

Distance Education Policy

Policy Statement:

The content, level, rigor, and overall educational quality of distance education courses should be the same as courses taught in traditional face-to-face classes.

Definitions:

Distance Education (DE): According to Claflin University, distance education is a form of formal education that occurs over the internet (course content, assessment and interaction between students and instructors as well as between students themselves) when students and instructors are not physically present.¹

Claflin University has developed the following criteria to distinguish between fully online, remote, hybrid and web-enhanced courses.

a. **Fully Online:** *The class is taught online to an extent of 95% to 100%.* Claflin University's learning management system (Moodle) will be used to deliver all course material and communications. With live video conferencing systems like Zoom, instructors will offer office hours that meet students' needs.

b. **Remote Instructions:** *Due to unforeseen circumstances, 51% to 94% of the course is taught online for a short time.* When inclement weather or an outbreak of pandemic prevents institutions from operating, this category of instructions is used. Through a learning management system and video conferencing system, instructors can continue students' education. Instructors conduct their class meeting time utilizing video conferencing systems. Claflin University has university-wide licenses for Zoom for its faculty, students, and staff. The provost's office has to approve for a limited time this type of course, as well as the registrar's office.

c. **Hybrid course:** *consists of between 25% and 50% online instruction.* Course content will be made available online and students will be able to meet instructors on campus as scheduled by deans and the registrar's office.

d. **Web-Enhanced courses:** *consists of between 0% and 24% online instruction.* While technology may enhance instruction, it does not replace class sessions. Instructors and students will schedule in-person classes according to their schedules. In this category, instructors and students can share course content and learn through traditional and flipped classroom models.

Learning Management Systems (LMS) are software systems for administering, documenting, assessing, communicating, tracking, reporting, and delivering educational courses. Claflin University uses Moodle as its approved learning management system that integrates with SIS technology (Jenzabar) to comply with FERPA guidelines and SACSCOC standards.²

Reason for the Policy:

To comply with SACSCOC requirements, institutions must have a distance education policy that governs the delivery of instruction by distance ¹.

It may not be possible for existing policies and procedures to adequately address questions regarding control, evaluation, quality, rights, and responsibilities associated with distance education. As a result, this document is intended to provide the institution with a definitive statement that courses taught through distance education must be of the same quality, level, rigor, and overall content as courses taught via face-to-face instruction.

Proposed Outcomes:

- At Claflin University, advanced methods are used to verify students' identities and course work to ensure the integrity of distance education. Claflin University has integrated Respondus Monitor for identity verification and SafeAssign for plagiarism detection into their learning management system. ³
- Maintain consistency in the delivery of distance education courses. To support faculty in their professional development in teaching and learning, Claflin University is a member of Quality Matters and of the Online Learning Consortium.
- Make sure that academic content, level, rigor, and overall education quality are equal to those offered in a classroom setting.
- Make sure distance education students receive the same level of academic support as traditional students, including tutoring services, library services, ADA support, and academic advice.
- The appropriate qualifications of adjunct and full-time instructors in their field must be ensured so that distance education students are receiving the best possible education. The office of human resources requires instructors to provide official transcripts, resumes, and criminal background checks. It is required that teachers have a master's degree at least. For instructors teaching distance education, a terminal degree is always recommended.
- As with traditional courses and programs offered by Claflin University, distance education courses and programs are subject to the same guidelines and standards.
- The Office of Online Education monitors the quality of education and service provided to online students.

Applicability of the Policy:

All credit-bearing courses offered via distance education are subject to the distance education policy.

Supporting Information:

¹ <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/Guidelines-for-Addressing-Distance-and-Correspondence-Education.pdf>

² https://www.claflin.edu/docs/default-source/records-and-registration/claflin-privacy-of-educational-records.pdf?sfvrsn=66f8380e_9

³ <https://wcet.wiche.edu/policy/student-identity-verification/>

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