North Central Missouri College Distance Learning Policy
Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning Courses

Mission

The mission of North Central Missouri College is to assist individuals in our educational/ business community to attain their goals through open admission, reasonable costs, progressive curriculum and services-- delivered by a caring, competent staff in a safe, technology-rich learning environment.

Vision

North Central Missouri College optimizes learning.

Definitions

Distance Learning is any educational environment that involves technology-enabled teaching and delivery outside the traditional on-campus classroom.   These types of courses are defined under one heading for which all regularly scheduled class time is replaced by required activities completed at a distance and/or managed online. The content within a Distance Learning course and the on campus course does not differ in content – the difference is mode in which the content is delivered. The material covered is equivalent to that offered in a face-to-face section of the same course and the Distance Learning course has the same credit value as the face-to-face equivalent.

Online (Fully Web-based) Courses/Programs:

All course content is delivered through the course web-based platform (i.e. Blackboard, etc.) as the platform is accessible anywhere, anytime. Course assignments have submission, completion and due dates that are common to all students. There are no regular class meetings on the NCMC campus.
**Nursing and Health Science students may be required to attend lab/clinical.

Hybrid (Web-enhanced) Courses:

Hybrid courses provide online content delivery predominately through a non-face to face modality with a limited number of on campus meetings. The faculty will clearly state the required dates the students must be present on campus.

ITV: (Instructional/Interactive Television Courses):

ITV courses are a method of utilizing fiber optic phone wires to video conference to another site which enables the instructor to interact with students at remote locations.

Program Standards

NCMC strives to offer Distance Learning/online courses that are equivalent to the best in quality. Each course meets the standards specified by the Higher Learning Commission-North Central Accreditation and the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

NCMC's Distance Learning course will:

1. Provide an **ACADEMIC activity during the first ten calendar days of class for an 8-week class and the first six calendar days of a four-week class** and inform the student of the consequences of non-participation in course activities and requirements.
2. Maintain high academic integrity
3. Encourage continuous faculty-student interaction throughout the course
4. Provide both the rigor of courses and the quality of instruction
5. Provide the technology used is appropriate to the nature of the objective of each course
6. Provide an up-to-date and current online platform (i.e., Blackboard or equivalent)
7. Provide the currency of materials, programs, and courses
8. Allow access to equipment and technical expertise required for distance learning/online courses
9. Provide students with information on how to access and effectively use appropriate library resources (MOBIUS, consortium of Missouri's academic libraries, etc.)
10. Provide distance learning/online courses that are of equal quality to those offered on campus
11. Evaluate for effectiveness by assessment of student learning outcomes, student evaluations and data concerning student retention
12. Have faculty assume responsibility for course oversight and adherence to Distance Learning policies.

NCMC's Exemplary Course Standards

Course Design

1. The availability of Distance Learning course content is varied and could be provided through learning modules, individual pages, hyperlinks to outside resources or internal resources, embedded media, individual organizer pages, etc.

2. The course will require regular and **academic interaction** between the student and faculty member at the beginning of the semester and continuing through the required course meeting calendar.

2. Distance learning policies, procedures and requirements will meet or exceed Distance Learning requirements implemented by the Missouri Department of Higher Education, Higher Learning Commission, and Title IV requirements from the Department of Education.

3. Learning modules should contain appropriate tools that enhance the learning process. Examples of specific tools include, but are not limited to, various media formats, quizzes, discussion, notes pages, course guideline documents, and others.

4. Various instructional methods are used to enhance student learning. These include visual, auditory, and print-based stimuli.

5. Ancillary resources will be made available to students through the web-based platform (i.e. Blackboard, etc.). Tools could include features such as grades, announcements, discussion board, blogs, calendar, email, etc.

6. NCMC will provide a means for course evaluation by each student.

7. Distance Learning course materials will comply with accessibility standards such as ADA. Check with Disability Services (attention Accessibility Service Coordinator) 1301 Main Street, Trenton, MO 64683 or call 660- 359-3948 ext. 1405.

Information Technology (IT) Responsibilities

1. Ensure the web-based platform(s) (i.e. Blackboard, etc.) used are frequently updated and kept current.
2. Procure and maintain equipment and technical expertise required for distance learning courses.
3. Provide materials and links to external training tools. Provide appropriate training to faculty.
4. Create course and have course populated a minimum of one week prior to the first day of class.
5. Administer the Distance Learning student evaluation instrument for all courses each semester.
6. Manage and staff the support "help desk" for students/faculty.

Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty will:

1. Adhere to the Missouri Department of Education, "Principles of Good Practice for Distance Learning".
2. The NCMC Information Technology (IT) Department will provide materials and links to external training tools. Faculty members may seek training from others or be self-trained. It is required that faculty teaching Distance Learning classes use Blackboard as their Course Learning Management System (CMS).
3. Have Distance Learning classes ready for students no later than the first day of the term. This will include a syllabus, course schedule (when appropriate and should include any required campus visits), and all materials to be used by students within the first two weeks of the term.
4. Require **ACADEMIC** activity/essay/participation **beginning the first ten calendar days of class for an 8-week class and the first six calendar days of a four-week class** to confirm attendance.
5. Include in the syllabus the criteria for active participation, attendance, approved proctors, and sites to be used.
6. Follow the outline and list of interactive **ACADEMIC** activities found in the course syllabus.
7. Make students aware of online course evaluations.
8. Respond to all student emails, discussion boards, etc. within 48 hours or two business days using their pirate email account. (Due to privacy regulations, faculty and staff can communicate with students only through the NCMC pirate email and not a private account).
9. Use an appropriate textbook for the distance learning/online course.
10. Provide students with up-to-date grades, post/submit final grades and maintain a grade book for three years.
11. Recognize that attendance is vital to student success. In most Distance Learning situations, a student will not come to campus and sit in the classroom. Where this is the case, **attendance is determined by the student's active participation**, regular and **ACADEMIC** interaction, communication beginning the first week of classes and completion of competencies at the end of the course (emails, discussion board, group projects, etc.)

12. Ensure that students are aware of the consequences on non-engagement in a course.
13. Make efforts to contact a student who enrolled but did not engage in an **ACADEMIC activity the first week of class.**
14. Recognize that assessment of student learning is timely, appropriate and responsive to the needs of the individual learner.
15. Recognize methods of assessment may include (but not limited too): examinations, papers, projects, etc.
16. Ensure assignment objectives and **ACADEMIC activities** are clearly communicated, utilize critical thinking and make use of outside resources.
17. Ensure assignments and assessments align with the objectives of the course and the mission of the college.
18. Document achievement of student learning outcomes.
19. Include opportunities in Distance Learning courses for communication and/or cooperation among members of the class."
20. Use activities such as proctoring, email, phone, short internships, etc. to ensure the student who enrolls in a course is the same student who submits assignments, takes exams, and earns a final grade and <u>protect student privacy in verifying student identity.</u>
21. Use a variety of tools supported by Blackboard where necessary such as: announcements, blogs, discussion board, emails, etc.
22. Provide appropriate contact information in the syllabus.
23. Provide resources in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
24. Continually review and evaluate courses for content and effectiveness.
25. Faculty will be available during posted office hours, via email, phone, discussion board, etc. Please refer to the syllabus.

