



NORTH CAROLINA A&T STATE UNIVERSITY

CHAPTER 300 – ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

UNIVERSITY POLICY 307, DISTANCE EDUCATION

SECTION 307.1 POLICY STATEMENT

All distance education programs and courses must be consistent with North Carolina A&T State University’s (“NC A&T or “University”) mission, policies, and institutional and accreditation standards.

SECTION 307.2 PURPOSE

The University recognizes the value of distance education as a means of furthering its educational mission and reaching a diverse population of learners with a wide range of needs. Online distance education presents rich opportunities for more flexibility in access and extends the use of technologies by blending traditional classroom and asynchronous approaches in courses. The purpose of this policy is to set forth the rules governing distance education at N.C. A&T.

SECTION 307.3 SCOPE

This policy affects all online distance education degree and certificate programs, services, and technology operations that involve faculty, students, and staff. It does not include site-based distance education.

SECTION 307.4 DEFINITIONS

- (1) “Asynchronous” means self-paced, unscheduled discourse that occurs when students and faculty are not in the same place.
- (2) “Attendance” for distance education students means the most recent date that an assigned last activity was completed, not the last date that a student logged into a course.
- (3) “Distance Education” means a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and faculty and among students) in a course occurs when students and faculty are not in the same place.
- (4) “Hybrid Certificate Program” means an online distance education program of study that leads to awarding a certificate rather than a degree and is intentionally designed with a combination of face-to-face and online distance education modalities or a blending of modalities, incorporating no more than 50% of its courses as synchronous with a campus-based section, as synchronous online with a set day/time, or as synchronous with intensive campus sessions.

- (5) “Hybrid Degree Program” means an online distance education program of study intentionally designed with a combination of face-to-face and distance education or a blending of modalities, incorporating no more than 50% of its courses as synchronous with a campus-based section, as synchronous online with a set day/time, or as synchronous with intensive campus sessions.
- (6) “Master Course” means a fully developed online distance education course with an associated syllabus, created and reviewed regularly by program faculty to serve as a template for all sections.
- (7) “On-Campus Program” means a campus-based degree or certificate program where students will complete fewer than 50% of courses asynchronously. Hence, a program with 100% campus-based courses is an on-campus program.
- (8) “Online Distance Education” means the delivery of degree and certificate program courses 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 or any other media.
- (9) “Site-Based Distance Education Program” means off-campus program delivery that occurs when students and instructors are together at an instructional site that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution.
- (10) “Synchronous” means real-time instruction, scheduled discourse where faculty and students participate in instruction at the same time.

SECTION 307.5 ACADEMIC QUALITY

- (a) Online distance education faculty shall hold distance education students to academic standards consistent with those to which students participating in on-campus instruction are held, providing syllabi with evaluation and student learning expectations and initiating regular and substantive interactions with students in instructional activities.
- (b) Online distance education programs and courses must contain equivalent academic rigor, quality, and assessment of student learning outcomes as on-campus programs or classes offered by the N.C. A&T.
- (c) To maintain consistent academic quality across the institution, course syllabi, student learning outcomes and evaluations of course effectiveness for online distance education classes shall be evaluated according to standards consistent with face-to-face classes.

SECTION 307.6 CALENDAR AND AVAILABILITY

Distance education courses shall be offered according to the general N.C. A&T academic calendar unless otherwise stated. Online distance education courses and services must be available to faculty and students within reason regardless of local time zone and weather conditions.

SECTION 307.7 METHOD OF DELIVERY

- (a) Distance education programs or classes other than those offered through a University-approved, contracted vendor that provides identity verification and disability support, must use the University's online Learning Management System ("LMS") to deliver content.
- (b) Faculty may use other external websites and tools for a given class at their discretion, but the foundation of the class must be accessible (or linked) through the University's LMS.
- (c) Faculty shall comply with federal and state laws and University policies involving copyright when preparing and delivering online distance education course material.
- (d) Access to online course environments shall be restricted to faculty and registered students. Faculty who wish to invite a guest from outside the N.C. A&T community to participate should contact ITS to arrange for temporary access.

