

**DISTANCE EDUCATION  
Policy Statement**

In accordance with *SACSCOC Principle 10.6*, which states that an institution that offers distance or correspondence education:

- ensures that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit.
- has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.
- ensures that students are notified in writing at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

*SACSCOC Principle 14.3*, which states that the institution applies all appropriate standards and policies to its distance learning programs, branch campuses, and off-campus instructional sites;

SACSCOC policy statement on “Distance Education and Correspondence Courses”, which states in part:

- An institution offering distance or correspondence learning courses/programs ensures that there is a sufficient number of faculty qualified to develop, design, and teach the courses/programs.
- The institution has clear criteria for the evaluation of faculty teaching distance education courses and programs.
- Faculty who teach in distance and correspondence education programs and courses receive appropriate training;

Department of Education (DOE) distance education policy ([34 CFR Parts 600, 602 and 668](#)); and VCCS [Learning Management System Best Practices Part I](#), and [Learning Management System Best Practices Part II](#):

The college ensures that all faculty follow academically sound standards for the development, delivery, and evaluation of quality distance education courses and programs that comply with SACSCOC policy, Department of Education regulations, and VCCS best practice. This policy is part of a comprehensive approach to support faculty through providing professional development, offering high-quality educational opportunities, and upholding a culture of continuous improvement to ensure a high-quality and rigorous student learning experience.

## 1. Definitions

*Distance education* - Distance Education is education that uses one or more of technologies 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 lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conference; or other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed herein (as defined by DOE [85 FR 54742](#)).

*Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)*:

Regular and substantive interaction engages students in teaching, learning, and assessment that include at least two of the following:

- (i) Providing direction 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; and does so on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and amount of content or competency; and

And, 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, 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 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 (as defined by DOE [85 FR 54742](#)).

The various distance education modalities, as interpreted by the college, offered are:

*In-Person Courses (Face-to-face)* – In-person courses provide students access to online class materials, communication, and resources via Canvas. In-person courses may not use internet-based resources or activities to replace required on-campus instruction or in-seat contact hours.

*Synchronous Online* – a fully online course where instructors and students meet on a regular and consistent schedule. *e.g.* Mondays 6-9 pm.

*Asynchronous Online* – a fully online course where instructor and students do not meet or engage in real-time interaction on a regular or consistent basis; instead, all course content, interaction, and assessment occur in the Learning Management System (LMS) and students may access the course materials when it best suits their needs. Faculty must be available to meet with students synchronously as needed or necessary to support learning.

*Hybrid* – a course in which instruction is offered both in-person and online where a portion of in-person instructional time is replaced with online activities. In-person instruction is delivered on a regular and pre-determined schedule.

*HyFlex* – a course with flexible attendance options allowing students to choose one of three modalities for attendance: synchronous, asynchronous, or in-person. Because students may elect to complete a HyFlex course entirely asynchronously, it is designed and carries the same expectations as a fully asynchronous course.

## **2. Procedures**

See Distance Education Procedure [51006P](#)

## **3. Responsible Office**

Authority for interpretation of this policy rests with the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs.

## **4. Other Information**

The eLET Committee, comprised of faculty, RADS and ITO representation, revised this policy based on SACSCOC principles of accreditation, Department of Education distance learning regulations, and established procedures based on the VCCS eLET Best Practices 2.0. The policy and procedure were considered by the Learning Policy Governance Committee with feedback received and appropriate revisions made. A draft was shared with all full-time faculty at a faculty meeting. Feedback was received and considered by academic leadership in consultation with faculty eLET chairs and instructional designer input. Policy and procedures were amended, reshared with faculty, and a revised draft presented to Learning Policy Committee. Learning Policy Committee endorsed the policy and procedure.

### ***Document History:***

*Approved: President Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, 2009*

*Revised: President Chery Thompson-Stacy, June 2012*

*Revised: President Kim Blosser, April 2022*