Student Responsibilities

1. **Class Attendance**
   a. Interacting and participating in a Distance Learning course is a different style of learning. Attendance is determined by a student's **active participation** and communication in a course beginning the first week of classes. **Students must engage in an ACADEMIC activity during the first ten calendar days of class for an 8-week class and the first six calendar days of a four-week class in order to maintain their financial aid.** Signing into BlackBoard without participating in a Distance Learning assignment or activity does not constitute attendance.
   b. If interaction and participation by the student does not occur during the first week of classes, efforts will be made by the faculty member to contact the student. If non-participation continues beyond the first week, an email will be sent and/or contact by faculty member/advisor will be made the student outlining the consequences of non-participation. If regular and substantial interaction does not occur as a result, the student's information may be entered into NCMC's Early Alert Program for further efforts to follow-up with the student.
   c. Students should log in frequently, **actively interact** and participate in course activities and discussions and check NCMC pirates email daily.
   d. Students who succeed in Distance Learning courses keep a schedule just as they would if they were attending class on campus and they communicate with one another and their instructor frequently.
   e. Attendance and **ACADEMIC participation** are vital to success in a distance learning course.
   f. On rare occasions extenuating circumstances may occur, such as an extreme illness, death in the immediate family, or military duty, etc**. It is the student's responsibility to provide**

appropriate documentation in a timely manner to substantiate such circumstances. At which time the instructor will determine if an extension is warranted. Students and instructors of online courses adhere to the academic calendar and the process of appeal. Examples of circumstances that are NOT considered extenuating:

> Registering late for the class
> Failure to read the syllabus
> Failure to plan appropriately
> Not having the appropriate textbook or software
> Technical problems

2. **Meeting Deadlines**
   a. Each instructor's syllabus will explain when assignments are due (example 11:55 P.M., Central Standard Time).
   b. Students should plan ahead for the unexpected (technology or personal problems)!
   c. Students are accountable for staying on the schedule as outlined in the syllabus.
   d. Students should <u>immediately communicate</u> with their instructor if an emergency may affect the ability to meet course deadlines. Waiting until the course is over greatly diminishes the ability to make a change.
   e. A Distance Learning course may provide the flexibility to do coursework when it best fits a student's schedule. **However, while certain courses may have flexibility, the course requires student accountability to meet the deadlines.** Students should set aside time to participate in their Distance Learning course and to complete assignments. Students will have frequent deadlines to keep focused and not fall behind. Playing catch-up on missed assignment or deadlines causes stress, and stress reduces learning.
   f. Many college students juggle school, work, family, and other life responsibilities at the same time. In extreme circumstances where a situation keeps students from being current in coursework, <u>contact your instructor immediately</u> and explain the circumstances. The faculty and staff at NCMC are aware that students face challenges with legitimate reasons and are committed to student success. Often, faculty may be able to help students see a way to deal with unique circumstances and still complete coursework. Faculty has experience in these situations and welcomes the opportunity to help students when a <u>legitimate situation</u> exists.
   g. Students are required to submit coursework according to the directions provided in the syllabus. Examples are:
      i. Post discussion board threads and replies in the appropriate forum
      ii. Submit written assignments or other projects according to the instructor's directions in the syllabus
   h. Students should save an electronic copy all assignments until the final grade is posted.
   i. Grades and feedback will be available via the **My Grades** area of Blackboard or from the instructor directly.

3. **Interaction with instructor**
   Interaction with a course instructor is very important. Each student is given a Pirate email account by which the college communicates with students in many areas. <u>Students should constantly (daily) check their Pirate account for important information and updates.</u> It is very important to interact and complete an **ACADEMIC activity/assignment the first ten calendar days of class for an 8-week class and the first six calendar days of a four-week class** and continually communicate with the instructor particularly during the **first week** of classes for financial aid purposes. If there are questions about an assignment, project etc., students should communicate with the instructor via the methods outlined in the syllabus.

4. **Academic Integrity**
   Students are responsible to be aware of NCMC's Statement of Ethics. Evaluation of each student's level of knowledge and understanding is a vital part of the teaching process. It requires tangible measures with the process of evaluation by misrepresenting the relationship between the work being evaluated and the student's actual state of knowledge is an act of academic dishonesty. These acts of dishonesty include but are not limited to: fraud, cheating, plagiarism, forgery, and other forms of academic misconduct. Violation of academic standards damages personal character and impedes the instructors' ability to promote learning. Academic integrity represents one of the most essential elements of the teaching and learning process. All members of the NCMC community are expected to fulfill their academic obligations through honest and independent effort. When submitting coursework to an instructor as a NCMC student, students are acknowledging that the work that is submitted is their own. Students are responsible for knowing and following the College's policies and procedures regarding academic integrity. These guidelines and more information related to academic integrity are available in the *Student Handbook and College Catalog. S*tudents are obligated to review these information sources carefully and to seek needed clarification from the instructor concerning questions of collaborative work, citation of sources, or other issues related to academic integrity.

5. **Proctoring Requirement**
   Some Distance Learning courses require a proctored test(s) where students must take the test(s) in the presence of an approved proctor who will verify student identity and monitor the completion of the exam(s). Instructors may allow students to take proctored exam(s) off campus where necessary. In cases where students may choose to have proctors administer the exam(s); the instructor must approve the proctor. Students are responsible for making appropriate proctoring arrangements and supply both the instructor and the proctor with complete and accurate information.

6. **Standards of Distance Learning Student Conduct**
   Appropriate academic conduct includes doing assigned work, meeting deadlines, participating in discussions, and completing all the required elements of the course. It also means following these basic rules of etiquette:

   1. Using proper capitalization, spelling and grammar.
   2. Signing your name to all email messages and discussion postings.
   3. Proving descriptive but concise subject lines.

   Appropriate academic conduct also means maintaining a safe learning environment based on mutual respect and civility regardless of the mode of delivery. All participants in NCMC distance learning courses are expected to behave professionally by adhering to these distance learning standards of conduct.

   1. Never transmit or promote content known to be illegal.
   2. Respect other people's privacy as well as your own.
   3. Forgive other people's mistakes.
   4. Never use harassing, threatening, embarrassing, or otherwise abusive language or actions.
   5. Refer to NCMC Catalog or Student Handbook further explanations.

Repeated misconduct will be reported to the appropriate Dean, which may result in removal from the course. If students have any questions regarding misconduct, contact their instructor with their concerns.

7. **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Students requiring accommodation must make a written request for services each semester and provide documentation of disability to Accessibility Services (1301 Main Street, Trenton, MO 64683 or call 660- 359-3948 Ext 1405). Once this process is complete it is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor immediately if special assistance or devices are needed to accommodate a disability. NCMC complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

8. **Dropping a Class**

A student may drop a class through SAIL during the posted add/drop period for a course and receive a full refund of fees for the course. Once the Add/drop period has ended, students may withdraw, with no refund, by completing a withdrawal card at the Alexander Student Center (ASC) information desk or by sending an email to Registrar@mail.ncmissouri.edu from their pirate's email account.

Students failing to meet attendance/participation requirements for a class at the start of a term will be considered a "No-Show" and the class will be administratively dropped from the student's schedule. Students will be charged a $50 fee for each "No-Show" course. Any classes left on a student's schedule will be charged at the full tuition rate.

Withdrawals cannot be done through the SAIL account. The withdrawal deadline is listed in the Academic Calendar on the website and in the Student Handbook. The withdrawal deadline is currently two weeks prior to finals week for classes that run the full 16 weeks. Courses with shorter completion times will have different deadlines. See the Student Handbook or contact the Registrar's Office for more information on withdrawal deadlines.

9. **Non-attendance**

According to Federal guidelines, simply logging on to BlackBoard without participating in a Distance Learning academic assignment or activity does not constitute attendance. **Students must engage in an ACADEMIC activity during the first ten calendar days of class for an 8-week class and the first six calendar days of a four-week class. Attendance is determined by the student's active participation, regular and substantial interaction, communication and completion of competencies in the course (emails, discussion board, group projects, etc.).** Faculty will make efforts to contact students who do not attend the first week of class. If non-participation continues beyond the first week, an email will be sent and/or contact by faculty member/advisor will be made the student outlining the consequences of non-participation. If regular and **ACADEMIC interaction** does not occur as a result, the student's information may be entered into NCMC's Early Alert program. Students who have been reported as not in attendance in their enrolled courses will be administratively dropped from that courses for the term. *Distance learning students must complete the academic activity during* **the first ten calendar days of class for an 8-week class and the first six calendar days of a four-week class** *term to confirm their attendance for the semester.*

Financial aid awards may be decreased for students who do not attend some of their courses, even though they are not dropped by the college. ***It is the student's responsibility to drop or withdraw from courses within the appropriate time periods.*** If proper procedure is not followed, grades earned will be recorded on the student's permanent record.

10. **Appeals Procedures**

    If a student has a complaint, <u>the first step is always contacting the instructor.</u> If the issue cannot be resolved with the instructor, students should follow the appeal policy as outlined in the NCMC catalog or Student Handbook.

11. **Learning**

    What matters most is that the student achieves the learning outcomes for each course. Distance learning allows students many different ways to learn, such as reading textbooks, following the hands-on-practice in assignments, communicating with classmates and instructor, and discovering other resources across the internet. **Actively participating in the course from the beginning and throughout the course** will provide good feedback for learning. Stay active in the course and focus on learning to get the most out of it.

12. **Changes**

    Occasionally, circumstances require the instructor to change the syllabus. Should the instructor find a change necessary, you will be notified as soon as possible. It is highly suggested that students print their syllabus and keep it in a binder for ready referral.

13. **Reminder**

    The instructor should always be the first point of contact and support for any questions or concerns you have about this distance learning course.

14. **Agreement**

    Students who disagree with the policies or procedures or cannot accept the demands of the course should drop or withdraw from the course as soon as possible. By remaining in the course, students are agreeing to comply with all the policies and procedures of this course.

15. **Basic Computer and Software Requirements**

    To participate in Distance Learning courses students must have access to a basic level of equipment and software. Information can be found on the college website by clicking the Home - Current Students or System Requirements links. Specific software requirements may be accessed by clicking on the Validating Java link.

IS ONLINE LEARNING FOR ME?

The purpose of this self-test is to help you decide whether or not you will succeed in an online course at NCMC. Choose yes or no as an answer to each question below. Be as honest as you can with yourself. Do you think you are ready for an online course? That is the purpose of this self-test.

Yes	No	
		I have internet access and an up-to-date computer at home.
		I am not intimidated by new technology.
		I can perform basic tasks on the computer, including sending and receiving email and accessing the Internet.
		I am able to work independently with little direction from an instructor.
		I am confident of my academic abilities.
		I generally achieve the goals I set for myself.
		I am not a procrastinator. I manage time well.
		I am a self-motivated person. I like to get things done.
		I do not give up easily, even if confronted with obstacles.
		I understand that online courses are just as or more challenging than on campus courses.
		I believe I possess the appropriate reading skills for the on line course I want to take. I can comprehend what I read.
		I can pick out the important ideas in a body of information.
		I am able to communicate well in writing.
		I can successfully take subjective, objective, and computer based tests.
		I do not require face-to-face interaction in order to succeed in a course.
		I can find adequate time in my schedule to complete the requirements of this course.
		I believe what I learn is ultimately my responsibility.
		I do not feel I need to be part of a traditional on campus course.

This test is by no means scientific, but as a general rule, the following guidelines are true: Count the number of questions you answered "**No"** to. If you answered "**No**" to:

0-2 questions: You have a strong likelihood for being successful with online courses.

3-4 questions: You have the potential to be successful in online courses, but you should consider your weaknesses as noted on the self-test before making a final decision.

5 + questions: You should seriously consider whether online learning is for you. You may experience too many difficulties with online learning for the experience to be of benefit to you.

No matter what the score, remember that online learning is not easy. Instructors will demand at least the same quality of work as he/she would require in a face-to-face courses. The time commitments for online courses and face-to-face courses are the same. Remember that an online course will include deadlines, but the instructor will not be reminding students to turn assignments in; <u>students will have to rely on reading deadlines</u> <u>in the syllabus, on an announcement or email.</u> Online courses have many benefits, but they are not for everyone. After taking this self-test, if you are still unsure about online courses, please contact your advisor.