

**CAROLINAS COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES  
POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

Section II – Academic/Student

**SUBJECT:** DISTANCE EDUCATION

**REVIEWER(S):** Provost\*  
Teaching and Learning Committee Chair

**Related Policies to Consult:**

CCHS Policies: [Allocation and Use of Information Technology \(Sec. I\)](#)  
[Curriculum Development, Review, and Approval \(Sec. II\)](#)  
[Substantive Change \(Sec. I\)](#)  
[Accommodating Special Needs \(Sec. II\)](#)

CHS Policies: [ADM240.07 Ownership and Commercialization of Intellectual Property](#)  
[IS.PHI 600.01 Communications Environment Acceptable Use](#)

**I. POLICY**

Carolinas College of Health Sciences (CCHS) defines distance education as instructional activity that occurs with a separation by time or space between the student and the instructor. The purpose of offering distance education is to expand the educational opportunities in health care and provide students with alternative methods of learning. Distance education is an optional mode of instruction. Nothing in this policy should imply that distance education is a preferred or required mode of instruction. All current policies and services that apply to faculty and students involved in on-campus or “traditional” courses apply to distance education courses unless otherwise specified below.

**II. PROCEDURE**

A. Definitions

Any course that is defined as a distance education course must seek approval from the learning resources committee according to procedure outlined in section B of this policy. For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Type of course	Percentage of content delivered online	Description of course activities
Traditional	0%	Course with no online technology used
Web-enhanced	1% - 25%	A traditional course that meets in the classroom for most of the regularly scheduled class time but uses web-based technology for purposes of supplementing the course by publishing course materials, delivering lectures, facilitating discussions, extending office hours, posting course grades, etc.
Hybrid	26% - 50%	A course the blends instructional methodologies so that a portion of regularly scheduled class time is replaced with online activities.
Online	51% - 100%	A course in which most or all of the content is delivered online. May have only a few or no required face-to-face meetings.

The percentage of content delivered online will be calculated based on the number of contact hours in the course. If one portion of a course (e.g., lecture, lab, practicum) is completely online, then the course will be defined as a hybrid.

B. Initial Internal approval

1. The course approval process originates in the academic programs. Faculty wishing to add a new course or make changes in course delivery to an existing course should submit an Online Course Approval form to the appropriate dean or program director at the beginning of the semester prior to the semester of course delivery. The dean or program director will monitor the percentage of offerings in online format to ensure that the appropriate percentage is maintained. A course syllabus should be included with the approval form. The course syllabus should clearly demonstrate that the course covers the same amount of material that would normally be expected if the class were a traditional classroom-based course. In addition, the course syllabus should contain the following statement regarding technology and orientation to the course web site:

“This course is a [insert distance education course type] course using the Carolinas College Information Portal. A general college orientation to this learning platform is available in addition to a course specific orientation on the first day of class. You will be required to access the internet, as well as, software programs including but not limited to, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Adobe Acrobat, and Windows Media Player. Should you be unable to access these software applications from your home, you may use the computer resources lab at the college to complete assignments. The information portal site is <http://online.carolinacollege.edu>.”

2. All new distance education courses also should go through the established practice and process at the college for the approval of new courses by undergoing review and approval by the appropriate curriculum committee outlined in the CCHS Curriculum Review and Approval policy.
3. Once the request has been approved by the dean or program director (and curriculum committee, if necessary), the online course approval form and course syllabus should be submitted to the teaching and learning committee for review and approval.
4. If the course is approved by the teaching and learning committee, the online course approval form should be signed and copied to the manager, institutional technology. A course will be created within the software platform used to deliver distance education courses (e.g., Moodle). This process should be completed at least 10 weeks prior to the semester of course delivery so that course changes can be incorporated into the published course schedule.

C. External approval

Academic program directors are responsible for satisfying all approval and accreditation requirements concerning distance education and notification of substantive changes before students are enrolled in a distance education course, in accordance with the CCHS Substantive Change policy. In order to meet standard guidelines for accrediting body approval, proposals should be reviewed and submitted to the appropriate accrediting body at least four months prior to the semester of course delivery.

D. Renewals of Internal approval

1. Approvals for distance education courses are considered ongoing in subsequent semesters, unless a substantive change is made to the teaching methodology (i.e., change in distance education course definition). Other changes in courses should seek approval within the appropriate academic department.

2. If substantive changes are approved by the teaching and learning committee, the manager, institutional technology and registrar are notified by the teaching and learning committee chair.

