

Distance Education Policy

Definition of Distance Education

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in its Distance and Correspondence Educational Policy Statement (July 2014) defines distance education as, "...a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (*interaction between students and instructors and among students*) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use 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 conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMS if used as part of the distance learning course or program."

Curriculum and Instruction

Course content must align with the mission of the University, departmental student learning outcomes, fields of study appropriate to higher education, and requirements of the SACSCOC *Principles of Accreditation*. Courses may be taught solely in electronic format or as hybrid instructional models. Courses taught in electronic format, whether solely online or hybrid models must utilize the University technology platform. Course faculty determine how the course is set up and configured within the technology platform. Communication protocol between faculty and students and technology requirements must be established early in the class process and clearly explained in the syllabus. Course faculty should indicate availability to explain technology specific to the course.

Minimum standards regarding communication and participation standards between students and instructors must be addressed in the course syllabus, followed by the instructor and students, and monitored by the instructor. Instructional communication and content is left up to the individual course faculty in the technology platform and is available to all registered for that course. Specific instructions must be included in the course syllabus addressing how to access and complete course evaluations. Course faculty must be prepared to provide additional help with course and school software used in the course when it is requested by students.

Faculty/Administration

Faculty department chairs have the primary responsibility for providing oversight of distance education courses taught within his/her department. Along with course faculty, faculty department chairs assess course/program rigor and instructional quality. Faculty department chairs are responsible for evaluating distance course faculty possess the necessary skills for teaching online.

To teach these courses, faculty must possess the qualifications, skills, and training to deliver content in a distance education format (electronic, hybrid, or other). Course syllabi are to be constructed using the approved template and must include a statement of response time to communications. SACSCOC student authentication requirements are verified when the student logs into the course using a secure password of their own choosing. The University of Holy Cross IT Department independently establishes an initial password for student access to program. Students can then sign on and change the password to something of their own choosing. All students are issued a University email address unique to them and it must be used to sign on to all school programs and communicate with faculty and administration.

Students

Before registering for an online course, students are responsible for determining whether they have the minimum requirements to participate in the course and available access to a computer capable of handling the software requirements for that course. In addition, prior to registering for a distance education course, students should be directed to access the school's link to determine online readiness at: <http://olhcc.edu/academics/docs/1%20Online%20Courses%20Are%20You%20Ready.pdf> and/or <http://louisianaonline.smartermeasure.com/>.

Student Procedure for Protecting Their Privacy

1. A student who enrolls in a course that has components of distance education will have a unique Identification and password assigned by the Information Technology Center.
2. The University of Holy Cross Information Technology Department is responsible for maintaining a secure online environment.
3. The student is responsible for protecting their identification and password on any school related electronic medium once individually issued by the Information Technology Department during the registration process.

Students who register for distance/online courses must authenticate their identity as that student in order to participate in, complete courses or programs, and receive academic credits. Any other circumstance violates the University Academic Dishonesty Policy. All students are to complete course and faculty evaluations prior to the end of the semester using the prescribed method authorized by the University.

Students on academic probation, students required to take developmental courses in reading (REA 100) and/or English (ENG 100) and have not successfully completed one or both of them, will not be permitted to register for online/distance courses.

Fees or charges for privacy protection or verification of identity—The University of Holy Cross has no plans at this time to apply for any additional charges for

identification verification for any class of student. Should such charge be considered, pursuant to SACS 4.8.3, the school will notify students as part of the formal registration process.

Minimum Online Class Standards

Contact hours per week—Course faculty are responsible for delineating contact hours per week for the course in order to insure content delivery and participation are the same as face to face instruction. Participation standards and methods for their monitoring are to be clearly outlined in the syllabus and monitored by the instructor. Evidence of participation can be determined by course statistics in Blackboard and other course requirements.

Grading scheme—All grading assessments and grade points assignment should be clearly stated in the syllabus. Course faculty can use multiple assessment methods such as, but not limited to, tests, case study work, online discussion groups, and other assignments.

Attendance reporting—Course faculty are responsible for determining whether the student is meeting course requirements in a timely manner. Course faculty are to use the University approved attendance reporting structure.

Security identification—Students have the ability to choose a unique password to avoid entry by unauthorized users.

Course evaluations—Electronic course evaluations are completed and submitted through the specific course as authorized by the Academic and Curriculum Council.