Policy #41
Distance Education Policy - Concord University

Section 1: General

1.1 Scope

The Distance Education Policy aligns with Concord University’s mission to provide a quality education for its students and upholds the strategic plan that includes a virtual and off-site presence. Distance Education is defined as any instruction that replaces traditional classroom teaching and learning with similar activities over the internet. This policy applies to all Concord University courses that are online or have a significantly defined portion of their content online, as referenced in the definitions section. The policy shall be reviewed annually to ensure its continued relevance in a fast-changing technological environment.

1.2 Effective Date:

October 29, 2016

Section 2: Policy

2.1 The Distance Education Policy will follow all existing policies of Concord University, except where the delivery requirements are not provided by current policies.

2.2 Distance Education courses at Concord University shall be based on the North Central Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Distance and Correspondence Education Policy, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commission (C-RAC) nine interregional guidelines for Distance Education to ensure appropriateness for the development, oversight, and evaluation of online learning, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation’s (CHEA) endorsement of Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs.

2.3 The Vice President and Academic Dean (VPAD), with the assistance of the department/division chairs, shall approve all new distance education courses according to institutional distance education guidelines.

Section 3: Intellectual Property of Online Courses

3.1 Generally, Concord University shall not compensate faculty who develop distance education courses. Thus, by default, the online course creator maintains the right of ownership to the content; however, the course title and CRN number remain with the University.

3.2 In such a case where compensation is made available for online course development, ownership of the course content, course title and CRN number remains the property of the University.

Section 4: Guidelines for Online Course Development

4.1 Decisions to offer an online course shall be based on assessed need(s) and resource availability.

4.2 Development for an online course will align with Concord University’s Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy.

4.3 Faculty offering an online course will be required to complete online course development training through Quality Matters.
4.4 Faculty will be responsible for acquiring the necessary technical skills needed for the online course and for contacting technical support when needed.

4.5 A Memorandum of Agreement, supplied by the Coordinator of Distributed Learning and Instructional Technology, will be signed by the course creator; the agreement will be copied to the Vice President and Academic Dean and Department/Division Chair.

4.6 Development of an online course will be completed at least one semester prior to the semester in which the online course is offered.

Section 5: Online Course Evaluation and Quality Assurance

5.1 Online courses offered for the first time will undergo review by the institution’s Quality Matters Peer Review Committee prior to placing the course online.

5.2 The Coordinator of Distributed Learning and Instructional Technology and the Quality Matters Peer Review Committee will review and communicate in writing to the Department/Division Chair and VPAD the completion of the initial online course review and all follow-up reviews.

5.3 The Department/Division Chair or designee and/or VPAD may be granted access by the instructor to an online course for ensuring quality distance education instruction or other academic purposes. Minimum online Quality Matters training for evaluators is required for evaluation purposes.

5.4 All online courses will be assessed every three years by the Quality Matters Peer Review Committee to ensure current research and trends are available for delivering content online.

5.5 Online student course evaluations will be conducted electronically.

Section 6: Enrollment

6.1 Enrollment for online courses shall be set for a maximum of twenty-five (25) students unless approved by the Vice President and Academic Dean.

6.2 Students will follow course enrollment guidelines set forth by Concord University.
Definitions

**Distance Education:** This refers to courses in which students work outside of the traditional classroom setting with little or no face-to-face (F2F) contact with instructors. This instruction is delivered through a variety of technologies such as the internet, one- or two-way broadcast technologies, audio or video conferencing, published media such as DVDs, CD-ROMs, or some combination of methods.

**Online Course:** This refers to a distance education course that delivers 100% of its course content asynchronously. This instance does not utilize any form of synchronous or face-to-face meetings. Online courses at Concord University shall be designated to reflect same in the University’s schedule of courses.

**Hybrid Course:** This refers to any course in which a significant portion of the course is scheduled and delivered synchronously and required online, face-to-face, or on-site attendance, with the remainder of the course delivered asynchronously. Hybrid courses may be given one of the following designations:

- **Hybrid30** – This has a course syllabus and between 30-49% of course sessions substituted with various online activities. The estimation of the amount of coursework and assignments assigned between the F2F and online sessions shall be determined by the instructor and shall be outlined in the course syllabus.

- **Hybrid50** – This has the course syllabus and between 50%-79% of the coursework taking place in an online environment. The estimation of the amount of coursework assigned between the F2F and online sessions shall be determined by the instructor and shall be outlined in the course syllabus.

- **Hybrid80** – This has the course syllabus and between 80%-99% of the coursework taking place in an online environment. The breakdown of coursework and assignments between the F2F and online components is determined by the instructor and is outlined in the course syllabus.

**Note:** All Hybrid courses must set aside clearly stipulated face-to-face meeting times which must be communicated to students at the first meeting or through course information set up on the course LMS. The first of these meetings must take place during the first week of regular classes.

**Course Creator:** This refers to the individual who generates original content for delivery as an online or a hybrid course.

**Quality Matters:** An international, inter-institutional program that uses a set of approved rubrics to evaluate the quality of Online Courses.

**Peer Review:** This activity shall be undertaken by not more than three instructors, with at least one of them having an academic background in the subject matter being reviewed, and are duly certified by Quality Matters as Peer Reviewers. A Master Reviewer who shall be duly certified by Quality Matters as such will head this team. The review will focus on the quality (content, navigation, and accessibility) of the course. Results from this review will be discussed with the designer of record with recommendations for improvement. A final report on the review will be copied to the designer/instructor, the Coordinator of Online Learning, the Division Chair, and the Dean’s Office.