



Angelo State University **Operating Policy and Procedure**

OP 04:11 Distance Education

DATE: June 14, 2011

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Operating Policy and/or Procedure (OP) is to provide a framework for the development, implementation, and maintenance of formal degree and certificate programs and courses offered via distance education for academic credit at Angelo State University (ASU).

REVIEW: This OP will be reviewed in February of odd numbered years by the vice provost for academic affairs with recommended revisions presented to the provost and vice president for academic affairs (PVPAA) by March 15 of the same year.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

The definition used for distance education in this document is the one adopted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools:

“For the purposes of the Commission’s accreditation review, distance education is defined 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, DVD’s, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program” (*Distance and Correspondence Education: Policy Statement*, 2010).

1. Mission and Goals for Formal Distance Education

ASU’s mission and vision statements for distance education (Attachment A) flow from and fulfill lead goals and objectives in the university’s strategic plan as well as the mission and vision statements (see <http://www.angelo.edu/services/strategy/vision2020.html> for the full text and http://www.angelo.edu/services/communications_marketing/mission.php for ASU mission and vision statements).

Annually during regular planning processes, the Division of Academic Affairs will review and revise, if necessary, the statement of the mission and goals of formal distance education at ASU. The statement will be consistent with the institution’s mission and goals.

2. Institutional Accommodation

- a. All academic units of the university shall have an opportunity to participate in providing degree or certificate programs for credit and/or courses for credit delivered via distance education wherever there is a need. The university shall assure that the institution's administrative policies and procedures allow for an effective, efficient distance education support infrastructure.
- b. Funding levels and fees must provide sufficient financial resources to initiate and maintain quality distance education courses and programs. Among these resources is the distance education fee collected from students under the authority of Texas Education Code § 55.16. Eligible expenditures of the fee are identified in the distance education fee expenditures (Attachment B).
- c. The Office of the Provost serves as the central repository for distance education program information and support structure. The PVPAA's designee will be assigned responsibility for distance education. The Distance Education Council will serve in an advisory capacity to the provost or the provost's designee on policy and operational issues related to distance education. Committee membership is comprised of the vice provost, academic deans, associate vice president of Enrollment Management, associate vice president of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, director of the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Research, two department heads appointed by the provost and two faculty members appointed by the provost upon recommendation from the academic deans.

3. Degree and Certificate Programs Offered Via Distance Education

- a. Programs offered via distance education shall be consistent with the role and mission of Angelo State University and the offering units and shall be approved through the usual curriculum approval process. There shall be no distinction between programs offered through distance education and those offered on campus. Unless otherwise provided, all policies, standards, and guidelines for on-campus instruction apply to programs delivered via distance education.
- b. Selection of programs to be offered via distance education is the purview of the appropriate academic unit, which shall provide oversight of the program to ensure currency of the program, its courses, and resources. Each program shall result in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree awarded.
- c. Once implemented, the offering academic units and the university commit to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to the continuation of the program for a period of time sufficient to enable admitted students to complete the program as long as financially feasible.
- d. Undergraduate certificate programs offered for academic credit require a 2.0 cumulative grade point average with no grade lower than a "C." All courses must be in residence.
- e. Graduate certificate programs offered for academic credit require a 3.0 cumulative grade point average with no grade lower than a "B." All courses must be in residence.

4. Courses Offered Via Distance Education

- a. Courses delivered via distance education are academic department courses approved through the usual curriculum approval process. There shall be no distinction between courses offered through distance education and those offered on campus. Courses offered via distance education shall have the same rigor and expected outcomes of resident offerings.
- b. Courses delivered via distance education carry the same curriculum prerequisites for Angelo State University admitted students. When a course is redesigned for delivery via distance education methods, it will be reviewed by the Distance Education Council.
- c. Students will evaluate courses delivered via distance education using the course evaluation procedures in effect for campus-based courses. Additional items to be evaluated shall include, but are not limited to, the effectiveness and efficiency of delivery systems, academic resources, student services, and access to faculty. As with campus-based courses, records of evaluations and analyses of evaluations must be used proactively in the enhancement of course offerings.
- d. Final examinations in courses delivered via distance education must be taken under the supervision of the instructor or an approved proctor or through the use of other techniques that assure the integrity of the process.

