

Policy on Instructional Modalities

Proposed changes include minor edits for clarity and deletion of content related specifically to correspondence education (content now provided in the proposed new *Policy on Correspondence Education*).

The ABHE Accreditation Standards and Essential Elements apply to all modes of delivery, including face-to-face, distance education, mixed modality, and correspondence education. Institutions are responsible for the quality of programs and instruction regardless of instructional modality, and for ensuring that all educational programs and courses/instruction offered include access to student services and resources that support student success and development. Institutions are expected to refer to current best practices for delivering instruction and student services for the chosen modality. All courses/instruction for credit or leading to a credential (degree, certificate, or diploma) must be under the direct control of the institution's administration, regardless of instructional modality. The initiation of courses/instruction or programs in a new instructional modality requires compliance with the *Policy on Substantive Change and Required Notifications*.

The ABHE Commission on Accreditation expects institutions not only to meet the Standards and Essential Elements for all instructional modalities, but also to comply with all related COA policies, and with federal, state, and/or provincial regulations in all jurisdictions in which it operates. Outlined below are definitions of instructional modalities and a summary of COA standards and policy statements related to face-to-face instruction, distance education, correspondence education and mixed modalities.

ABHE considers competency-based education (CBE) and competency-based theological education (CBTE) pedagogical models rather than instructional modalities. Consult the *Policy on Competency-Based Education* and the *Policy on Substantive Change and Required Notifications* for further information on requirements related to these pedagogies.

Definitions of Instructional Modalities

Modality (synonyms)	Proportion of Course Instruction* Delivered in a Face-to-Face** Setting	Description	Requires Substantive Change to initiate courses?	Requires Substantive Change to offer 50% or more of first program?
Face-to-Face (traditional classroom, hybrid classroom)	50% or more	Course content is delivered in a mandatory face-to-face setting. May use technologically-mediated educational engagement strategies to enhance the course	Yes	Yes

		and/or to replace some face-to-face meetings		
Distance Education (distance learning, remote learning, online education, synchronous online, HyFlex)	0-49%	Characterized by instructor and students being separated by space and/or time; most course activity is done via technologically mediated educational strategies including but not limited to video conferencing, audio conferencing and learning management systems; courses include substantive and regular faculty-student interaction.	Yes	Yes
Correspondence Education	0%	Instructional materials are delivered via mail or electronic means; there are no required face-to-face sessions within the course and no requirements for on-campus activity; interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced	Yes	Yes
Mixed Modality	Student Choice	Students can choose between two or more modalities for class sessions and/or learning activities depending on the student's schedule and learning preference.	Yes	Institution or Program must be approved for 50% or more of each modality used

*Instruction = interaction between students and instructors and among students

**Face-to-face = synchronous interaction in the same physical space

These descriptions were informed by working definitions from the Online Learning Consortium and SACSCOC.

Other Applicable Policies for Distance Education

1. Policy on Distance Education

2. *Policy on Compliance with U.S. Department of Education Regulations*
3. *Policy on State/Government Authorization*

Correspondence Education

Recognition and Authorization for Correspondence Education

~~Correspondence education is not distance education, and correspondence courses are not eligible for Title IV financial aid. Correspondence education is not included in ABHE's scope of recognition with the U.S. Department of Education but is included in ABHE's scope of recognition with the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).~~

~~Institutions must ensure that they meet state and/or provincial authorization requirements for correspondence education in all jurisdictions in which they operate. For more information, see the *Policy on State/Government Authorization*.~~

Ensuring Integrity in Correspondence Education

~~Institutions utilizing correspondence education are required to:~~

- ~~1. Take appropriate steps to ensure that every student who registers for a correspondence education course and/or program is the same student who participates in the course and/or program and receives academic credit. Institutions must have written policies governing measures undertaken to verify the identity of a student who participates in class or course work offered via correspondence education.~~
- ~~2. Provide students with written notification at the time of registration of any additional charges associated with verification of student identity. This notification should include a disclosure to students related to the technology(ies) that will be required by students prior to enrolling in the course (specific software, smart phone, version of an operating system or plug-ins, audio and/or video capabilities). Equally, admissions policies should address required proficiencies to enroll in correspondence courses.~~
- ~~3. Develop and implement written procedures to protect the privacy of students enrolled in correspondence education courses and/or programs.~~

~~**Applicable Standards:** Standard 3, 7~~

~~**Other Applicable Policies:** *Policy on Substantive Change and Required Notifications*~~

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