MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™

AOP 10.16: DISTANCE EDUCATION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Academic Operating Policy and Procedure (AOP) is to ensure an understanding of the procedures for the development, implementation, and maintenance of formal distance learning degree programs, courses, minors, and certificates offered for academic credit at Mississippi State University (MSU).

POLICY/PROCEDURE

MSU uses the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) definition of distance education.
(http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/DistanceCorrespondenceEducation.pdf)

1. **Students:** A distance education student is defined as one who has been admitted into a distance education program at MSU. Although geographically dispersed, distance students meet the definition of a "student at Mississippi State University" as defined under *OP 31.01 Definition of a Student.*

2. **Programs:** All Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) Board of Trustees and Mississippi State University policies, standards, and guidelines for on- and off-campus instruction apply to distance education, unless otherwise stated. Any academic unit may provide distance education programs, courses, minors, or certificates that serve populations of students with a demonstrated need, who are not on campus, and whereby the curricula can be developed and effectively delivered in a distance format. All such academic endeavors are housed within their respective colleges and academic units, and are the responsibility of the assigned faculty and administrators.

3. Compliance Guidelines:

   - All distance education degree programs, courses, minors, and certificates must be consistent with the role and mission of both Mississippi State University and the units providing them.

   - All distance programs, courses, minors, and certificates are subject to the same University curricula approval processes, guidelines, and requirements as is required for on-campus programs and courses. This includes on-campus programs and courses that are reconfigured for delivery via distance education methods.

   - Programs, courses, minors, and certificates will comply with all requisite approval processes of state, regional, or other agencies or associations germane to the conduct of the academic program at MSU. Distance education programs must comply with all on-campus program and course requirements.

- Academic units must demonstrate and maintain equivalency between on-campus and distance degree programs relative to academic rigor, breadth, and expected outcomes.

- The colleges and departments that choose to offer distance degree programs, courses, minors, and certificates have full control over their content. The respective teaching faculty are responsible for all academically-related functions.

- Only persons holding a faculty position, approved and assigned by their department head, may teach distance classes. The required credentials for an instructor of record for distance courses and on-campus courses must be identical, and appropriate for the discipline in which they are teaching.

- Contingent on programmatic needs and upon approval of their college academic deans, all qualified faculty members may teach distance classes as part of their normal teaching assignment. Faculty participation in distance education must be clearly defined by workload assignment and performance evaluation.

- Ownership of intellectual property developed for distance courses will be determined by the MSU Intellectual Property, Policy and Procedure Statement.

- Distance education students must have access to a range of student services that are comparable to those provided for on-campus students, e.g., academic and career advising, and general library and reserve materials.

- Once a distance degree program is implemented, the academic units and MSU are committed to ongoing financial and technical support, and to ensure that all admitted students are allowed an appropriate timeframe to satisfy the program requirements.

- Faculty must use best practices to ensure the highest standard of academic integrity in the preparation of exams and other graded activities in distance courses. Similarly, best practices must be followed to prevent student academic misconduct in distance courses.

- All distance courses must comply with the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act of 1990, ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

- The University Policy on Use of Copyrighted Works for Education and Research OP 1.20 applies to all distance education degree programs, courses, minors, and certificates.

4. **Evaluation, Assessment, and Recognition:** Distance education courses will use the same course evaluation procedures as on-campus courses. Each distance education program shall be assessed at the same frequency as that of programs offered on campus. Student learning in distance education programs must compare favorably to that in on-

campus based programs. Faculty will receive recognition for teaching and scholarly activities for distance education commensurate with those for traditional activities and programs.

5. **Library Support.** Faculty are encouraged to use library resources and personnel in their distance education courses.

6. **Faculty and Faculty Services.** The university will assure an effective and efficient distance education support infrastructure that provides development opportunities for faculty that will increase their awareness of distance education methodologies and improve their instructional skills. The university will also provide adequate equipment, software, and communications access to faculty to support interaction with students, cooperating institutions, and other faculty for approved programs and courses.

7. **Student Services.** The rights of and services provided to distance students will be comparable to those offered to on-campus students.

   Distance education students shall receive clear, accurate, complete, and timely information needed to complete their studies. All information regarding application, admission, enrollment, course activities, and so forth, for any distance education program must be easily accessible and provided in a well- organized and complete manner.

8. **Technology.** MSU will provide a central learning management system that departments and colleges are encouraged to use. Selection of technology for electronically-delivered distance education courses and programs shall be the responsibility of the faculty and the department offering such courses and programs, and shall be based primarily on pedagogical objectives, student demographics, and available information technology resources.

9. **Financial Administration and Teaching of Distance Classes.** For details regarding financial administration and teaching of distance classes please refer to the guidelines located under the Provost and Executive Vice President's Office web site at the following link: http://www.provost.msstate.edu/resources/staff/distance/

<u>REVIEW</u>

This AOP will be reviewed every four years, or whenever circumstances require an earlier review, by the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs with recommendations for revision, if any, presented to the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

REVIEWED:

/s/ Susan Seal   02/12/2020
Executive Director   Date
Center for Distance Education

/s/ Peter L. Ryan   02/12/2020
Executive Vice Provost and   Date
Dean of the Graduate School

/s/ David Shaw   06/29/2020
Provost and Executive Vice President   Date

/s/ Randy Follett   06/29/2020
President, Robert Holland Faculty Senate   Date

/s/ Tracey N. Baham   06/29/2020
Director   Date
Institutional Research and Effectiveness

/s/ Joan Lucas   06/29/2020
General Counsel   Date

APPROVED:

/s/ Mark Keenum   06/29/2020
President   Date