SECTION 307.8 STUDENTS

Section 307.8.1 Student Expectations

- (a) Distance education students shall be subject to the same academic, academic integrity, and conduct standards as students participating in on-campus instruction.
- (b) Student usernames, passwords and registration personal identification numbers (PINs) shall be obtained through the normal course of the admissions, registration, and advising processes. Students, staff, nor faculty shall share student usernames and passwords.
- (c) Students shall complete an online learning orientation as a part of the required admissions orientation process.

Section 307.8.2 Designations

- (a) Online distance education students shall be designated as a special population, and must be included in business and support processes that safeguard that designation.
- (b) Active-duty military online distance education students and their dependents shall be classified as in state for residency, business, and finance purposes.

Section 307.8.3 Student Support Services

The University shall provide online distance education students with adequate access to services comparable to those offered to on-campus students.

Section 307.8.3.1 Admissions

- (a) Students seeking admission into N.C. A&T to enroll in distance education offerings shall follow the admissions procedures defined by the University.
- (b) Current N.C. A&T students do not require additional admission to enroll in distance education courses.
- (c) Specific limitations for enrollment in distance education courses apply to students classified as foreign or international students in on-campus programs.
- (d) Enrollment of foreign national students in distance education courses must be completed in coordination with the Office of International Affairs.
- (e) Upon admission to a distance education program, the University shall provide the student with a student account for student access to email, online campus services, the library, and limited access to other campus resources.

Section 307.8.3.2 Accommodations

- (a) The University shall provide online distance education students with adequate access to services comparable to those offered to on-campus students.
- (b) The University shall provide reasonable accommodations for disabled students and comply with web accessibility standards. Students with disabilities may register and receive accommodations with the Office of Accessibility Resources equivalent to on-campus students.

Section 307.8.3.3 Bookstore

All students enrolled in distance education courses may access the campus bookstore during its posted hours. Students may also purchase course materials from the bookstore's online services.

Section 307.8.3.4 Treasurer's Office

Section 307.8.3.4.1 Billing and Payment

Students enrolled in distance education courses shall be billed by and submit fees to the Treasurer's Office. The Treasurer's Office also disburses financial aid funds.

Section 307.8.3.4.2 Financial Aid

Students enrolled in distance education courses may apply for financial aid as controlled by federal, state, and local regulations. Students may seek financial aid counseling through face-to-face, telephone, or asynchronous conferences with the Office of Financial Aid.

Section 307.8.3.4.3 Tuition and Fees

- (a) Online distance education students shall be billed for courses at the distance learning tuition and fee rates per credit hour.
- (b) Online distance education program students who register for on-campus courses are subject to on-campus student fees and requirements.
- (c) On-campus program students enrolled in distance education courses shall pay the on-campus course tuition rate and without online distance education special population registration privileges.
- (d) The Extended Campus shall ensure that the website and Treasure's Office are updated with all costs associated with online distance education so that at the time of registration or enrollment, all online distance education students are notified of all costs associated with access, verification of student identity, academic integrity, and/or hybrid programs.
- (e) Distance education students shall be provided with the location of relevant University policies and academic regulations, including those pertaining to admission, registration, enrollment, refund of student charges, and transfer of credit.

Section 307.8.3.5 Library

Students enrolled in distance education courses are entitled access to normal library services, including online and remote access services. The campus library shall be open to all students enrolled in distance education courses during posted hours.

Section 307.8.3.6 Registration/Records

Students wishing to enroll in distance education courses are entitled to use the online registration systems maintained by the Office of Registrar. Students are responsible for seeking academic advisement from their advisor prior to registration. The student is responsible for obtaining a registration personal identification number (PIN) each session and any necessary permissions to enroll in a course.

Section 307.8.3.7 Tutoring

Students enrolled in online distance education courses shall receive access to virtual tutoring services to the same degree as on campus students.

Section 307.8.3.8 Proctored Testing

Students may be required to take proctored exams for verification of student identity in online distance education courses. Faculty shall notify students regarding any projected additional charges associated with student identity verification in the course syllabus and on the web at the time of registration.

