Policy Title:	Distance Learning
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Policy Management Area(s):	Faculty Senate

SUMMARY:

To ensure the highest quality of online instruction at Coastal Carolina University, this policy document articulates specific expectations intended to maximize the academic performance of distance learning students.

POLICY:

I. DEFINITION

Distance education, distance learning and *online learning* refer to a formal educational process in which the majority of course interaction occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction integrates online technologies and teaching strategies, and it may be synchronous or asynchronous.

II. CURRICULUM POLICIES

A. Distance learning instructors are responsible for the integrity of all content used in distance learning course materials, including accuracy, currency, and compliance with copyright laws and related university policies.

B. The development of new distance learning courses and/or programs must follow the same procedures of academic review as those offered traditionally on-site.

C. Course sections offered via distance learning must have identical course catalog descriptions and student learning outcomes as sections taught traditionally on-site.

D. Distance learning courses should identify expectations of student time commitment necessary to complete course requirements successfully.

E. For reporting purposes, an absence in a distance learning course is operationally defined as a missed online submission deadline—such as a quiz, assignment, or discussion post.

F. Distance learning courses must require an initial online submission within the session drop/add period. Students who do not submit may be dropped from the roster.

G. Academic units are responsible for developing distance learning enrollment cap policies consistent with best practices in their disciplines.

H. Distance learning programs must be clearly identified as such in the university course catalog, as well as in all marketing materials, including websites.

I. Distance learners must be informed of any site-based experiences required in a distance learning program or course prior to enrollment.

J. Distance learning courses must utilize D(x) section prefixes in all registration systems.

K. Distance learning courses and programs must align to the University mission and undergo systematic evaluation for continuous improvement.

III. INSTRUCTOR POLICIES

A. Eligibility to teach distance learning courses is determined by the academic unit (Department chair or equivalent) where the course is housed.

B. Criteria for eligibility to teach distance learning courses may include prior teaching experience or completion of the distance learning training sequence offered by CeTEAL.

C. Instructors may be eligible for remuneration and/or load reduction for the development of new distance learning courses in cases of significant institutional need, such as new academic programs. Such remuneration does not preclude ownership of the course content, unless otherwise stated in contractual arrangements.

D. Instructors teaching distance learning courses will be evaluated by students using instruments that include items relevant to the distance learning modality.

IV. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY POLICIES

A. Distance learning instructors hold intellectual property rights on all materials that they create, unless otherwise contracted by the university.

B. The university will claim ownership of intellectual property created by distance learning faculty in certain cases, as identified in the Intellectual Property policy (ACAD- 106).

V.   ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

To authenticate student identities and maintain academic confidentiality, distance learning course materials, communications and assessments should be delivered within online learning management systems that use a secure login and passcode.

VI.   QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

In addition to requirements delineated in the Faculty Manual, academic units are responsible for compliance with the following university quality assurance standards for distance learning courses. (See Appendix I for the complete inventory):

A.   COURSE OVERVIEW – There is an obvious starting point to explain the structure, syllabus and technology for the course, as well as how to communicate with the instructor.

B.   LEARNING OUTCOMES – Student learning outcomes are clearly described, aligned to overall course objectives, and measurable.

C.   LEARNER SUPPORT – Academic and technology support services and processes are clearly described for distance learners.

D.   INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES – Attendance, participation and academic integrity policies are clearly described and include a statement of expectations for all required synchronous and/or site-based experiences.

E.   ASSESSMENT – Course grading policies and assessment criteria are stated clearly. Assessments measure student learning outcomes.

F.   COURSE STRUCTURE – Course structure is logically organized and easily navigated with consistent visual, typographic and semantic designs.

G.   LEARNER INTERACTION – Learners are expected to interact with the instructor, the content and other learners. Communication and interaction policies are clearly described for online discussion, assignment submission and instructor feedback.

H.   INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS – Instructional materials and assignments are current, relevant to course objectives, logically segmented, copyright compliant, and promote learning engagement.

I. ACCESSIBILITY – The course demonstrates a commitment to accommodate all students through the use of accessible technologies and materials. Accessibility policies are clearly stated.

J. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – The course demonstrates a commitment to continuous quality improvement through systematic evaluation.

VII. STUDENT & FACULTY SUPPORT POLICIES

A. Distance learning students have access to adequate advising services to ensure successful academic progress.

B. Distance learning students have access to adequate technology support services managed by ITS and available at coastal.edu/scs.

C. Distance learning students have access to adequate library resources and instruction available at coastal.edu/library/dl/index.html.

D. Distance learning students who meet the university immunization requirements are eligible for on-site access to health and counseling services described at coastal.edu/health and coastal.edu/counseling. Distance learning students are also eligible to purchase school-sponsored health insurance plans.

E. Faculty development in distance learning teaching strategies and technology tools will be continually offered to ensure best practices. Instructors are encouraged to work with CeTEAL when developing their online courses.

VIII. GOVERNANCE

A standing distance learning committee with a representative from each college, COOL, CeTEAL, Library Services, and ITS will continually review distance learning resources and policies to provide feedback to the administration.

IX. FACILITIES AND FINANCES

A. Coastal Carolina University commits to appropriate finances for the development, implementation, management, maintenance, and marketing of distance learning

programming and related resources. Part of its funding strategy to support distance learning will include a distance learning fee added to all D(x) designated courses.

B. Distance learning facility design and management are collaborative processes that require mutual consultation between ITS and respective academic units.

Appendix I
Quality Assurance Inventory for online course development

1. COURSE OVERVIEW – There is an obvious starting point to explain the structure, syllabus and technology for the course, as well as how to communicate with the instructor.

- ❑ "Start Here" Folder or "Getting Started" or other clear starting point
- ❑ Welcome letter or multimedia instructor introduction
- ❑ Instructor contact information, instructor availability, and course communication policy
- ❑ Text or multimedia "course tour" or introduction
- ❑ Complete printable course syllabus available for download and/or online viewing
- ❑ Course outline/schedule with deadlines and important dates readily accessible
- ❑ Online decorum or netiquette expectations are clearly described.
- ❑ Instructor provides an opportunity for students to familiarize themselves with the course structure, content and technology.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES – Student learning outcomes are clearly described, aligned to overall course objectives and measurable.

- ❑ Syllabus contains course objectives and student learning outcomes (required by CCU Faculty Manual) which can be easily located.
- ❑ Student learning outcomes are listed for each course unit/module/chapter and are relevant and measurable.
- ❑ Performance expectations for learning outcomes are clearly stated.

3. LEARNER SUPPORT – Academic and technology support services and processes are clearly described for distance learners.

- ❑ Information for academic support services and processes (Learning Assistance Centers, Counseling Services, etc.) are clearly identified.
- ❑ Information for technology support is easily located (Student Computing Services).
- ❑ Information for other student services is provided.

4. INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES – Attendance, participation and academic integrity policies are clearly described and include a statement of expectations for all required synchronous and/or site-based experiences.

- ❑ Attendance policy (required by CCU Faculty Manual) is listed.
- ❑ Course participation requirements are clearly described.
- ❑ All required synchronous and/or site-based sessions are clearly listed.
- ❑ Academic Integrity Policy and/or a Statement of Community Standards.

5. ASSESSMENT – Course grading policies and assessment criteria are stated clearly. Assessments measure student learning outcomes.

- ❑ Varied assessment activities are clearly described and align to student learning outcomes.
- ❑ Grading policy is included in the syllabus (per CCU Faculty Manual).
- ❑ Performance expectations are clearly described through rubrics, checklists, guidelines or other heuristic documents.
- ❑ Policy and procedures for student feedback and turnaround time are clearly described.

6. COURSE STRUCTURE – Course structure is logically organized and easily navigated with consistent visual, typographic and semantic designs.

- ❑ An obvious navigation schema organizes course materials by theme, timeline or purpose.
- ❑ Course minimum technology requirements and prerequisite skills are clearly stated.
- ❑ Course navigation and technology support student learning outcomes.
- ❑ Course materials compatible for access by multiple devices.
- ❑ Any specialized course technologies are clearly described.

7. LEARNER INTERACTION – Learners are expected to interact with the instructor, the content and other learners. Communication and interaction policies are clearly described for online discussion, assignment submission and instructor feedback.

- ❑ Instructor provides opportunities for students to introduce themselves.
- ❑ Instructor provides opportunities for students to ask questions.
- ❑ Interaction opportunities are varied and align to student learning outcomes.
- ❑ Interaction opportunities support assessments and performance expectations.

8. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS – Instructional materials and assignments are current, relevant to course objectives, logically segmented, copyright compliant and promote learning engagement.

- ❑ Instructional materials are current and relevant to course objectives and student learning outcomes.
- ❑ Instructional materials are logically sequenced and clearly related to learning activities aligned to student learning outcomes.
- ❑ Instructional materials are copyright compliant and include appropriate citations.

9. ACCESSIBILITY – The course demonstrates a commitment to accommodate all students through the use of accessible technologies. Accessibility policies are clearly stated.

- ❑ University accessibility policies are clearly identified, including contact information.
- ❑ Course demonstrates best practices in universal design for students who require accommodations or adaptations.

10. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – The course demonstrates a commitment to continuous quality improvement through systematic evaluation.

- ❑ Course is evaluated and updated based on department/unit guidelines or procedures.
- ❑ Course is evaluated and updated based on instructor and student feedback.
- ❑ Course is updated to ensure currency and accuracy each time it is taught.