

Faculty and Staff Manual

SECTION 7: DISTANCE EDUCATION 7-2

7.1 DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES 7-2

7.1.1 DISTANCE EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY 7-2

7.1.2 COURSE SELECTION 7-2

7.1.3 COURSE APPROVAL 7-3

7.1.4 COURSE DEVELOPMENT 7-3

7.1.5 COURSE DELIVERY 7-4

7.1.6 EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES 7-6

SECTION 7: DISTANCE EDUCATION

7.1 DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

7.1.1 DISTANCE EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

The Distance Education program is based upon certain beliefs which are essential for understanding the policies and procedures set forth in this document. We believe that:

- A. Distance education courses are intended to augment, not replace, on-campus offerings. Distance education courses, particularly telecourses, are part of Mountain Empire Community College's effort to increase educational access by bringing education to people instead of bringing people to education.
- B. On-campus, traditional courses do not meet the needs of all potential students. Some people, due to work schedules, disabilities, family commitments, etc., are better served by nontraditional approaches to instructional delivery. Distance education courses at Mountain Empire Community College are designed for those students who are unable to travel to campus or who choose to pursue academic goals outside the traditional classroom setting.
- C. Faculty teaching distance education courses are responsible for ensuring the academic integrity of the teaching and learning process. Faculty do not generally function in the traditional "lecturer" role; rather, they are facilitators and navigators of information. Course content and procedures for delivery are developed from a student-centered approach.
- D. Faculty must be willing and able to communicate with students in writing, by telephone, electronic mail, or personal conference, and they must be willing to devote the appropriate amount of time each week to student contact, regardless of the method of course delivery.
- E. Distance education courses are equivalent in quality and content to on-campus courses. Course requirements, grading, and content are designed to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn as much from a distance education course as from an on-campus course.
- F. Students enrolled in distance education courses have the same rights and privileges as those students enrolled in on-campus courses.

7.1.2 COURSE SELECTION

The following criteria are used as guidelines for determining which courses are developed for delivery through distance education.

A. Potential Enrollment

1. Do topics, title and segments have high interest?
2. Is the course of general appeal or does it target a relatively small group of potential students?
3. Is the course transferable?
4. Is the course a general education requirement, elective course, or completely separate from existing curricula?
5. Is the course a prerequisite or lead-in to another course?

B. Potential Longevity

1. Will the subject matter become obsolete too soon to permit long-term (2-4 years) utilization without major revision?
2. Is the course material too topical to allow long-term (2-4 years) appeal?

C. Cost

1. Is the estimated cost within reasonable limits in terms of anticipated use?
2. Will delivery of the course be cost-effective?
3. Does the proposed course have potential marketability to other colleges?

7.1.3 COURSE APPROVAL

Distance education course approval follows the same procedure as any other college course. Because distance education courses are nontraditional forms of instruction, obtaining department and program area input and review to ensure understanding and support of the instructional methodology is very important for faculty members developing courses.

7.1.4 COURSE DEVELOPMENT

A. Faculty Roles

1. **Designer** - Faculty are responsible for course development, i.e., creating an integrated “learning system” that may include the use of media, computer programs, multimedia, discussion groups (on-line or off-line), textbook and supplemental readings, papers, projects, and other activities considered appropriate to the achievement of established learning objectives. Distance education courses are designed to minimize on-campus visits for students.
2. **Content Specialist** - Faculty ensure the academic integrity of distance education courses. Comparability to on-campus offerings is the course developer’s responsibility.
3. **Reviser** - As with any course, there should be periodic revisions of materials. New editions of textbooks, study guides, and mediated resources should be adopted as soon as they become available. At least once every three years, the distance education course should be reviewed by the associated department

to determine whether or not the material is still current and the course fits the department's curriculum.

B. Preparation of Materials

1. **Course Packet** - Faculty are responsible for preparing the course packet. The following documents are required, unless otherwise noted, in course packets and are intended primarily as basic, reasonable requirements necessary to give students an overview of the course, a list of expectations, and information necessary to successfully complete a particular distance education course:
 - a. Orientation: "How the Distance Education Program Works"
 - b. Letter from the instructor
 - c. Checklist for starting the course
 - d. Course syllabus, to include important dates, course details, course schedule, weekly assignments, and grade distribution
 - e. Course assignments, with full explanations of what is expected
 - f. Testing information
 - g. Broadcast schedules (when appropriate)
2. **Support Services** - The Continuing and Distance Education Office is responsible for coordinating all distance education courses. The following support services are provided by that office:
 - a. Ordering course materials, except textbooks
 - b. Reproduction and distribution of course packets and other course materials
 - c. Processing mail and other communication between students and instructors
 - d. Coordination and compilation of student opinion surveys
 - e. Other unanticipated services to help ensure a quality teaching and learning experience

7.1.5 COURSE DELIVERY

A. Advisement, Registration and Placement Testing

Faculty advisors should familiarize themselves with the policies and procedures herein to advise students of the nature of distance education courses. Advisors should encourage students who are available to take traditional courses to do so; also, the need for self discipline and initiative on the part of students taking distance education courses should be emphasized. The processes governing registration for distance education courses do not differ from the registration process for traditional courses.

B. Faculty Roles and Responsibilities

1. **Course Facilitator and Manager** - Counsel individual students, direct them to

additional learning resources, answer questions, and generally facilitate learning. In this role, the instructor relies heavily on the core material presented in the media and text components of the course.

2. **Course Presenter and Discussion Leader** - Provide for appropriate presentations and discussions. Presentations may involve one or more media, such as audio cassettes, videotapes, etc., and should offer additional insights and analyses and discuss different approaches or interpretations of material. This material may be included as part of the core requirements or as a supplement to existing materials.
3. **Evaluator** - Develop examination materials, provide feedback to each student, and assign grades. The following are guidelines to assist with examinations and grading:
 - a. The grading system used for the course should be included in the course packet
 - b. Faculty develop and grade all examinations, written assignments, etc.
 - c. Faculty are responsible for submitting final grades
 - d. On-campus exams may be arranged by the faculty member through the Learning Place. Arrangements for test proctors at off-campus locations should be arranged by the instructor with assistance from the Continuing and Distance Education Office
 - e. Faculty are responsible for test administration, including sending proctors tests and providing testing guidelines.
4. Course papers, exams, etc. are turned in, faxed in, or mailed directly to the instructor or to the Continuing and Distance Education Office, depending on requirements specified in the course packet.

C. Faculty Procedures

1. **Before the Course Begins**
 - a. Be thoroughly familiar with course components
 - b. Be familiar with College and Distance Education policies and procedures
 - c. Prepare course packet (see IV.B.1)
 - d. Develop and coordinate any activities needed to help students get started
2. **During the Course**
 - a. Review all course materials
 - b. Be available at times specified in course packet to consult with students
 - c. Initiate any needed contact with students
 - d. Review and, if appropriate, grade all assignments
 - e. Provide students with timely feedback on their progress
 - f. Maintain an accurate class roll
 - g. Maintain contact with Continuing and Distance Education staff

3. **After the Course Ends**
 - a. Assign final grades for the course
 - b. Assist in the evaluation of the course
 - c. Revise course materials as needed
 - d. Finish commitment through any Incompletes

D. Student/Faculty Interaction

While many students value the independence and freedom that comes with distance education courses, all require some amount of contact with an instructor. Faculty members are responsible for establishing good lines of communication with students. To achieve this, the following guidelines have been established:

1. At the request of the faculty member, Continuing and Distance Education staff shall perform routine correspondence with students. This includes periodic mailings as described in the course packet and special notifications when requested.
2. Faculty are responsible for talking with students about exams, course content and requirements or any other concerns regarding the course. Continuing and Distance Education staff answer questions concerning the administration of distance education courses and questions which can be easily answered from general knowledge about the course.
3. An instructor specifies a telephone number and office hours in the course packet. For full-time faculty, a total of 10 office hours per week is required during regular sessions, and these hours are specified at the beginning of each term.
4. Adjunct faculty provide one contact hour per week for each distance education course taught. When an adjunct instructor does not have a regular office, s/he may use the Continuing and Distance Education Office to consult with students.

7.1.6 EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Educational support services, primarily library services, for distance education courses are provided in a number of ways. First, the videocassettes which support many of these courses are circulated in the Wampler Library. Through a formal agreement with the Lonesome Pine Regional Library System, these videocassettes can also be placed on reserve at the nine public library branches located throughout the College's service region.

The Wampler Library staff is committed to serving all our students and works to meet the needs of distance education students by maintaining evening and weekend hours, by providing Internet access to the library catalog through the college home page, and by offering free interlibrary loan services via fax or Ariel workstation.