DISTANCE EDUCATION

Academic Affairs Policy Statement No. 19

1. References

a. Academic Affairs Handbook, Board of Regents, University System of Georgia.

b. Bylaws of the University Council of the University of Georgia, 2005.

2. Background

The following policy replaces that outlined in the November 16, 2001, memorandum from Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Karen Holbrook entitled "Goals and Responsibilities in UGA Distance Learning."

3. Purpose

This policy (1) advocates a case-by-case evaluation of distance education opportunities rather than an across-the-board approach in favor of distance education, (2) does not mandate any particular use of internal resources for format or delivery of distance education, and (3) provides for more coordination of distance education. Courses delivered in an online or distance format must be equivalent in content, level, rigor, and overall educational quality to courses taught in regular classroom instruction.

4. Definition

Distance education, also known as online learning and other formats, is defined to include any credit-bearing course or program of which more than 50% is delivered through distance learning defined by the Board of Regents as instruction delivered through one or more forms of distance technology, and in which the instructor of record and the student(s) are separated by time and/or geographic location such as two-way video conferencing, online asynchronous or synchronous, web-based materials and resources, electronic-based discussion, video and/or audio streaming. The definition of distance education does not include non-credit-bearing courses, including continuing education courses under the auspices of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach.

5. Responsibilities

a. <u>Instructional Units</u>

(1) The academic instructional units and faculty will retain control and authority over the initial decision of whether to offer courses or programs through distance education, which courses or programs to offer, and what method of delivery to pursue.

(2) The substantive content of the courses or programs, as well as the staffing of those courses or programs, is the responsibility of the academic instructional unit who has primary responsibility for maintaining the quality and integrity of all instruction in its area regardless of the course format or method of delivery.

(3) Faculty who provide distance education must meet the same qualifications as faculty who provide regular classroom instruction.

b. Central Administration

Central responsibility for distance education curriculum will be placed in the office of the Vice President for Instruction. The Vice President for Instruction shall, in consultation with the Provost, appoint a Director of Distance Education whose duties will include, but may or may not be limited to, coordination and facilitation of distance education curriculum. This individual will report directly to the Vice President for Instruction.

6. Procedures

a. A course or program may not be offered through distance education unless it has been approved through the University's curriculum approval process.

b. Courses

A course of which more than 50% is delivered through distance technology will be considered to be a distance education course and will require an E-suffix. The course should be approved through the University's course approval process (CAPA). E-courses will also be reviewed by the Director of Distance Education. When offering a distance education course, units should provide additional information in the syllabus as outlined in the distance education individual course form (Appendix A).

c. Programs

The Board of Regents requires that a program must have approval as an External Degree if more than 50% of the courses included in the program are to be offered through distance education. Courses and/or degree programs offered online must adhere to the guidelines, criteria, and nomenclature contained in the document "External Instruction in the University System of Georgia: Policies and Procedures" as adopted by the Board of Regents on February 2, 2005, and as thereafter amended. This document is maintained in the Academic Affairs Handbook. The proposal for an External Degree should be consistent with the University mission and follow the format provided in Appendix B.

7. Approval Process

Courses require approval to be offered through distance education and will require an E-suffix. Approval will follow the established course approval process. Per Board of Regents policy, all programs offered through distance education require approval as an External Degree. External Degree proposals will be submitted by deans of respective schools or colleges or directors of institutes directly to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. Graduate program proposals must first be reviewed by the Dean of the Graduate School who will then forward them to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. Proposals will be reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee and subsequently forwarded with a recommendation to the University Council for consideration. University Council recommendations on proposals are forwarded to the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost who will transmit the same to the President of the University for consideration. The President will transmit proposals to the Board of

Regents with his or her recommendation. Board of Regents approval is required for External Degree programs. A proposal for a program that will be offered through distance education should follow the format provided in Appendix B.

8. Guidelines for Distance Education

a. Courses or programs should comply with the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) statement on Distance Education provided in Appendix C. In addition, courses or programs must meet the following requirements to be considered appropriate for distance education:

(1) All distance education, as defined in this policy, should be offered in conjunction with a UGA degree or certificate program.

(2) Distance education offerings may be provided only by existing academic units (instructional units, schools, or colleges). No new instructional unit, school, or college will be created for the purpose of offering distance education courses or degrees.

(3) Accreditation standards should be viewed as establishing minimum requirements but not necessarily as high as the standards the University wants to achieve with its distance education offerings.

(4) The syllabus for a distance education course should include the additional information listed in Appendix A.

b. The following factors listed below should be taken into account when deciding whether or not a course or program is appropriate for distance education. This is a balancing process that in some cases will point in favor of distance education, while in other cases it will not.

(1) Important reasons to offer distance education include, but may not be limited to, the following examples:

(a) An improved or enhanced learning experience for our currently enrolled students.

(b) The ability to reach students the University otherwise would not be able to reach, permitting the University to extend degree programs or course work to qualified students who desire a UGA experience but who otherwise would not be able to access one.

(c) An improved learning environment for faculty, who may welcome the opportunity to enhance their instructional or research programs.

(d) To assist the University in carrying out its mission of serving the entire state of Georgia, both in terms of our land grant status and our charter.

(2) Important reasons to be cautious about distance education include, but may not be limited to, the following examples:

(a) Dilution of resources.

(b) The time-intensive nature of many distance education offerings may interfere with faculty time for research and on-campus instruction, resulting in reduced productivity in assigned duties.

(c) Less faculty time for on-campus instruction and/or research activities may dilute the educational experience for on-campus students.

APPENDIX A

Individual Course Syllabus

(Additional information required for distance education courses)

1. **Instructor Name**

2. **Instructor Accessibility**
(Instructor accessibility to students, such as office hours, office location, telephone number, and/or e-mail address.)
For distance learning courses:
(Instructor accessibility to students: e-mail address, telephone number, when the instructor will be available online. How frequently the instructor will respond to e-mail from students.)

3. **Principal Course Assignments**
(Required reading, papers, other activities, and the week of the course in which these assignments are expected to be completed and submitted.)
For distance education courses:
(Specify how assignments should be submitted and in what format. Outline how the course will function and what will be expected of the student.)

4. **Specific Course Requirements for Grading Purposes**
(Written and oral tests and reports, research papers, performances, or other similar requirements, participation requirements -- if any.)

5. **Grading Policy**
(How the final grade will be determined with respect to weights or points assigned to various course requirements.)

6. **Attendance Policy/*Participation Policy***
(If there are specific requirements for attendance, these should be stated; if attendance is to be weighted for the final grade, the syllabus should state what the weight or course points will be.)
For distance education courses:
(Specify the participation policy for the course. State whether the course will be asynchronous or synchronous or a combination. If there are specific requirements for online participation, these should be stated; if online participation is to be weighted for the final grade, the syllabus should state what the weight or course points will be.)
Indicate if the course will be primarily
O Asynchronous
O Synchronous
O Both asynchronous and synchronous

7. **Required Course Material, Including Texts**
   For distance education courses, also include:
   Technology Requirements and Required Technical Competence

8. **Exam Policy/ Policy for Make-up of Examinations**
   For distance education courses:
   (Specify how exams will be administered and how the identity of the student will be verified for exam purposes.)

9. **General Education Curriculum**
   (Please provide information concerning how this course incorporates the general education learning outcomes.)

10. **Additional Course Information**

Appendix B

University of Georgia

EXTERNAL DEGREE PROPOSAL FORM

To offer a program externally, the form below must be used for submission of a program offered outside of the Athens campus, including external face-to-face, online, videotape and DVD, or a combination of technologies thereof.

PROCEDURES
The Board of Regents encourages the use of distance education to help meet the instructional needs of the citizens of the State. The guidelines and questions below are not considered to be exhaustive, but rather are listed to provide an idea of the breadth and depth of information sought in order to judge the merits of the proposal.

Date of Submission: _____

Institution: _____

College/School/Division: _____

Department: _____

Degree (please indicate whether this is a stand-alone degree): _____

Major: _____

CIP Code: _____

Proposed Start Date: _____

Proposed End Date (for example if this is only for a specific cohort for a limited period of time:

---

1. Description of the Delivery System
What is the primary delivery mode for this program (e.g., internet, videotape, satellite, GSAMS, telecourse, remote site location, etc.)? Will instruction be delivered in a synchronous or asynchronous format? What type of interaction is involved (e.g., point-to-point, two-way video with two-way audio, etc.)? Will the program have variable locations or be offered at a specific site other than the campus?

2. Assessment of Societal Need and Demand for Distance Education Delivery
Based on quantitative and qualitative evidence, describe the institution's assessment of societal need and demand for this type of delivery method. Please describe the geographical area to be served through delivery of this program (e.g., another city in Georgia, contiguous states, or other areas).

3. Readiness of the Institution to Offer the Program

a. Institutional Mission and Relevance to Other Programmatic Offerings--Describe how distance education is consistent with the institution's mission and programmatic role with respect to academic programming. Describe how the program does not duplicate existing offerings in the University System or if it is duplicative, explain why the program is warranted. What is the program's niche?

b. Faculty Inventory with Delivery Expertise – Describe the programs available to ensure appropriate training for faculty who teach distance technology delivered programs. Please provide an inventory of available faculty with the expertise to deliver instruction in an alternative format.

c. Facilities – Describe any modifications required for existing facilities to establish and maintain the alternative delivery of the program.

d. Instructional Support -- What plans are available to ensure remote student and faculty access to information and resources necessary to support the teaching and learning process? What is the institution's assessment of the need for back-ups, encryption, passwords, firewalls and other electronic security measures? How will the campus validate student authentication for the electronic submission of assignments? What are the provisions for real-time and delayed interaction between and among faculty and students? What provisions are in place to support the use of technology and instructional materials after hours (campus-based or contract)? Describe the library resource options available to students to enhance the learning process. What equipment, software and electronic communication access is required to support appropriate interactions among students, faculty and institutional administration in this program?

e. Student Services – Please describe how the program ensures that appropriate learning and resources are available for students to fully participate in the learning experience. Describe any special arrangements that will be used to meet the unique needs of distance learners.

f. Cooperative Links with the Community – What economic development purpose does the program satisfy? Please describe any cooperative links that the program has with the community.

g. Accreditation and Legal Issues – It is assumed that institutions offering programs in an alternative delivery format are responsible for satisfying all approval, licensing, institutional, and specialized accreditation requirements. Please explain what measures will be taken to satisfy SACS substantive change requirements and, if required, other accreditation requirements.

4. Recruitment and Admission of Students -- What are the prerequisite technology competencies, skills and equipment requirements? What are the residency requirements associated with this program, if any? Please describe your affirmative action impact analysis with the alternative delivery of this program? Please describe the institutional guidelines for in-state versus out-of-state students.

5. Curriculum -- What are the academic standards for this program? Please explain how the program provides the appropriate rigor and breadth for the degree awarded. Are all of the courses in the program appropriate for distance delivery? Is a laboratory experience part of the curriculum? Are lab kits or videotaped experiments required? Please describe available alternatives. What is the time to degree length for the program?

6. Consistency with Principles of Good Practice -- Demonstrate how the institution incorporates the Principles of Good Practice (http://www.alliance.usg.edu/usg_info/policies/good_practice.html/) in the delivery of the program. Describe the relevant benchmarks that can be used to develop comparisons about the program's merits.

7. Fiscal Implications of the Program -- What is the funding stream for this type of delivery as well as upgrades and replacements? What are the line costs for delivering this program? Does the campus project that any tuition adjustments will need to be requested to support the delivery of this program? What are the external sources of funding and support for the program? Will there be any operating budget requests for this program that would exceed normal operating budget guidelines? Please demonstrate the cost and benefit of developing this program for a distance education format.

