



NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY

SEC. II- ALL: DISTANCE EDUCATION 1.0

DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIT POLICY - ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

I. DEFINITIONS

North Carolina A&T State University (N.C. A&T) adopts the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) definition of distance education and description of a distance education course.

- A. Distance Education. 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. Pratica, internships, and field engagements may require face-to-face engagement.
- B. Distance Education Course. A course that 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; video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs, if used, as part of the distance education course or online degree program; or any other media.

Under the umbrella of Distance Education, North Carolina A& T State University's definitions of online degree programs, degree-related distance education courses, and online degree completion programs are informed by Chapter 400 of the Code and UNC Policy Manual of the Office of the President.

- A. **Online Degree Program.** A fully internet-mediated program of study prepared to meet students' access and global competitiveness needs and resulting in a student being awarded a degree.
- B. **Degree-Related Distance Education Courses.** Individual degree-related distance education courses for which the development and delivery are the responsibility of the institution.
- C. **Degree-Completion Programs.** Online degree programs for transfer students who typically have some college or a two-year degree and seek an undergraduate degree.

II. POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Student Identity

The Office of Distance Education and Extended Learning utilizes the established University processes of the University Registrar and the Division of Information Technology along with effective instructional design practices to ensure the identity of students. The processes ensure a student who registers in a distance 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. Verification is accomplished by utilizing a secure login and password code, unique registration personal identification numbers (PINs) each term and/or proctored examinations. The Office of Distance Education and Extended Learning will periodically review processes and other tools effective for verifying student identification.

2. Student Privacy

The Office of Distance Education and Extended Learning, individual faculty, and N.C. A&T student support personnel will follow University Registrar protocols and applicable laws (e.g., FERPA) for protecting student privacy. Links will be provided to privacy policies for all external tools required for online learning. If the student is required to create an external account with a username and password to access an application or tool, the privacy policy will be available for students to read and use to safeguard their accounts.

3. Additional Costs

The Office of Distance Education and Extended Learning, University Registrar, and University Treasurer will ensure that, at the time of registration or enrollment, all distance education students are notified of any additional costs associated with verification of student identity and academic integrity. Academic programs and individual faculty must distinguish clearly in the syllabus between required and optional course materials as well as assessments that require additional costs.

4. Program Assessment

Faculty and administrators in academic units will be responsible for the assessment of all Distance Education courses and programs. The Office of Distance Education and Extended Learning and the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness will work with academic programs to assess at least annually student learning outcomes, student retention, graduation, and satisfaction for distance programs in order to ensure effectiveness and attainment of program goals. Faculty and administrators in academic units are responsible for adhering to established University timelines and program assessment protocols for all distance education courses and programs.

5. Headcount

The Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness will maintain official data on headcount enrollment for students in distance education programs.

6. Compliance

All distance education programs will comply with SACSCOC distance education policy statement. This applies to all educational programs and services, wherever located or however delivered. The *Principles of Accreditation* may be found at <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/DistanceCorrespondenceEducation.pdf>.

N.C. A&T recognizes the authority of the University of North Carolina System to approve online and site-based distance education delivery of degree programs and will comply with established processes for program approval and for offering and listing individual degree-related distance education courses.

N.C. A&T is a National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC SARA) participant through SARA North Carolina's membership (<http://www.saranc.org/>) and, thus, will honor the agreement and comply with its annual data reporting process.

All distance education programs and courses will comply with the quality assurance and standards of excellence adopted by the Office of Distance Education and Extended Learning.

7. Degree Program and Individual Degree-Related Course Approval

All degree programs and individual degree-related courses offered through Distance Education will undergo the same approval process established for all N.C. A&T courses.

8. Faculty Professional Development

Distance Education faculty have the same faculty development opportunities and evaluation processes as all university faculty. The Office of Distance Education and Extended Learning will ensure that all distance education faculty are enrolled

in the Center for Teaching Excellence moderated online community of practice. All faculty members will undergo faculty orientation and online teaching training before teaching the first distance course and must be certified for meeting quality standards by the Office of Distance Education and Extended Learning within the first year.

9. Faculty Office Hours and Communication

Distance education faculty members will adhere to the University's Office Hours policies. Full-time faculty teaching online courses may maintain virtual office hours while simultaneously maintaining on-campus office hours. Part-time faculty teaching solely online will hold all office hours online and may hold on-campus hours. Office hours will be published in the online course, under the Faculty Information section, and on the course syllabus.

The course syllabus and Faculty Information section must notify students of the approximate time and method they can expect to receive an answer to all communications (e.g., email, phone, course messages). Excluding holidays, the response should be provided within 48 hours.

10. Student Attendance Policy for Online Courses

Students are expected to attend class and participate on a regular basis in order to successfully achieve course learning outcomes and meet federal financial aid requirements. Class attendance in online courses is defined as active participation in academically related course activities. Active participation may consist of course interactions with the content, classmates, and/or the instructor.

Examples of academically-related course activities include, but are not limited to:

- Completing and submitting assignments, quizzes, exams, and other activities within Blackboard or through Blackboard (third-party products).
- Participating in course-related synchronous online chats, discussions, or meeting platforms such as Blackboard Collaborate in which participation is tracked.

11. Reporting Student Attendance for Federal Aid Purposes

Student withdrawals affect Title IV federal aid funds. The U.S. Department of Education requires the Office of Financial Aid to determine if a student who receives federal aid fails or withdraws from an online degree program course under any circumstance (34 CFR 668.22). It is essential that faculty of online courses arrange for at least one, if not more, of the above activities regularly. Instructors should be able to identify the weekly activities completed or not completed by the student, and the attendance/participation record for each week should reflect this information. A student's last date of "attendance" should be the date that the last activity was completed.

Attendance should not be determined by the last date the student logged into the course. Logging in and out of a course does not constitute active participation. Emailed messages or assignments and texting to and from students, while interactive, are difficult to track and should not be relied upon as proof of attendance or participation in the course. The latest version of the federal mandates related to federal aid is found at <https://ifap.ed.gov/ifap/byAwardYear.jsp?type=fsahandbook>.

12. Learning Management System (LMS) and Collaboration Tools

Faculty members must use the official learning management system (LMS) and collaboration tools implemented by the University to deliver online courses and post student grades.

13. Copyright of University Course Materials

Distance education policies pertaining to copyright use and ownership adhere to The University of North Carolina Board of Governors and North Carolina A&T State University policies that regulate these areas. Information regarding these policies is found on the Faculty Handbook (Section II - Academic Affairs) website:

<https://www.ncat.edu/legal/policies/sec2-acad-affairs/Copyright%20of%20University%20Course%20Materials.pdf> .

14. Student Services

Students will have access to appropriate academic support services to support online degree programs and degree-related distance education courses offered through distance education.

To help ensure student success, N.C. A&T will provide students with to fully online academic advising by program faculty with experience teaching online courses.

15. Student Complaint Procedures

Online students will have the same means to voice their concerns as on-campus students and with the additional option of using the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement- North Carolina (SARA-NC). North Carolina A&T State University students who desire to resolve a grievance should follow the University Student Complaint Procedure and complete the University Student Complaint Form.

<https://www.ncat.edu/student-affairs/index.html>

Online students should follow the SARA-NC Student Complaint Process at <http://www.saranc.org/Complaint.html> and use the Complaint Form.

Approved by the Chancellor

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