

# The Principles of Good Practice for Credit Courses Offered at a Distance

## Distance Education Definition

Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapters P and Q define distance education as any formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50 %) of instruction. Distance education includes off-campus face-to-face, interactive video/livestream, hybrid/blended, fully (85-100%) online, and 100-percent online courses and programs as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

## The Principles

The Principles of Good Practice for Credit Courses Offered at a Distance (hereinafter, PGP) provide an outline for consideration when developing, teaching, or evaluating the quality of electronic instruction. This document was derived from a collective review of the THECB's original PGP guidelines, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) standards, Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) guidelines, Quality Matters (QM) rubrics, and Online Learning Consortium Quality Scorecard (SC).

## Completion, Signing of the PGP

As the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board notes that “[i]t is the institution's responsibility to review educational programs and courses it provides at a distance and certify continued compliance with [the PGP],” Stephen F. Austin State University requires the document below to be completed and signed by each course’s faculty designer(s), his/her/their academic unit heads, and the Center for Teaching & Learning to ensure that all newly-developed fully online and 100-percent online courses meet THECB guidelines.

## Course Developer

By signing below, I declare that the named course is coherent and complete, that I have duly inspected it, and that it meets the standards of the Principles of Good Practice.

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Course Developer

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Date

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Course Prefix, Number, and Title

## **Institution**

### **Accreditation and Approval**

SFASU is accredited the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and is authorized to operate in the state where the course originates.

SFASU has satisfied or will satisfy all in-state approval and accreditation requirements before students are enrolled in this course and/or its associated program.

### **Information Security**

SFASU has documented procedures in place to ensure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.

SFASU has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance education courses or programs.

### **Fraud Prevention**

SFASU ensures that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using methods such as (1) a secure login and pass code, (2) proctored examinations, and (3) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

SFASU has a written procedure distributed at the time of registration or enrollment that notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

### **Institutional Policies**

SFASU's distance education policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products.

### **Student Services and Access**

SFASU provides students adequate access to the range of services appropriate to support programs offered through distance education.

SFASU provides enrolled students reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services and student rights appropriate to support their learning.

SFASU provides students with reasonable and cost-effective ways to participate in the institution's system of student authentication.

SFASU provides students access to and appropriate library and learning resources.

SFASU makes efforts to ensure compliance with federal and state accessibility requirements.

## Center for Teaching & Learning

### **Student Technology Support**

Students in distance learning programs have ready access to technology support.

### **Faculty Training & Support**

SFASU provides faculty support services and training specifically related to teaching via distance learning modalities.

Faculty who teach in distance education courses and programs receive appropriate training.

SFASU's training program for online learning faculty is periodic, incorporates tested good practices in online learning pedagogy, and ensures competency with the range of software products used by the institution.

Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) staff responsible for online learning training programs are clearly identified and have the competencies to accomplish the tasks, including knowledge of the specialized resources and technical support available to support course development and delivery.

Appropriate equipment and technical expertise required for distance education are available.

### **Institutional Policy**

Approval of online courses and programs follows standard processes.

### **Copyright and Accessibility**

All course materials and technologies have been reviewed and meet ADA guidelines. Alternative methods for access have been identified if necessary.

Copyright laws are followed throughout the course.

### **Course Materials**

The course named in this documentation is coherent and complete and includes:

- a syllabus that includes institutional requirements (e.g. SLOs, assessments, etc.)
- a timeline of tasks and assessments
- content modules with clearly defined components, including:
  - pedagogical introduction and objectives
  - content generated by the course developer
  - assessments
  - pedagogical conclusion or summary
- opportunities for regular and substantive interaction between faculty and students, students and students, and students and content.

The technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the course, and expectations concerning the use of such technology are clearly communicated to students.

Course design and the learning management system enable active faculty contribution to the learning environment.

By signing below, I declare that I have duly inspected the named course, warrant that it meets the institutional and CTL portions of the Principles of Good Practice, and approve it to be offered as an electronically-delivered course.

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CTL Staff

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Date

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Course Prefix, Number, and Title

## Academic Unit Head (or Designee)

### Accreditation, Institutional Standards

If this course is part of a program that holds specialized accreditation, it meets the same requirements when offered at a distance.

Academic standards and student learning for this course to be offered at a distance is the same as those for courses delivered by other means at SFASU.

### Faculty

Qualified faculty provide appropriate oversight of courses or programs offered electronically.

SFASU's faculty assumes primary responsibility for ensures both the rigor of courses and programs and the quality of instruction at the institution.

Online learning faculties are carefully selected, appropriately trained, frequently evaluated, and are marked by an acceptable level of turnover.

Faculty who teach in distance education courses and programs receive appropriate training.

### Assessment

Online learning courses and programs are evaluated on a periodic basis.

Student course evaluations are routinely taken and an analysis of them contributes to strategies for course improvements.

Curricula delivered through online learning are benchmarked against on-ground courses and programs, if provided by the institution, or those provided by traditional institutions.

Assessment of student learning follows processes used in onsite courses or programs and/or reflects good practice in assessment methods.

By signing below, I declare that I have duly inspected this course, certify that it is coherent and complete, warrant that it meets the above standards of the Principles of Good Practice, and approve it to be offered as an electronically-delivered course.

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Academic Unit Head

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Date

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Course Prefix, Number, and Title