

MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Policy and Procedures Manual

SUBJECT: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Policy 303.7 – Online Learning

Effective: Adopted: November 4, 1988; Revised: September 22, 2011

I. Board Policy

A. The commissioner of higher education shall appoint a member of the staff to be the director of eLearning business and to chair an eLearning advisory committee (EAC). The EAC is comprised of Montana university system (MUS) eLearning leaders who collaborate to benefit learners and to align campus eLearning efforts. The EAC is composed of one primary representative from each stand-alone campus in the MUS and from each of the community colleges. EAC campus representatives are appointed by the respective campus chief academic officer. The purpose of the EAC will be to advise the academic, research, and student affairs (ARSA) committee of the board through the eLearning director on matters related to present and future delivery of online education and other matters related to the use and types of educational technologies associated with quality online education.

B. The most recent update to the accreditation standards of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), the regional accrediting body for the Montana university system and the community college campuses in Montana, has embedded the language, “wherever offered and however delivered” heavily into its standards for accreditation specifically to eliminate separate standards associated with online learning. As a matter of practice, the EAC accepts and endorses a similar approach to board of regents (BOR) policies and practices governing both traditional face-to-face delivery and the use of technology in delivering postsecondary education.

C. Definitions

1. *Distance Education* is defined as planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching, requiring specialized course design, instructional techniques, communication through various technologies, and special organizational and administrative arrangements. Both *synchronous* and *asynchronous* learning are included in this definition.
2. *Face-to-Face/Enhanced* delivery is characterized when instruction occurs in a traditional classroom with face-to-face interaction between the instructor and students, at any local campus or remote site, and includes utilization of technology to enhance the class without reducing student seat-time.
3. *Internet or Online* delivery implies that 100% of the course section is offered completely online and delivered asynchronously, with no face-to-face interaction between instructors and students.
4. *Video Conferencing* is characterized by a course section offered through scheduled (synchronous) interactive video, including desktop conferencing.
5. *Blended* learning is designed specifically to be delivered partially online in an asynchronous format and partially through face-to-face (F2F) interaction, typically in the classroom. Both online and F2F interactions are required for the course. This delivery is characterized by the expectation of reduced F2F class meeting time when compared to the equivalent credit classroom course.
6. *Other Distance Learning* includes courses other than internet/online and interactive video, and may include correspondence courses, tape/DVD delivery, etc.

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II. Reporting Procedures

A. The director of eLearning business will annually identify data elements involving online learning to be gathered on an annual basis, and will rely upon the use of these definitions in the gathering of data from the campuses and the MUS data warehouse. By September 15th of each year, the director shall file with the ARSA committee of the board, an annual report of online learning activity over the preceding fiscal year. The director will provide guidelines to the campuses for the format and content of this annual report, the web site presence of online programs will be updated at least annually, and the director will publish a compiled report on the MUS web site at <http://mus.edu/online>.

B. The EAC serves as a formal conduit for campuses and OCHE to share technology interests, adaptations, uses, experiences for the purposes of judging and evaluating compatibility and possible multi-campus purchasing/licensing efficiencies that can be discussed and attained where feasible, as well as to offer periodic recommendations to the ARSA committee of the board, as needed. Campuses considering the acquisition of large-scale interactive delivery systems and/or learning management systems to support technology-mediated learning or online course development and delivery should strive to select systems that are compatible with existing technology, and should provide timely notice of interest, product experience/evaluations, and potential acquisition to the to the director of eLearning business for review and discussion with the EAC prior to purchase and implementation. Prior to purchases of other related distance learning technology, campuses are encouraged to share their desire for such technologies with the EAC.

III. Standards and Conditions

A. Faculty training and development of courses or programs will follow the eight core principles of quality online course design as developed, adopted, and defined by the EAC, and which may be found at: <http://mus.edu/online/CorePrinciples0308.asp>.

B. Each campus will ensure that students admitted to a course possess the knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed in the course, and will provide aid to students who experience difficulty using the required technology.

C. Each campus will be responsible for ensuring that its online web presence at the Montana university system web site is current and fully functional with respect to the posted web links, and will notify the director of eLearning business whenever updates are needed or web links are not functioning properly.

D. Course-related content

1. Copyright and intellectual property protection (see also BOR Policy 401.3)

a. Campuses offering distance education courses shall ensure compliance with all applicable copyright laws governing the use and transmission of films, videotapes, recordings, performances and other protected works, as well as the reproduction of printed materials prior to the offering or transmission of the course.

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- b. Campuses offering distance education courses shall ensure compliance with all laws, as well as MUS or institutional policies relating to the protection of intellectual property prior to the offering or transmission of the course.

History:

Item 60-004-R0788, Telecommunication Instruction Policy, November 4, 1988; as revised March 25, 1999. Item 152-132-R0911, revised September 22, 2011.