



LOMA LINDA
UNIVERSITY

OPERATING POLICY

CATEGORY: ACADEMIC

Effective: April 2015

SUBJECT: DISTANCE EDUCATION

COORDINATOR: PROVOST / OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Preface

Loma Linda University (LLU) is using a growing range of delivery modalities for instructional and educational programs and services including various electronic means; as such, LLU has adopted this policy based on principles of good practice to help ensure that distance learning is characterized by the same expectations for quality, integrity, effectiveness, and mission that apply to more traditional modes of instruction.

This policy reflects WSCUC's¹ standards and criteria for review in addition to federal regulatory requirements regarding distance and correspondence education. It will be reviewed regularly.

Policy Statements

1. The University, schools, and programs will ensure that their distance and correspondence education courses and programs comply with all applicable accreditation requirements including federal regulations, WSCUC, Adventist Accreditation Association, discipline-specific accreditation.
2. The University will confirm that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence course or program is the same person who participates each time in the course or program and is the one who completes it and receives the academic credit (see WCET Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education²). Verification of student identity includes secure login and password, proctored examinations, and other emerging technologies and practices. The University will ensure the protection of student privacy and will notify students prior to class registration of any charges associated with verification of student identity (34 C.F.R. 602.17 (g)).

Mission

3. The development, implementation, and evaluation of all Loma Linda University's courses and programs including those offered via distance or correspondence education must advance the University's published mission.

¹ WSCUC – WASC Senior College and University Commission - <http://www.wascsenior.org/>

² WCET Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education Version 2.0, June 2009-
<http://wcet.wiche.edu/wcet/docs/cigs/studentauthentication/BestPractices.pdf>

Curriculum and Instruction

4. Schools and programs have the responsibility of the rigor and quality of curriculum and instruction of their distance education and correspondence courses. The University has oversight of the development of online courses' instructional design and implementation with evaluation for both whether offered via distance or correspondence education.
5. All University courses and programs including distance education and correspondence education are expected to have clearly defined and appropriate student learning outcomes, including Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ILOs), Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs).
6. The technologies used for the online course will be appropriate to the nature and objectives of the programs and courses, and the expectations concerning the use of such technologies are clearly communicated to students.
7. Faculty will apply University policies and acceptable practices when designing and teaching distance and correspondence education courses including determining the amount and level of credit awarded.

Faculty

8. The schools and programs will ensure that there is a sufficient number of faculty qualified to develop, design, and teach the distance and correspondence courses and programs.
9. Faculty who teach in distance and correspondence education programs and courses will receive appropriate, University-approved training.
10. The University criteria and processes for the evaluation of faculty teaching distance education and correspondence courses and programs will be standardized across the schools.
11. Faculty will offer the same number of regular office hours for online students as required for face-to-face students.

Institutional Effectiveness

12. The comparability of distance and correspondence education courses and programs to campus-based courses and programs will be ensured by the evaluation of educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction.

Library and Learning Resources

13. The University will assess the effectiveness of its provision of library/learning resources and student support services for distance and correspondence education students.
14. Students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources. The University will provide assistance in using the employed technologies.

Student Services

15. Students have adequate access to the range of services appropriate to support the programs offered through distance and correspondence education.

16. Schools and programs must inform all students of their rights and protections through the University's procedure for resolving their complaints.
17. Advertising, recruiting, and admissions information will adequately and accurately represent the programs' requirements, cost, state authorization, and services available to students.
18. The University provides procedures to assure the protection of student information is protected, including when assessing and evaluating students and disseminating results.
19. Schools and programs will make known to the student enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses the type of technological equipment needed for success in the required course interaction. The University will provide assistance in using the employed technologies.