#### E. Course Enrollment

1. The manager, institutional technology is responsible for population of distance education courses the Wednesday before each term begins or on Monday for Wednesday start of term. Student lists are created based on enrollment information the week before classes begin.
2. During the first week of classes, faculty members must confirm registration for those students who add courses after the start of term. Once registration is confirmed, faculty members provide the enrollment keys to students to gain access to course web sites.
3. For course withdrawals that occur once the add/drop period is complete, program staff assistants save the course grades up until the time of the enrollment change and then unenroll students from course web sites.
4. Students who register in distance education courses/programs are responsible for completing all of the academic assignments and methods of assessment required in each course/program.
5. To assist in verifying the identity of individual students in distance education courses/programs, one or more of the following methodologies must be used: a secure log-in and password, or proctored examinations.
6. Information on costs associated with verifying student identity in a distance education course/program will be provided to the students at the time of enrollment in the course or program.

#### F. Curriculum and Instruction

1. Distance education courses should demonstrate that they provide the opportunity for substantial and timely interactions between faculty and students and among students comparable to the level of interactions in the same course offered in a traditional format. Comparability of interaction, assignments, and content are evaluated based on descriptions outlined in course syllabi.\*
2. The faculty members of each academic program assume responsibility for and exercise oversight of distance education, ensuring both the rigor of the courses and the quality of instruction.\*
3. Ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourse, or other media products will be governed by the CHS policy number ADM 260.01 - Ownership, and Commercialization of Intellectual Property.
4. The college should provide faculty support services specifically related to teaching via an electronic system, such as adequate equipment and software (in accordance with CCHS Allocation and Use of Information Technology Policy).\*
5. The college should provide appropriate training for faculty who teach using technology.\* All faculty involved in distance education courses should be proficient in the development and delivery of distance education. Faculty teaching hybrid or online courses will be required to complete the appropriate training modules available on the college learning platform (e.g., Moodle).

#### G. Evaluation and Assessment:

1. The college should assess student capability to succeed in distance education courses and apply this information to admission and recruitment policies and decisions.\* Informing students of the skills and technology that are needed for particular distance education courses will allow the student the opportunity to do a self-assessment regarding their capability to succeed in the course. In addition, faculty can, at the beginning of each semester, discuss requirements with students and/or create assignments that require students to demonstrate the necessary skills to succeed in the course.

2. Distance education courses should be evaluated for course effectiveness, including assessments of student learning, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction.\* Courses should be evaluated following the established procedures and schedules for course evaluation and will be included in the regular program review cycle. The teaching and learning committee is responsible for the development and oversight of the evaluation process for distance education courses, in addition to the academic program directors.
3. Hybrid and online courses will undergo a comprehensive review using the Course Quality Rubric (Appendix A) at least every three years. A peer review will be completed to assess course elements such as ease of navigation, clarity of instruction, assessment methods, learner interaction, engagement, and support, and course technology. Faculty in courses that are being peer reviewed will complete an instructor's worksheet to initiate the review process (Appendix B). Peer reviews will revise the assigned course in accordance with outlined guidelines (Appendix C). In the years a comprehensive review is not required, faculty will submit a checklist indicating compliance with the standards outlined in the Course Quality Rubric.
4. If a hybrid or online course does not meet standards:
  - a. The faculty member will be notified immediately and provided with specific reasons for the outcome and recommendations for improvement
  - b. The appropriate dean or program director will be notified that the course did not meet quality standards
  - c. The dean/program director and faculty member will develop a plan to address areas requiring improvement
  - d. After improvements have been completed, the faculty member will submit the course for a review of problematic areas
  - e. The course must meet the quality standards prior to the next semester in which the course is offered. If the course does not meet the appropriate quality standards within that time frame, it will not be offered in a hybrid or online format at the time of the next course offering.
5. Primary responsibility for hybrid and online course oversight will return to the program dean or director and courses will be evaluated according to established procedures for course evaluation.
6. Hybrid and online courses will undergo a new comprehensive peer review every three years.

