Distance Education Review-Team Report Appendix

Institutions must have WSCUC approval to utilize distance education in the delivery of any of its programs in any amount, and are required to seek WSCUC approval for programs where 50% or more of the program can be completed through distance education. The institution’s use of distance education in the delivery of its programs is reviewed as part of a comprehensive evaluation of the institution including an Accreditation Visit or Seeking Accreditation Visit.

**Distance Education** is defined as:

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support **regular and substantive interaction** between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies that may be used to offer distance education include:

* The internet;
* One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband, fiber optic, satellite, or wireless communication devices;
* Audioconference;
* Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in this definition

In keeping with federal expectations, WSCUC requires institutions that utilize distance education in the delivery of programs to demonstrate “Faculty-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction” and“Academic Engagement” as defined by the federal regulations (see Code of Federal Regulations §600.2).

**Regular and Substantive Interaction** is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

(i) Providing direct instruction;

(ii) Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;

(iii) Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;

(iv) Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or

(v) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency -

(i) Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and

(ii) Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

**Academic Engagement** requires active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student's course of study that –

(1) Is defined by the institution in accordance with any applicable requirements of its State or accrediting agency;

(2) Includes, but is not limited to -

(i) Attending a synchronous class, lecture, recitation, or field or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students;

(ii) Submitting an academic assignment;

(iii) Taking an assessment or an exam;

(iv) Participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction;

(v) Participating in a study group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or

(vi) Interacting with an instructor about academic matters

Please complete either Section A for institutions that offer distance education programs approved by WSCUC or are 100% distance education institutions OR Section B for institutions that utilize distance education in the delivery of programs that do not rise to the level of a WSCUC approved distance education program.

**Institution**:

**Type of Visit**:

**Name of reviewer/s**:

**Date/s of review**:

**Section Completed**: \_\_ A OR \_\_B

A completed copy of this form should be appended to the team report for all comprehensive visits and for other visits as applicable. Teams can use the institutional report to begin their investigation, then, use the visit to confirm claims and further surface possible concerns. Teams are not required to include a narrative about this in the team report but may include recommendations, as appropriate, in the Findings and Recommendations section of the team report.

**SECTION A:** Institutions with Approved Distance Education Programs

1. Programs and courses reviewed (please list)
2. Background Information (number of programs offered by distance education; degree levels; FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs; history of offering distance education; percentage growth in distance education offerings and enrollment; platform, formats, and/or delivery method)
3. Nature of the review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

# Observations and Findings

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| **Lines of Inquiry** | **Observations and Findings** | **Follow-up Required**  **(identify the issues)** |
| *Fit with Mission.* How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How are distance education offerings planned, funded, and operationalized? |  |  |
| *Connection to the Institution.* How are distance education students integrated into the life and culture of the institution? |  |  |
| *Quality of the DE Infrastructure.* Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups? |  |  |
| *Student Support Services:* What is the institution’s capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services, academic support and other services appropriate to distance modality? What do data show about the effectiveness of the services? |  |  |
| *Faculty.* Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? Do they teach only online courses? In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? How are faculty trained and supported to teach in this modality? |  |  |
| *Curriculum and Delivery.* Who designs the distance education programs and courses? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to on-ground offerings? (Submit credit hour report.) |  |  |
| *Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction.* How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction”? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as student/instructor substantive interaction”? |  |  |
| *Academic Engagement.* How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “Academic Engagement”? How is compliance monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement? |  |  |
| *State Licensure Requirements.* Describe, as appropriate, the institution’s process for disclosing to students how state licensure requirements are met by distance education programs, whether licensure requirements are not met by programs, or whether the institution has not determined where licensure requirements are met by the programs. |  |  |
| *Student Identification Verification and Privacy.* What is the institution’s process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment? |  |  |
| *Retention and Graduation.* What data on retention and graduation are collected on students taking online courses and programs? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to on-ground programs and to other institutions’ online offerings? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed? |  |  |
| *Student Learning.* How does the institution assess student learning for online programs and courses? Is this process comparable to that used in on-ground courses? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results of on-ground students, if applicable, or with other online offerings? |  |  |
| *Contracts with Vendors.* Are there any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses? If so, do these comport with the policy on *Agreements with Unaccredited Entities?* |  |  |
| *Quality Assurance Processes:* How are the institution’s quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover distance education? What evidence is provided that distance education programs and courses are educationally effective? |  |  |

**SECTION B**: For Institutions Without Approved Distance Education Programs

1. Courses reviewed (as appropriate; please list)
2. Nature of review (material examined and persons/committees interviewed)

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| *Nature of Online Learning Courses.* How do faculty use distance learning options in face to face courses e.g., blended learning, hybrid learning, hybid flexible (hyflex), flipped classroom, or other instructional strategies that allow student/instructor separation? How extensive is distance learning in the curriculum? |  |  |
| *Faculty and Student Preparation for Distance Education.* What training is offered to faculty who incorporate distance learning in their courses? Can students request a distance learning option for onsite courses? How is their placement in the option determined? What orientation to distance education do students receive? |  |  |
| *Quality of the Distance Education Infrastructure.* Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups? |  |  |
| *Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction.* How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction”? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as student/instructor substantive interaction”? |  |  |
| *Academic Engagement.* How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “Academic Engagement”? How is compliance monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement? |  |  |
| *Student Identification Verification and Privacy*. What is the institution’s process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment? |  |  |
| *Quality Assurance*. What processes are in place to collect data from courses that use some type of remote learning? How are the findings used to improve instruction? |  |  |

*Revised April 2023*