Additional Policy Statements and Definitions

Credit Hour

20. "A credit hour is an amount of work that reasonably approximates not less than
 1. "One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class work each week for approximately...10 to 12 weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or at least the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; *or*
 2. "At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours."
(34 CFR 600.2)

Course Types

21. Correspondence

"(1) A course provided by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced. "(2) If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, the Secretary considers the course to be a correspondence course. (3) A correspondence course is not distance education." *Note:* this is the default federal definition of an online course *unless* it rises to the level of a distance education course."
(34 CFR 600.2)

22. Distance Education

Distance education means education that uses certain technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor. The interaction may be synchronous³ or asynchronous⁴. The technologies may include the Internet; audio conferencing; or one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines fiber optics, satellite, wireless communications devices, and other modalities of electronic interaction. This type of course requires the monitoring of student activity and tracking academic engagement. (34 CFR 600.2) *Note:* for more detailed best practices, strategies, and examples about how to apply these policies, please refer to the

³ *Synchronous* – Same time, live event or interaction.

⁴ *Asynchronous* – Posted materials and interactions that can be accessed at any time regardless of the time of day or time zones.

LLU Distance and Correspondence Education Instructor Guide⁵.

23. Hybrid Distance Education

When a face-to-face course replaces the equivalent of one or more of the required weekly sessions with online instructional materials and activities in the course management system *and* the instructor regularly and substantively interacts with the students, it is a hybrid distance education course. This type of course requires the monitoring of student activity and tracking academic engagement.

24. Hybrid Correspondence

When a face-to-face course replaces the equivalent of one or more of the required weekly sessions with scheduled online instructional materials and activities in the course management system but has only limited instructor interactions with the students, it is a hybrid correspondence course. *Note:* correspondence is the default federal definition for a course that is part face-to-face and part online *unless* it rises to the level of hybrid distance education.

25. Web-enhanced Face-to-Face

When a face-to-face course posts resources in the course management system and uses additional features such as discussion boards, quizzes, assignment submissions, etc., but meets face-to-face for *every* class session, it is a web-enhanced face-to-face course.

Instruction and Attendance

26. Weeks of Instruction

“A week of instructional time is any period of 7 consecutive days in which at least 1 day of regularly scheduled instruction, examination, or (after the last day of classes) at least 1 scheduled day of study for examinations occurs. The period begins on the first day of class and ends on the last day of classes or examinations. Instructional time does not include periods of orientation, counseling, homework, vacation, or other activity not related to class preparation or examination. Therefore, the weeks of instructional time may be less than the number of calendar weeks that elapse between the first day of classes and the last day of classes or examinations.” (34 CFR 668.3)

27. Instructor-initiated Interactions

Distance education instructors are required to actively initiate interaction with their students as a group and individually, unlike correspondence education, in which students are responsible for initiating contact with the instructor.

28. Frequent and Timely, i.e., Regular Contact/Interactions

Distance education instructors should measure “regular contact” or “interactions” based on a standard that is at least the same as it would be in a traditional face-to-face class. Instructors may exceed this minimum at their discretion. The number of asynchronous or synchronous hours that an instructor is available to students in a distance education class must be at least equal to the number of hours of availability as required for face-to-face classes of the same courses for both (1) instruction time and (2) office hours.

⁵ LLU Distance and Correspondence Education Instructor Guide - <http://www.llu.edu/central/assessment/distance-education.page>

29. Effective/Substantive Contact/Interactions

Distance education instructors must have effective/substantive contact with students and delivery of course content through instructor-initiated interaction with the entire group of students in the course based on a well-defined schedule of availability, deadlines, feedback, and exchanges that are included in the course syllabus. Instructors define their schedules in the syllabus and in other appropriate locations within the course management system.

30. In Case of Interrupted, Regular Contact

Interruptions in instructor contact as defined by the instructor’s syllabus (such as illness or an emergency that takes the instructor offline) require notification to students via a class announcement, email, and/or discussion board, or another course tool, stating the duration of the interruption. In the event that contact is not possible for four or more days, a substitute instructor must be engaged to assist students until the instructor of record is available once again.

31. Documenting Student Attendance

“In a distance education context, documenting that a student has logged into an online class is not sufficient, by itself, to demonstrate academic attendance by the student. A school must demonstrate that a student participated in class or was otherwise engaged in an academically related activity, such as by contributing to an online discussion or initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a course-related question, student submission of an academic assignment, submission of an exam, documented student participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction, and posting by students showing participation in an online study group assigned by the instructor.” (34 CFR 668.2 (l) (7))

APPROVED: _____

~~~~~

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
LLU President

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_  
LLU Corporate Secretary