#### H. Student Support

1. Students enrolled in distance education courses or programs are provided the same library, financial, student and learning resources as those students enrolled in traditional courses.
2. Distance education courses are identified as such (i.e., web-enhanced, hybrid, or online) prior to the publication deadline for the course schedule so that students can be notified that (1) internet access is required for the course, and (2) the required face-to-face meeting time may be reduced.
3. Students complete a college-wide orientation to computer resources that includes information pertaining to using software used for distance education courses, college e-mail, and computer lab use. In addition, faculty members provide course-specific orientation to course web sites at the beginning of the semester. An online orientation will also cover information pertaining to academic affairs and procedures, student support, business and financial aid information and library resources.
4. As with traditional, on-campus courses, students taking distance education courses may request accommodations to meet individual learning needs. Students seeking accommodations should review the Accommodating Special Needs policy and are encouraged to contact the dean of student affairs and enrollment management.
5. Students are required to comply with the CHS Policy IS.PHI 600.01 - Communications Environment Acceptable Use policy.

- I. Faculty:
  - 1. All faculty members teaching distance education courses meet the same criteria set by the Southern Association of Colleges and School's Commission on Colleges as all college faculty.
  - 2. Teaching distance education courses is considered a part of the regular teaching load.
  - 3. Members of the faculty are required to comply with the CHS Policy IS.PHI 600.01 - Communications Environment Acceptable Use policy.
  
- J. Facilities and Finances:
  - 1. CCHS possesses the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education.\* Appropriate equipment and software should be distributed in accordance with the CCHS Allocation and Use of Information Technology policy. The manager, instructional technology and learning technology specialist are available for technical support. Technical support is available to resolve problems within a reasonable time frame (within 24 hours).
  - 2. The teaching and learning resources committee ensures that planning, budgeting, and policy development processes reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education course as a part of regular committee functions.\*
  
- K. The Distance Education policy and procedure will be reviewed bi-annually.

**III. APPROVAL**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: President Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\* The Southern Association of Schools and Colleges (SACS) has developed guidelines for distance education. The CCHS policy outlined above reflects many of the SACS guidelines set forth in 6/1997, updated in 12/2006, revised in 6/2010 and edited in 1/2012. The language used in the SACS guidelines has been incorporated into this policy, when deemed appropriate, but has been adapted to reflect conditions at CCHS. For the text of the SACS guidelines, please refer to <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Distance%20and%20correspondence%20policy%20final.pdf>.

**Appendix A**  
Carolinas College of Health Sciences  
**Online Course Peer Review**

<b>Course Number:</b>	
<b>Instructor(s):</b>	
<b>Peer Review Team Leader:</b>	
<b>Additional Peer Reviewers:</b>	
<b>Date of Review Completion:</b>	
<b>Total Points Awarded:</b>	

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Meets expectations: 60 points or more (max of 70) and 'yes' answered to all 3-point essential standards: I.1, I.2, II.1, II.2, III.3, III.2, III.3, IV.1, V.1, V.2, VI.1, VII.1, VIII.1, VIII.2</b>		

<p>General Course Comments from Review Team:</p>
--

<p>Specific feedback as requested by the course designer on the instructor worksheet:</p>
---

**I. COURSE OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION**

**General Review Standard:** The overall design of the course, navigational information, as well as course, instructor, and student information are made transparent to the student at the beginning of the course.

Specific Review Standards	Points	Yes	No	Notes/Recommendations
I.1 There is a statement introducing the student to the course, including how to get started, the purpose and structure of the course, and minimum technical skills needed.	3			
I.2 Course layout, as designed by the instructor, is easy to navigate and understand.	3			
I.3 Expectations regarding academic honesty, including plagiarism concerns, and other policies are clearly stated in the instructor's course syllabus.	2			
I.4 Netiquette guidelines for the course, including etiquette regarding discussions and email communications, are clearly stated.	1			
I.5 The self-introduction by the instructor is available and appropriate.	1			
I.6 Students are requested to introduce themselves to the class.	1			
<b>STANDARD I TOTAL</b>				

Additional Comments: The following recommendations of the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments.

## II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**General Review Standard:** Learning objectives are clearly defined and explained. They assist the learner to focus on learning activities.

Specific Review Standards	Points	Yes	No	Notes/Recommendations
II.1 The course learning objectives are observable, measurable, and achievable.	3			
II.2 Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate, clearly written, and easy to understand.	3			
II.3 Learning activities are relevant to course outcomes.	2			
<b>STANDARD II TOTAL</b>				

Additional Comments: The following recommendations of the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments.

--

## III. ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT

**General Review Standard:** Assessment strategies are established ways to measure effective learning, assess learner progress by reference to stated objectives, and are designed as essential to the learning process.

