



<b>Policy Title:</b>	ACAOM Distance Education Policy
<b>Approved By:</b>	ACAOM Executive Committee
<b>Document History:</b>	Implementation Date: 17 October 2015 Last Updated: 30 October 2016
<b>Related Policies:</b>	ACAOM Notification of Change Policy; ACAOM Fees and Dues Schedule; ACAOM Eligibility and Candidacy Procedures
<b>References:</b>	34 CFR Part 602; 20 U.S. Code § 1099(b)
<b>Responsible Official:</b>	ACAOM Executive Director

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**Policy Summary:** This guidance outlines ACAOM's distance education policy.

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## 1. Definitions

### Correspondence Education

Correspondence education are self-paced courses in which teaching materials necessary for a course are sent to the student, and the student initiates contact with the instructor. Correspondence education is not included in ACAOM's definition of distance education or allowed under current Commission policy.

### Distance (or Distance Delivered) Education

An educational process in which the majority of the instruction ( $\geq 50\%$  of the seat time in a course) occurs when a student and instructor are not in the same place and includes technology that is used to support regular and substantive interactions between the instructor and the students. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ the following technologies: (1) the internet; (2) one-way transmission through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband

lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; (3) audio conferencing. Distance education may employ video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs and CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the previous three technologies [34 CFR 602.3]

### Hybrid or Blended Courses

Distance-delivered courses are distinguished from hybrid/blended courses in which some traditional face-to-face time has been replaced by online learning or other technologically mediated learning activities. ACAOM defines hybrid/blended courses as those in which seat time has been reduced so that  $\leq 50\%$  of the learning activities are technologically mediated.

## 2. Distance Education Substantive Change

When an institution plans to implement its first distance education course, ACAOM must be notified at least six months prior to the planned implementation through receipt of a completed substantive change application and associated fee. (See ACAOM Notification of Change Policy and ACAOM's Fees and Dues Schedule). ACAOM will review the substantive change based on the demonstrated compliance with all of its *Standards and Criteria for Accreditation*, policies, and procedures, including those specific to distance education and elements critical to effective use of distance education methods. ACAOM approval is required prior to the implementation of the first distance education course.

While recognizing that some ACAOM accredited institutions offer instruction in more than one language, this policy specifies that the first course to be offered via distance education must be offered in English. An accredited institution seeking to offer a subsequent distance education course in a language other than English, must apply for Substantive Change approval for the first course in each additional language. At the present time, only programs offered in English are eligible for distance education approval.

## 3. Distance Education Critical Elements

Several expectations are central to good practice in distance education in AOM courses and programs:

- A. The institution offering distance education course(s) must meet current ACAOM Standards and Criteria. The institution accepts responsibility to review educational courses and programs provided via distance education and ensure continued compliance with accreditation requirements and reporting.
- B. The institution clearly states its policies concerning the establishment, organization, funding, and management of distance education courses and programs; and there is an ongoing commitment to such courses and programs.
- C. The institution recognizes that distance education differs from traditional on-site learning in substantive ways, e.g., pedagogy, instructional media tools, assessment. Cognitive and affective skills need to be taught and assessed differently depending on the mode of delivery.
- D. The institution/program undertakes the necessary planning prior to the initial distance education course to ensure the adequacy of technical and physical plant facilities, including appropriate staffing and technical assistance to support distance education programs and courses and that students are informed about, and have access to, the required hardware and software. Prior to starting a distance education program, the institution should also have reviewed admission and acceptance criteria to assess whether the student has the necessary background, knowledge, and technical skills needed to undertake the courses or programs.

## 4. Verification of Student Identity

AOM institutions/programs with one or more distance education offerings must demonstrate that processes are in place through which the institution/program establishes that the student who registers in a distance education offering is the same student who participates in, completes, and receives the academic credit for the course/program. The verification of student identity may occur through, at the option of the institution, methods such as:

- A. A secure login and pass code.

- B. Proctored examinations.
- C. New or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identity.

AOM education programs with one or more distance education offerings must demonstrate that the institution uses processes that protect student privacy, and that notify students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity at the time of registration or enrollment.

## 5. Distance Education Guidelines

All distance education must comply with ACAOM's *Standards and Criteria for Accreditation* and meet the following guidelines.

### A. The institution must:

- (1) Indicate how distance education fits the institution's mission and goals;
- (2) Employ and articulate sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded;
- (3) Have a process to verify the identity of students taking distance education offerings;
- (4) Have the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education; and
- (5) Have long range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes that reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment, and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education offerings.

### B. The distance education course or program must provide:

- (1) Regular and substantive faculty-initiated interaction with students; as well regular and substantive interaction among the students;
- (2) Faculty responsibility for oversight of distance education ensuring both the rigor of offerings and the quality of instruction;
- (3) Technology that is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the offerings;
- (4) Currency of materials, programs, and courses;
- (5) Policies that are clear concerning the ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, "tele-courses," or other media products;
- (6) Sufficient faculty qualified (experienced or trained) to develop, design, and teach distance education courses and programs;
- (7) Support services for faculty specifically related to distance education; and
- (8) Faculty development in instructional and technological strategies for faculty who teach in distance education course(s).

### C. The students must have:

- (1) Access to the range of student services appropriate to support the program(s) and course(s), including library and information resources, admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, placement, and counseling;
- (2) Knowledge and equipment necessary to use technology employed in the course(s) and regularly available assistance when experiencing difficulty using the required technology;
- (3) Technology appropriate to the courses or program(s);
- (4) A learning orientation to effective participation in distance education; and
- (5) Means for resolving student complaints.

### D. Ongoing systematic evaluations are planned and organized to assess:

- (1) Student capability to succeed in distance education offerings and use of the information in course and program planning;
- (2) Effectiveness of distance education offerings (including assessment of student learning outcomes, student retention and student satisfaction);
- (3) Effectiveness of distance education offerings in meeting ACAOM accreditation Standards; and
- (4) Integrity of student work and credibility of the credits awarded.

Revision History

Date Revised	Summary of Revisions	Approved By
161030	Refreshed and Reformatted.	ACAOM Executive Director