

## **Missouri Principles of Good Practice for Distance-Learning/Web-Based Courses**

When providing courses and programs through distance-learning methods, institutions should establish standards and encourage academic integrity equivalent to those expected of courses offered in a traditional, campus-based environment. These Principles of Good Practice, adapted from the 1999 Guidelines for Distance Education by the North Central Association Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (NCA), are suggested as a guide for Missouri institutions as they develop and implement courses for, and assess their involvement in, distance education and web-based course delivery.

The intent of these principles is to encourage reflection on quality and best practices, as faculty and institutions negotiate the rapidly changing and sometimes unfamiliar territory that such courses inherently have. Institutions are encouraged to operationalize these principles in locally directed ways that result in meaningful steps toward ensuring high quality.

**I.** Distance-learning courses and programs, including web-based courses, should maintain high academic integrity.

- Institutions should ensure both the rigor of courses and the quality of instruction.
- Institutions should ensure that the technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of each course.
- Institutions should ensure the currency of materials, programs, and courses.
- Each institution's distance education policies regarding ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products should be clear and in writing.
- Institutions should provide appropriate faculty support services specifically related to distance education.
- Institutions should provide appropriate technological and pedagogical training for faculty who teach distance education courses/web-based courses.
- Faculty should engage in timely and adequate interaction with students and, when appropriate, should encourage interaction among students.
- Institutions should ensure that distance-learning courses and web-based courses apply toward degrees and that there is sufficient explanation to the distance learner as to how those courses apply toward degrees.

**II.** Distance-learning and web-based courses and programs should be assessed and evaluated regularly.

- Institutions should assess student capability to succeed in distance education programs and should apply this information to admission and recruiting policies and decisions.
- Institutions should evaluate the educational effectiveness of their distance education programs and web-based courses (including assessments of student-learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction) to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.
- Institutions should ensure that the performance of distance-learning faculty and faculty involved in providing web-based courses is evaluated in a fashion that is at least as rigorous as that used to evaluate the performance of their peers who do not teach distance-learning courses.
- Institutions should ensure, to a reasonable extent, the integrity of student work.

**III.** Institutions involved in distance education and web-based instruction should ensure that students have access to adequate resources and services.

- Institutions should have access to the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education.
- Institutions should ensure that students have access to, and can effectively use, appropriate library resources (through traditional and electronic means), including

MOBIUS, a consortium of Missouri's academic libraries.

- Institutions should monitor whether students make appropriate use of learning resources.
- Institutions should provide laboratories, facilities, equipment, and software appropriate to the courses or programs and/or make clear to students the responsibilities they have to provide their own such equipment.
- Institutions should provide adequate access to a range of student services appropriate to support distance-learning courses and programs, including (but not limited to) admissions, enrollment, assessment, tutorials, special needs access, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, placement, and counseling.
- Institutions should provide an adequate means for resolving student complaints.
- Institutions should provide students with information that adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available.
- Institutions should ensure that students enrolled in courses possess the knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed in the program and should provide aid to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology.