Guidelines for Reviewing Online/Distance Education Programs
University of North Carolina-General Administration
Licensure and State Authorization (June 2015)

Faculty Qualifications for Teaching Distance/Online Courses

Beyond offering orientation and training for faculty and students in the use of online technology, detail is needed to demonstrate how the institution ensures faculty preparation to deliver quality instruction--not just a statement that the institution does so.

Document the capacity (sufficient number and qualifications) of faculty to deliver individualized instruction to each learner in online courses at their normal teaching load.

Describe how faculty are supported in acquiring the pedagogical skills needed to teach online courses that are different than the skills needed in the face-to-face environment.

Describe the availability and quality of professional development and support that is offered to faculty for maintaining instructional quality including continuous training in institutional policies, learner needs, instructional approaches and techniques, and use of appropriate instructional technology.

Describe how the department and institution will assure that online courses are of equal rigor and quality as traditional face-to-face courses.

Curriculum and Instructional Design of Distance/Online Education

What are the institution's processes and procedures for assuring faculty control of the curriculum?

How did faculty participate in the instructional design of the online courses and programs?

What involvement did other constituencies have in the process for planning and developing the online program and courses?

What are the qualifications (academic subject matter knowledge and expertise in online study techniques) of those who developed the curricula and will manage the online/distance education programs?

Is the curriculum content comprehensive and supported by sound research and practice for online education?

Are course objectives clearly defined and stated in a manner that prospective students can understand the expected skills, knowledge, competency and attitude outcomes?

Are the educational objectives of the courses and academic program measurable?

Are all course objectives attainable through electronically delivered, online or other methods of distance study?

If textbooks are used, are they suitable for the online education format?

Educational Technology and Learning Resources

How does the institution assure that the technology utilized to deliver instruction is compatible with the course design?

How does the content, methods and technology for each online course provide for adequate interaction between instructor and students and among students?

How does the institution assure that students have access to appropriate learning resources and libraries to attain the course leaning outcomes?

Is the learning management system (LMS) "user-friendly" – intuitive and logical for users to navigate through the course?

How does the institution ensure that instructional materials and technology requirements are supplied to students at the appropriate times?

Assessment and Improvement of Distance/Online Education

How often are evaluations of courses and instructors done, including peer observations of online teaching?

What are the criteria for evaluation of faculty teaching distance/online courses and how, if at all, do they differ from criteria used to evaluate all other faculty?

Are there mid-semester evaluations so that "mid-course correction" can be made if necessary, especially in courses that are being taught online for the first time?

What are the plans and processes for assessing student learning outcomes, including persistence and completion?

What is the institution's process for monitoring, evaluating and improving the overall quality and effectiveness of online programs?

Are the evaluation measures and techniques equivalent to those used to assess and evaluate traditional face-to-face courses?

What assessment data does the institution use to demonstrate that the learning outcomes and competencies for students taking online courses are equivalent to the outcomes for students in traditional face-to-face courses?

Does the institution have a written plan showing how evaluation results will be used for improvement of online programs?

What is the institution's plan for monitoring and evaluating how online students use support services?

Assurances of Support and Compliance for Distance/Online Education

Does the institution have in place an organizational and management structure to plan for and direct its online programs?

Does the institution have internal approval for online delivery of courses and programs?

Does the institution have approval from all accreditors to offer online education?

What is the institution's plan to assure adequate financial and other resources to sustain the distance/online program and to manage its growth?

How does the institution assure that students have access to necessary technology and support services?

How does the institution verify that all students have the preparation, including technology skills, necessary for successfully completing online/distance education courses and programs?

Does the institution provide students with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress in online courses and programs?

Does the institution have a written policy of etiquette (netiquette) for online discussions, email, and other forms of communication?

Does the institution have a written policy and procedures for accommodating/enabling students with disabilities to enroll in online/distance education courses and programs?

Does the institution have adequate written policies and procedures for receiving, monitoring and resolving student complaints?

How does the institution assure the security of personal/private information of students enrolled in online courses?

How does the institution authenticate and verify the identity of students and their work to assure academic honesty/integrity?

How does the institution inform students of its policies and requirements for participating in online education courses and programs?

How does the institution assure compliance with the laws and regulations of all states in which it enrolls online students?

How does the institution assure that all advertising, recruiting and admissions information about online programs and courses is accurate and complete?

How does the institution assure compliance with copyright law and its policies for using the intellectual property of others?