

ABHE Standards and **Distance Education:** Connecting the Dots

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Where Have We Been

- Standard 11d (Alternative Academic Patterns)
 - Three Essential Elements that provided general guidelines for programs offering online education (with some correlation to competency-based education, correspondence education as well)
 - Gap between schools to which this Standard/subset applied was significant
 - Some schools were offering a few courses
 - Some schools were operating wholly in the alternative offering space
 - Satisfy 11d and one could generally make the case for substantial compliance
- Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns
 - Discussed design and operations for online, competency-based, correspondence, Hybrid formats
 - Some connecting points to Standard 11d

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Where Are We Now

- There are specific policies for Correspondence Education, Competency-Based Education, and Distance Education (Online)
 - For our purposes, consider the **Glossary of Definitions**, the **Policy on Instructional Modalities**, the **Policy on Substantive Change**, and the **Policy on Distance Education**
- There is no particular Standard/subset of Standards that cover components of Distance Education
 - Components of concern for Evaluation Teams, related to distance education, is in most/all of the Institutional Standards

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Distance Education is...

An instructional **modality** characterized by the instructor and students being separated by space and/or time. Most course activity is accomplished via technology mediated educational strategies, including but not limited to, video conferencing, audio conferencing, and learning management systems. Distance education courses include **substantive and regular faculty-student interaction**. Examples of distance education include remote instruction, synchronous and asynchronous online education, and HyFlex models. (*Glossary of Definitions*)

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Policy on Instructional Modalities (applies to *courses*)

Modality	Portion of Course Delivered <i>Face-to-Face</i>	Description	Requires SC to Initiate Modality?	Requires SC to offer 50% or more of first program?
Face-to-Face (F2F)	<i>Face-to-Face = 50% - 100%</i>	Course content is delivered in mandatory F2F setting. May use technologically mediated engagement strategies to enhance course/replace some F2F meetings	Yes	Yes
Distance Education	<i>Face-to-Face = 0-49%</i>	Course is characterized by instructor and students being separated by space and/or time, most course activity is done via technologically mediated strategies including, but not limited to, video conferencing; audio conferencing; and learning management systems; courses include regular faculty-student interaction	Yes	Yes
Mixed Modality	<i>Student Choice</i>	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/Program must be approved for 50% or more of each modality used

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Policy on Instructional Modalities

- All Standards and Essential Elements apply to all modes of delivery (including face-to-face, distance education, mixed modality, and correspondence education).
- Institutions must ensure quality of instruction as well as ensuring access to student services and resources that support student success/development.
- COA expects all offerings, regardless of modality used, to comply with all related policies and regulations in all jurisdictions in which it operates.

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Qualifications of Distance Education

- **Glossary** definition of “*distance education*” (Standards & Policies Manual)
 - A **course** is considered a distance education course if 50% or more of course activity is accomplished through the means described in the definition (remote instruction, synchronous/asynchronous online education, Hyflex models)
- **Policy on Distance Education**
 - Distance Education involves teaching, learning, and assessment that are consistent with course content and include two of the following:
 - Provide direct instruction
 - Assess/Provide feedback on student work (grading)
 - Provide information or respond to questions about content from the course
 - Facilitate a group discussion around/about the course content

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Policy on Substantive Change and Required Notifications

- For Institutions where there has been NO distance education **courses** offered...
 - Section 5, Subsection 5a
 - **First offering of courses** using a new instructional modality (e.g., distance education, correspondence education, mixed modality)
- For Institutions where there is an offering of distance education **courses**...
 - Section 5, Subsection 5b
 - **Reaching the 50% threshold for distance education**, evidenced by one of the following triggers...
 - **Addition of the first credential** where a student may complete 50% or more through distance education
 - **Enrollment of 50% or more of the institution's students** in distance education. A student is considered “enrolled in distance education” if he or she enrolls in at least one course offered through distance education.
 - **Offering 50% or more of the institution's courses** through distance education

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Policy on Substantive Change and Required Notifications

- As you will notice...even where distance education is the primary modality through which education is offered, there are applicable Substantive Change requests that must be secured
 - Where online only moves to some form of F2F or correspondence educational modality
- Change in Instructional Modality
 - Section 5, subsection 5c
 - Addition of the first credential where a student may complete 50% or more face-to-face, by mixed modality, or through correspondence education