Please complete the following modified fiscal page:

Costs Per Year of Implementation

Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Network Design					
Network Configuration					
Network Installation					
Hardware Acquisition					
Software Acquisition					
Technical Integration					
Support Services					
Course Acquisition and Licensing Fees					
Distribution Costs					
Personnel (Faculty)					
Personnel (Technical Support)					
Personnel (Secretarial)					
Estimated Cost for Renovated Facilities for Technological Support					
Maintenance and Operation (specify)					
Supplies and Materials (specify)					
Other (specify)					
Total:					

8. Assessment -- Please indicate how students will meet the educational outcomes of the degree program. Does the institution have a system whereby it can monitor the effectiveness of the program in terms of numbers of students engaged in this mode of delivery for the program and the number of degrees conferred versus traditional delivery methods Please describe the evaluation plan to be used.

Appendix C

The Commission on Colleges
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

DISTANCE AND CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION

- Policy Statement -

Definition of Distance Education

For the purposes of the Commission's accreditation review, distance education is 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, DVD's, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.

Definition of Correspondence Education

Correspondence education is a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. 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.

Policy Statements

1. At the time of review by the Commission, the institution must demonstrate that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (1) a secure login and pass code, (2) proctored examinations, and (3) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

2. An institution that offers distance or correspondence education must ensure that it reports accurate headcount enrollment on its annual Institutional Profile submitted to the Commission.

3. Institutions must ensure that their distance and correspondence education courses and programs comply with the *Principles of Accreditation*. The referencing of the particular requirements listed in this policy does not imply that they are the only requirements of the *Principles* that apply to distance and correspondence education. This policy applies to degree and certificate programs and their courses. (See also COC guidelines called "Distance Education and the *Principles of Accreditation.*")

Standards that Directly Apply to Distance and Correspondence Education

The citations below refer to the *Principles of Accreditation*: Principle of Integrity (PI), Core Requirements (CR), Comprehensive Standards (CS), and Federal Requirements (FR).

Curriculum and Instruction

Programs and courses provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty and among students. (CS 3.4.5)*

The faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight of distance and correspondence education, ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction. (CS 3.4.1 and CS 3.4.12)

The technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the programs and courses and expectations concerning the use of such technology are clearly communicated to students. (CS 3.4.12)

There is currency of materials, programs, and courses. (CS 3.5.3 and CS 3.6.4)

Distance and correspondence education policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products. (CS 3.2.14)

Faculty support services are appropriate and specifically related to distance and correspondence education. (CS 3.4.9)

Faculty who teach in distance and correspondence education programs and courses receive appropriate training. (CS 3.7.3)

Admission and recruitment policies and decisions take into account the capability of students to succeed in distance and correspondence education programs. (CS 3.4.3)

Comparability of distance and correspondence education programs to campus-based programs and courses is ensured by the evaluation of educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction. (CS 3.3.1)

The integrity of student work and the credibility of degrees and credits are ensured. (PI 1.1, CS 3.4.6, CS 3.5.3, and CS 3.6.4)

Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs, including those offered through distance education and correspondence education. (FR 4.4)

If the institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours in its distance or correspondence education, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester hours or its equivalent unit. (CR 2.7.3)

Library and Learning Resources

Students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources. (CS 3.8.2 and CR 2.9)

Course requirements ensure that students make appropriate use of learning resources. (CS 3.8.2)

Access is provided to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs. (CS 3.8.1 and CS 3.8.2)

Student Services

Students have adequate access to the range of services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, and delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling. (CR 2.10)

Students have an adequate procedure for resolving their complaints. (CS 4.5)

Advertising, recruiting, and admissions information adequately and accurately represent the programs, requirements, and services available to students. (PI 1.1 and FR 4.6)

Students enrolled in distance education courses are able to use the technology employed, have the equipment necessary to succeed, and are provided assistance in using the technology employed. (CS 3.4.12)

Facilities and Finances

Equipment and technical expertise required for distance and correspondence education are available. (CS 3.4.12)

Long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance and correspondence education program. (CS 3.3.1, CS 3.8.3, and CS 3.11.3)

Adopted: Commission on Colleges, June 1997
Updated in accord with the revised Principles, December 2006
Endorsed: Executive Council, SACS Commission on Colleges, June 2009