Section 307.8.4 Student Complaints

Students may file complaints using the University's Student Complaint Portal at <https://www.ncat.edu/campus-life/student-affairs/index.php> or with by using the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement Complaint Procedure through the website at <http://www.saranc.org/Complaint.html>.

SECTION 307.9 UNIVERSITY RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 307.9.1 Student Identity Verification

- (a) The identity of distance education students shall be authenticated using the processes established by the University's Division of Information Technology Services.
- (b) Students shall obtain usernames and passwords through the normal course of the admissions and enrollment process.
- (c) Students shall be informed of the requirement to not share usernames and passwords.
- (d) N.C. A&T shall provide students with a virtual authentication option in order to obtain student identification cards.

Section 307.9.2 Student Privacy

- (a) Student education records and privacy in distance education programs and courses shall receive the same Family Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) and other protections as on-campus students.
- (b) Links will be provided to privacy policies for all external tools required for online distance education courses.
- (c) If students are required to create an external account with a username and password to access a course application or tool, the privacy policy will be available for students to read and use to safeguard their accounts.

Section 307.9.3 Advising and Career Services

- (a) N.C. A&T shall provide students with a fully online academic advising by program faculty with experience teaching online courses.
- (b) N.C. A&T shall provide students virtual academic and career support services.

Section 307.9.4 Approvals

- (a) Distance education activities for online distance education programs shall occur within the same governance and approval processes as campus-based degree and certificate programs, and courses.
- (b) Faculty must obtain Extended Campus approval before developing online distance education courses.

Section 307.9.5 Master Courses and Master Syllabus

- (a) Online distance education programs shall use master courses, master course syllabi, and student learning outcomes alignment in courses to maintain consistent academic and instructional design quality across the institution and according to standards consistent with campus-based classes. Master courses are intended to ensure a level of course quality consistent with UNC, regional accreditation, and U.S. Department of Education requirements. [See SECTION 307.10 COMPLIANCE below for more information on regulatory bodies]
- (b) Master course disciplinary content is determined by program faculty.
- (c) The master course template, master course evaluation processes, and outcomes will not prevent faculty from designing and adding their own content and student assessments (e.g., assignments, exams, etc.) within the course.
- (d) A master course syllabus shall accompany every master course.
- (e) The master course syllabus will be available for public viewing.

Section 307.9.6 Master Course Coordinators

- (a) Department chairs shall ensure that each program course has a master course coordinator, selected by the department chair for three-year terms.
- (b) Master course coordinators shall at least annually review master courses for quality assurance and shall hold at least one quality enhancement review consultation with an instructional designer for each course in their portfolio during their service term.

Section 307.9.7 Shared Responsibilities

- (a) The Extended Campus shall collaborate with academic units to recruit and onboard online distance education faculty and shall retain all faculty orientation and certification documentation.
- (b) The Extended Campus and University Registrar shall assist colleges and academic units in maintaining their hybrid synchronous or online asynchronous program and course codes with course descriptions in systems and communications.
- (c) The University Registrar shall maintain the Banner course, student designations and the related processes to ensure online distance education students receive preferential access to distance education degree-related courses.
- (d) The Extended Campus and the Office of Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (“OSPIE”) shall collaborate with academic programs to assess at least annually student learning outcomes, equal rigor, student retention, graduation, and satisfaction for online distance programs and courses.
- (e) The Extended Campus and OSPIE shall document, maintain, and disseminate effectiveness and assessment reports.
- (f) OSPIE shall maintain official data on headcount enrollment for distance education students.
- (g) Information Technology Services shall collaborate with academic units and the Registrar’s Office to ensure the same student who registered for online distance education is the same student who receives the grade and completes the program.
- (h) The Extended Campus shall ensure that all online distance education students are enrolled in the Online Learner Support Commons and the required online distance education orientation.

Section 307.9.8 Faculty Responsibilities

- (a) Distance education department chairs shall collaborate with the Extended Campus to develop one master course for each course in a degree or certificate program.
- (b) Faculty and administrators in academic units shall adhere to established University timelines and program assessment protocols for distance education courses and programs.
- (c) Faculty in online distance education courses shall initiate regular and substantive interactions with students in instructional activities; this also helps ensure the student who registered participates and receives course credit.

