committee, to College Dean, to University Courses and Curricula Committee, to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Additionally, in order to offer a new degree program, approval must be gained through the LSU Board of Supervisors and the Louisiana Board of Regents (see Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for more information). If a degree program is to be offered via distance education, the degree program must be approved to be offered online through the LSU Board of Supervisors.

Faculty Qualifications

Faculty engaged in the delivery of online courses/programs must meet the same qualifications as those teaching face-to-face as outlined in LSUS Policy Statement 2.27.00. LSUS gives primary consideration to the highest degree earned in a discipline, preferably a terminal degree or a master’s degree. Other considerations are certifications, professional licensure, or experience in the field.

Faculty Teaching Review

According to LSUS Policy Statement 2.18.01, Section II.H., faculty shall be annually evaluated and mentored on their teaching effectiveness by their Department Chair. This effectiveness includes all teaching modalities. The Peer Observation Form, available to Chairs on the University global drive, is used for both face-to-face and online classes. Faculty receive opportunities for professional development to enhance teaching effectiveness through programming from the Office of Online Learning, as well as attendance at professional development programming online and through conferences.

Course Content

Regardless of the format in which a course is delivered, all courses at LSUS require equivalent student-to-instructor and student-to-student interaction. This is achieved in teaching via the online modality through interaction and learning in asynchronous discussions, group work, and regular tests/exams of the course material. Learning outcomes should be equivalent for a class regardless of the method of delivery.

All existing courses at LSUS have been approved through the Courses and Curricula (C&C) process, which begins with department and college review committees and ends with the Faculty Senate committee charged with overseeing curricula as part of faculty governance recommending courses and curricula to the Chief Academic Officer (Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs??) for approval. This Senate committee evaluates courses to ensure appropriate academic rigor and scope according to its established criteria published in its Manual, as well as to avoid duplication of content. New courses, including those being taught online, must be approved through the traditional C&C process and meet all LSUS standards.

Admission of Students into Online Degree Programs

The admission criteria for undergraduate online degree programs mirror the requirements for a face-to-face student. All students must meet the minimum entrance requirements as defined on the LSUS Admissions webpage (<https://www.lsus.edu/admissions-and-financial-aid>), regardless of the method of degree program delivery. Admission requirements to a graduate program are determined by the faculty of the specific graduate program, with the understanding that the basic admission for post-baccalaureate programs are to have earned an undergraduate degree with at least a 2.0 grade point average. Individual programs may provide further stipulations for admission into their programs.

Verification of Student Identity in Online Courses/Programs

In accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), LSUS verifies student identification via secure username and passwords, and through proctored exams. Verification of student identity is documented in LSUS Policy Statement 7.08.00.

Privacy of Student Information in Online Courses/Programs

LSUS takes the privacy of student information in an online course or program seriously and adheres to the governance of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). All faculty, regardless of mode of delivery, must comply with federal regulations as documented in LSUS Policy Statement 7.09.00.

Tuition and Fees

The cost of a credit hour for an online course may differ from that of a traditional face-to-face course. The LSUS Administration is permitted to determine if the cost of a student credit hour in a distance education program is more than that of a course offered in a traditional face-to-face format, and can also determine if there is a price differential between discipline-specific distance education programs. In order to charge a different tuition than that of a face-to-face course, permission must be secured in writing from the LSU President and the LSU Board of Supervisors.


State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement

LSUS abides by all requirements as outlined in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), which oversees and sets comparable national standards for the offering of post-secondary distance education courses and programs. LSUS cannot offer online courses and programs in states that do not have SARA approval, unless LSUS has received separate approval from that state. Access to LSUS' online courses and programs is available to all students in SARA states.

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AUTHORIZED BY:

DocuSigned by:

C5A51FB73265474...
Julie Lessiter
Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives

01/08/2021
Date Signed

APPROVED BY:

DocuSigned by:

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Lawrence Clark
Chancellor

01/08/2021
Date Signed