5. Library Support

- a. ASU ensures that all distance education students have access to library resources to support appropriately the courses in which the students are enrolled and to provide services that represent the closest approximations of those offered to on-campus students. These services include document delivery, electronic access to reference services, reserves, interlibrary loan, and a web page that includes ready links to services, contacts, and self-help modules.
- b. The library will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of resources provided to distance education students and will demonstrate that services are improved where appropriate.
- c. Instructors will provide distance education students information about library services.

6. Student Support Services

- a. Distance education students shall have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their successful completion of course work. These services will be comparable to those offered to traditional, on-campus users and should include all or most of the following: admissions; bursar's office; payment processing; bookstore; university catalog; academic advising; technical assistance; registration, withdrawal from courses; financial aid information; academic calendar; services for disabled students (American Disabilities Act of 1990 accommodation); policies, procedures, and protocols for taking courses.
- b. Outcomes for effective provision of support services must include distance education students.

[Link fixed: September 11, 2012; Under review]

- c. Assessment data for effective provision of learning resources to distance education must be available and regularly evaluated and improved where appropriate.
- d. Instructors will provide distance education students information about support services.

7. Faculty and Faculty Services

- a. Only qualified faculty members, assigned by the appropriate department head, shall teach courses delivered via distance education. Assigned faculty shall have the same expertise, experience, rank, etc. as the faculty assigned to resident classes.
- b. Faculty retain the responsibility and authority for the academic management and oversight of distance education programs and courses and shall have full control of the content of the courses.
- c. The faculty member retains the authority and responsibility to produce any revised or supplemental materials to maintain or enhance the accuracy and quality of the distance education course. Operating Policy 56.10: Intellectual Property Rights applies to all programs and courses delivered via distance education.
- d. Faculty who teach through distance education technologies are responsible for acquiring sufficient technical skills to present their subject matter and related material effectively and, as necessary, for consulting with technical support personnel.
- e. ASU's distance education infrastructure will provide development opportunities for faculty to increase their awareness of distance education methodologies and improve their instructional skills. Each faculty member shall receive consultation, training, implementation, and evaluation support from instructional design and delivery staff to assure effective, efficient use of the chosen delivery system.
- f. The university will provide adequate equipment, software, and communications access to faculty to support interaction with students.
- g. Faculty are responsible for informing students about technical skill prerequisites and required hardware, software, and supplemental materials necessary for course participation in the catalog description or syllabus.
- h. When faculty create courses to be offered via distance education, they may be compensated at the established rate with approval from their dean and from the provost.
- i. When faculty teach courses to be offered via distance education, they will do so as part of their regularly compensated responsibilities to ASU.
- j. Policies for faculty evaluation should give equal value to and appropriate recognition of teaching, scholarly activity/creative endeavor, and service related to distance education programs or courses.
- k. To document individual and institutional compliance with requirements of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, faculty members teaching a course via distance education must affirm that they

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are following the “Principles of Best Practice” (Attachment C) by completing and submitting the Principles of Best Practice/Copyright Compliance Form for Distance Education Courses and Programs (Attachment D) no later than November 1 for the spring term and by March 15 for the summer and fall terms.

[Attachment A: Distance Education Mission and Vision Statements](#)

[Attachment B: Distance Education Fee Expenditures](#)

[Attachment C: Principles of Best Practices and Protocols for Degree and Certificate Programs and Credit Courses Offered Electronically](#)

[Attachment D: Principles of Best Practice/Copyright Compliance Form for Distance Education Programs and Courses](#)