Specific Review Standards	Points	Yes	No	Notes/Recommendations
III.1 Multiple methods of assessment are aligned with and measure the achievement of stated course outcomes and learning objectives.	3			
III.2 The grading policy is easy to locate and understand.	3			
III.3 Assessment and measurement strategies provide appropriate feedback to the learner.	3			
III.4 The types of assessments selected are appropriate for the distance learning environment.	2			



III.5 The grade-book tool or alternative communication method is utilized so that students may monitor their course progress.	1			
III.6 The methods used for submitting assessments are appropriate and ensure the privacy of the student work.	1			
<b>STANDARD III TOTAL</b>				

Additional Comments: The following recommendations of the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments.

#### **IV. RESOURCES AND MATERIALS**

**General Review Standard:** Instructional materials are designed to be sufficiently comprehensive to achieve announced objectives and learning outcomes.

Specific Review Standards	Points	Yes	No	Notes/Recommendations
IV.1 The instructional materials have sufficient depth in content and are sufficiently comprehensive for the student to meet the stated learning objectives.	3			
IV.2 Resources and materials are easily accessible to and usable by the learners.	2			
IV.3 The elements of the course-learning content, instructional methods, technologies, and course materials complement each other.	1			
IV.4 All instructional materials are presented in a format appropriate to the online environment.	1			
<b>STANDARD IV TOTAL</b>				

Additional Comments: The following recommendations of the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments.

**V. LEARNER INTERACTION**

**General Review Standard:** Forms of interaction incorporated in the course motivate students and promote learning

Specific Review Standards	Points	Yes	No	Notes/Recommendations
V.1 The course design provides learning activities to foster instructor-student, content-student, and if appropriate, student-student interaction.	3			
V.2 The student requirements for course interaction are clearly articulated.	3			
V.3 Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability (turn-around time for email, grades posted, etc.)	2			
V.4 The course design provides a variety of opportunities for interaction between instructor and learner.	2			
V.5 Directions for contacting instructor are clear and specific.	2			
<b>STANDARD V TOTAL</b>				

Additional Comments: The following recommendations of the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments.

**VI. COURSE TECHNOLOGY**

**General Review Standard:** To enhance student learning, course technology should enrich instruction and foster learner interactivity.

Specific Review Standards	Points	Yes	No	Notes/Recommendations
VI.1 The selection and use of tools and media supports the course outcomes and is integrated with texts and lesson assignments.	3			
VI.2 The selection and use of tools and media enhances learner interactivity and guides the student to become a more active learner.	2			
VI.3 The course contains links to any additional requirements such as browser plug-ins, media players or additional software.	2			
VI.4 The course technologies are readily accessible.	2			
VI.5 Instructions for accessing course-required resources at a distance (e.g., AHEC library, websites) are clear and easy to follow.	2			
<b>STANDARD VI TOTAL</b>				

Additional Comments: The following recommendations of the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments.

**VII. LEARNER SUPPORT**

**General Review Standard:** Courses are effectively supported for learners through fully accessible modes of delivery, resources, and learner support.

Specific Review Standards	Points	Yes	No	Notes/Recommendations
VII.1 There is a clear description of the technical support and academic student	3			

support available				
STANDARD VII TOTAL				

Additional Comments: The following recommendations of the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments.

**VIII. ADA AND COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE**

**General Review Standard:** Access to course resources is in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and U.S. copyright laws are followed.

Specific Review Standards	Points	Yes	No	Notes/Recommendations
VIII.1 There is evidence of effort to recognize the importance of ADA requirements (such as equivalent alternatives to auditory and visual content, Web page links that are self-describing and meaningful, and course design facilitates readability and minimizes distractions).	3			
VIII.2 No apparent violations of copyright law exist within the course content or related materials.	3			
STANDARD VIII TOTAL				

Additional Comments: The following recommendations of the review team are designed to assist in advancing implementation of the General Standard to the next level or in refining accomplishments.

**Appendix B**  
Online Course Peer Review  
**Instructor Worksheet**

This worksheet represents the self-report component of the peer course review process.

