Procedure Title: Distance Education

Impact: All Benefit-Eligible, Non-Faculty Employees

Responsibility: Human Resources

Effective Date: 4/25/2001

Revised Date: 1/30/2020

Reviewed Date:

Relates to Policy (s): 3.08.10; 3.02.34; 5.06.01

Legal Citation(s): US Department of Education - 34 CFR. §600.2, 34 §CFR 602.17(g)
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) Distance Education Policy, Standard 2.G.7

I.   Procedure Narrative

The following procedures are to ensure the quality and effectiveness of online learning at North Idaho College and meet the Department of Education requirements for distance education.

II.   Federal Regulations

Distance education is defined by the US Department of Education as an educational approach that utilizes various technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from their instructors. The goal of this mode of instruction is to establish regular and substantive interactions between the student and instructor, whether synchronous or asynchronous.

An instructor is an individual responsible for delivering course content and who meets the qualifications for instruction established by an institution's accrediting agency.
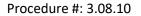
III.   Substantive Interaction

Engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:

   A. Providing direct instruction
   B. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework
   C. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency
   D. Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
   E. Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.

IV.   Regular Interaction

Prior to the student's completion of a course or competency, NIC ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by:

A. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled regular basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency.
B. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

V.   Course Delivery

All online and hybrid courses will be delivered using NIC's licensed Learning Management System (LMS). In exceptional circumstances other delivery options may be used if approved by Division Chairs/Directors and Deans.

VI.   Faculty Qualification for Online Teaching

Online courses should be developed and delivered by qualified instructors who have the necessary training and expertise in the subject matter and in online instruction.

Pursuant to NIC policy and procedure 3.02.34, "Teaching Focus," Section I, "Teaching Activities," Item 2, Faculty members are expected to "demonstrate competence in their teaching fields and related technologies."

Faculty members teaching online or hybrid courses are responsible for demonstrating experience or competency in teaching online. Faculty members can demonstrate competency by:
1. Providing evidence of previous experience teaching online; or
2. Completing onboarding to online teaching verified by the Office of eLearning.

In exceptional circumstances, a faculty member may be employed to teach an online or hybrid course on a probationary basis without first demonstrating proficiency, but will be required to complete proficiency requirements by the end of the semester in which they are teaching.

VII.   Course Review

Pursuant to NWCCU Distant Education policies in regards to the Evaluation of Distance Education, *"The institution has established a system for monitoring or periodically evaluating its online programs to ensure that its instructors continue to observe such policies for regular and substantive interactions".*

On a schedule determined by the Office of Instruction with input from the Office of eLearning, faculty will engage in an informal course review with the instructional design team. This informal review will identify areas of quality in a course, regular and substantive interactions and areas of a course that could be improved.

VIII.   Student Verification and Identity

In accordance with 34 §CFR 602.17(g) North Idaho College will maintain an effective identity verification process to establish that the student who is academically engaging in the course or program is the same person who is enrolled for the class. Violation of this procedure could lead to actions outlined in the Academic Integrity (5.06.01) and User Authentication (3.08.05) policy and

procedure. All methods of verifying student identity in distance learning must protect the privacy of student information.

One or more of the following methods will be used
    a.   A secure log in and password
    b.   Proctored examinations
    c.   New or other technologies and practices.

NIC students who register for any classes that require additional fees associated with verification processes are notified in advance before registration with an appropriate symbol on the registration webform.

IX. Faculty Support

North Idaho College will offer professional development and support to all part-time and full-time instructors in the preparation and delivery of online learning.