- (d) Distance education faculty shall maintain LMS records that identify the students' weekly activities, graded assignments, and course grade.

Section 307.9.9 Faculty Hiring

- (a) University colleges, departments or units proposing to hire instructors to teach distance education courses who are not current University employees must seek advance approval from the Office of the Provost.
- (b) University colleges, departments or units shall not extend an offer to hire an instructor until it obtains approval from the Office of the Provost.
- (c) University colleges, departments or units must use faculty lines allocated for distance education to hire faculty with previous online teaching and course development experience sufficient to ensure instructional effectiveness and Extended Campus certification.
- (d) Faculty residing outside North Carolina shall not be hired without prior review by the Division of Human Resources, who shall determine whether payroll tax withholding and/or business registration requirements have been met.
- (e) Faculty shall receive authorization from their academic units to teach distance education courses.

Section 307.9.10 Faculty Certification and Professional Development

- (a) The Extended Campus shall ensure that distance education course developers and/or faculty possess or have access to materials to acquire the necessary skills for online course development and/or teaching.
- (b) The Extended Campus shall collaborate with academic units to recruit and onboard online distance education faculty, and shall retain distance education faculty orientation and certification documentation.
- (c) The Extended Campus shall ensure online distance education faculty are enrolled in the Center for Teaching Excellence moderated online community of practice.
- (d) The Extended Campus shall facilitate distance education faculty access to technology resources and collaborate with academic units to ensure support.

Section 307.9.11 Faculty Office Hours and Communication

- (a) Online distance education faculty members shall comply with Administrative Policy 301, Faculty Office Hours.

- (b) Full-time faculty teaching online courses may maintain virtual office hours while simultaneously maintaining on-campus office hours.
- (c) Part-time faculty teaching solely online shall hold all office hours online and may hold on-campus hours.

SECTION 307.10 COMPLIANCE

Section 307.10.1 Compliance Authority

- (a) Unless otherwise provided, all UNC Code and Policy Manual, accrediting agency, and institutional policies, standards, and guidelines for on-campus instruction apply to distance education instruction.
- (b) Distance education at N.C. A&T shall meet the guidelines set by the UNC Board of Governors and the interregional accrediting agencies, including the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Distance and Correspondence Education and Guidelines for Addressing Distance Education and Correspondence Courses at <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/Guidelines-for-Addressing-Distance-and-Correspondence-Education.pdf>.
- (c) N.C. A&T shall comply with its agreements with the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC SARA) participant <http://www.saranc.org>.

Section 307.10.2 Compliance Conformity

- (a) All programs shall comply with any relevant accreditation standards specific to their academic disciplines regarding distance education. In the event of a conflict, the accreditation policies shall supersede this policy.
- (b) Course developers and faculty of each online course shall comply with federal guidelines for accessibility.
- (c) Course developers and faculty utilizing materials that are not accessible shall provide the Office of the Provost and Extended Campus a written plan for alternate access and a plan for bringing the course into compliance.
- (d) Extended Campus and faculty shall ensure compliance with all applicable copyright laws concerning the reproduction and use of printed and digital materials, and the use and transmission of all media recordings, performances, or other protected works.

Section 307.10.3 State Authorization

- (a) The Extended Campus shall ensure that N.C. A&T meets all state requirements to legally offer distance education in that state when the University offers postsecondary education through distance education in a state in which it is not physically located, or in which it is otherwise subject to state jurisdiction as determined by that state.
- (b) The Extended Campus shall ensure that N.C. A&T obtains required state institutional authorization for all educational activities undertaken by N.C. A&T in state, and licensure authorization for any professional programs that require approval from a state licensing board.
- (c) Distance education programs or courses shall not be offered by N.C. A&T in states, countries, or jurisdictions where the University has not received state authorization to provide distance education programs or courses.

POLICY HISTORY:

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AUTHORITY: Chancellor

POLICY OWNER: Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Extended Campus

RESOURCES:

UNC Code and Policy Manual Chapter 400

[SACSCOC Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy](#)

[National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements \(NC SARA\)](#)