BASIC COURSE INFORMATION

1. Instructor name:
2. Instructor e-mail (note that reviewers may contact you directly with questions/suggestions during the review process):
3. Course Number (e.g., ENG 1010):
4. Course Title:
5. Course Access URL:
6. Where do the course- and unit/chapter-level objectives appear in the course?
7. Explain how the learning objectives are appropriate for the level of the course.
8. List the major instructional materials required and/or recommended for the course (e.g., textbooks):
9. Describe what, if any, ways you have attempted to ensure the course is designed to be accessible to students with disabilities.
10. Does the course include any real-time instructor/student interaction? If yes, please describe.
11. In what ways are students required to interact online with the instructor?
12. Are students asked to introduce themselves to the class?
13. Is student-to-student interaction (e.g., discussion boards, in forums, in group work) appropriate in this course?
14. Identify any particular aspects of this course you want to ask for feedback on from the Review Team.
15. Please provide any other information you want to communicate to the Review Team about your course.

## Appendix C

### Instructions for Completing Online Course Peer Review

A variation on the Quality Matters (QM) Rubric will be used as a basis for completing peer reviews of our online courses. The QM Rubric takes a holistic view of the course and that's why it's so important that the learning objectives **ALIGN** with the assessments, resources and materials, student interaction, and technology standards. **Alignment** refers to the direct link between the learning objectives and the assessments and measurements, resources and materials, learner engagement, and course technology.

The rubric tells us that learning objectives must describe measurable outcomes and address content mastery, critical thinking, and learning skills. But measurable objectives are not very useful unless students engage with learning activities, materials, and other resources that are likely to help them achieve those objectives. For example, we would not expect someone to learn how to give a persuasive speech solely by reading a written account of how it's done. The rubric helps reviewers check that course materials, learning activities and course technology provide the necessary information and practice to help students achieve the stated objectives. The QM rubric also encourages reviewers to examine the alignment of the types of assessments used in a course with both the objectives and the learning activities in that course. If the objective says that students should be able to construct a well-written essay, an appropriate assessment would not be a multiple choice test. In that case, the objective and the assessment would not be properly aligned.

1. Determining if a standard is met:
  - a. Refer to the QM Rubric for specific annotations describing how different standards can be met.
  - b. During a course review, we are not looking for "just good enough." Rather, we are looking for above average -- approximately 85% or B+. Although this is somewhat subjective, the basis for the decision is based on the evidence found in the course compared to the standard and its annotation. Standards are based in the research literature and widely accepted standards about effective online learning.
  - c. The emphasis on above average is also the reason that we will choose to review "mature" courses -- those that have been taught at least two semesters. If the course has been taught over several semesters, the faculty developer/instructor has had time to "fine tune" the course and to make management and content improvements.
2. Providing feedback/comments:
  - a. The recommendations made by all of the reviewers are compiled and given to the faculty developer/instructor. This results in a rich set of recommendations from the reviewers indicating the **strengths of the course, areas for improvement** and **specific recommendations and suggestions** for improving the course. As a course reviewer, you should strive to make recommendations for each specific review standard. After all, this may be the only time that a colleague looks at this course in-depth and with "high standards."
  - b. When a course does NOT yet meet a standard, it is **mandatory** to write a recommendation for improvement on that standard. Your recommendation will state what is necessary in order for the standard to be met. If the standard is one of the essential standards (those assigned with 3 points), the instructor will need to use your recommendation in order to revise the course before it passes the peer review process.

- c. Even when courses "meet expectations," there may still be many opportunities for improvement, and as a course reviewer, you should strive to offer suggestions for improvement. Feedback is key to quality courses!
- d. Effective recommendations should include reference to evidence from the course and be:
  - Constructive
  - Specific
  - Measurable
  - Sensitive
  - Balanced
  - Example: The Start Here button was a great idea, but when I read the information it contained, I still couldn't tell exactly how to begin the course. It might be very helpful to include a prominent link and directions about what students should do next to actually begin the first lesson of the course.

As you write recommendations, keep the following points in mind:

- There will be recommendations from two reviewers (you and one other reviewer); you are not responsible for reminding the instructor of ALL the specifics of the standards. Choose the most critical, relevant, useful points for improving this course... and communicate them as clearly and concisely as possible.
- Resist the temptation to share too many "this is what I do in MY course" comments. So much of online course design is personal preference that it will likely not be helpful to suggest that participants use your preferred way. It's best to approach the recommendations from a student perspective and in a collegial tone. Avoid recommendations that might appear arrogant ... that set you up as the expert and the faculty developer/instructor as subordinate. This process should be about colleagues helping colleagues, not "grading" another's work.
- No online course is perfect (even yours!) and we can all benefit from sharing ideas and suggestions. Be sure to provide suggestions for improvement.