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Standards Connecting to Distance Education

- **Standard 1 (Integrity and Mission)**
 - Essential Element 4 – Policies addressing Student privacy & Harassment
 - Essential Element 8 – Is there a reference to distance education scope in integrated into the mission statement?
- **Standard 2 (Institutional Planning and Assessment)**
 - Essential Element 2 - distance education; intended student learning objectives
 - Procedures are in place for regular evaluation of the effectiveness of online courses/programs
 - Essential Element 4 – Are you online students a missionally relevant group?
 - Essential Element 7 – Does the assessment data inform decision-making and budgeting processes with touch-points in distance education?

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Standards Connecting to Distance Education

- **Standard 3 (Authority and Governance)**

- Essential Element 2 – Is the institution authorized to offer distance education in all jurisdictions in which it operates in the US/Canada, does the institution adhere to all federal regulations for distance education?
- NC-SARA nuances

- **Standard 4 (Administration, Staff, and Faculty)**

- Essential Element 4 – Is there an identified leader overseeing the distance education offerings?
 - Might be the Chief Academic Officer...is that person trained to oversee the components of distance education?
 - Might be Chief Information (Technology) Officer – Training for collegiate instruction?

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Standards Connecting to Distance Education

- **Standard 4 (Administration, Staff, and Faculty)**

- Essential Element 8 – Are there protections and protocols in place for distance education students?
 - Privacy issues?
- Essential Element 9 – Are there policies and procedures that relate specifically to your distance education program?
 - One or two courses is different than one or two program is different from an online only institution
- Essential Elements 11-13 – Do instructors responsible for writing/delivering the course content meet faculty qualifications?
- Essential Element 16 – Evaluation processes extend to distance education
- Essential Element 17 – Who owns the courses designed for online consumption? Do policies clearly demarcate ownership?

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Standards Connecting to Distance Education

• **Standard 5 (Financial and Physical Resources)**

- Essential Element 5 – Adequate internal resources (including technology) to support the mission achievement
- Essential Element 9 – Reliable technology platforms, training and support, and related policies
 - Faculty instructors receive adequate training and support for the DE courses (and is reflected in the workload & compensation).

• **Standard 6 (Enrollment Management)**

- Essential Element 5 – Evaluation procedures and/or programs that reasonably ensure that admitted students (to distance education modalities) possess the ability to achieve educational goals and are adequately prepared for their desired level of student and instructional modality

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Standards Connecting to Distance Education

• **Standard 7 (Academic Programs and Policies)**

- Essential Element 1 – Academic programs designed with content and rigor...commensurate with the level of education offered.
 - Distance education offerings demonstrate equivalent academic rigor, quality, & student learning outcomes as F2F offerings, verified through assessment of student learning and program effectiveness
- Essential Element 7 – Academic advising system that guides the selection of courses (and modalities)
- Essential Element 11 – Appropriate measures to ensure that the student receiving the credit is the person completing the work, and notification in writing at the time of registration or enrollment of any additional charges associated with verification of student identity.
 - Student and instructor should have predictable and scheduled engagement. Monitoring of student engagement and success should be provided in evidence.

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Standards Connecting to Distance Education

- **Standard 8 (Learning Resources and Services)**

- Essential Element 2 – Physical and digital resources that effectively support access to and securing of learning resources and services.
- Essential Element 3 – A collection of learning resources appropriate to the institution's curriculum...with regard to content, format, usage, and currency.

- **Standard 9 (Student Development and Success)**

- Essential Element 2 – Services that address diverse student needs, abilities, and cultures regardless of location or instructional modality.
- Essential Element 3 – Services that address the needs of at-risk students and improve student achievement and retention.
 - Student support services for distance education include technical assistance, academic advising, readily accessible learning resources, and other services supporting student learning for those at a distance in all language in which the program is offered. Can students with disabilities access course materials and participate in required learning activities.

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For many students, distance education is another medium through which they receive their education...

How is your Institution doing connecting the dots to its accreditation?

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Questions???

