

SUBMITTING REQUESTS TO OFFER EXISTING DEGREE PROGRAMS BY DISTANCE EDUCATION

Revised Instructions: July 2003

In June, 2000, the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents (BOR) approved Standards for Academic and Student Support Services in Distance Education Credit Courses, Degree and Certificate Programs and Guidelines for Distance Education Credit Program Array and Approval (<http://www.uwsa.edu/acadaff/planning/destandfullboard.htm> - [destandards](#)). This document provides revised instructions to institutions seeking approval to offer an existing degree or certificate programs via distance-education technology within the BOR guidelines.

DEFINITION: A degree or certificate program is considered distance education when a substantial number of credit hours will be delivered through distance-education technology. For the purposes of this policy, distance education is defined as follows:

Distance education is a planned teaching/learning experience in which a substantial portion of the instruction occurs when teacher and students are separated by time and/or distance. In distance education courses and programs course materials may be delivered and interactions between student and teacher and among students may occur in an asynchronous or synchronous mode over a wide spectrum of existing and evolving media.

This definition will supersede any previous definitions. It encompasses many design permutations in which barriers to participation, including time or place, are eliminated. Essentially, if an institution identifies a degree or certificate program as available by distance-education delivery methods, this process will apply.

APPROVAL PROCESS: The approval process consists of two parts, a one-time institution-level document and a program-specific document.

- A. The **institution-level** document will provide a description of how academic support services and access will be provided distance learners. This document will only be submitted once, prior to or simultaneous with the first request to convert a program to distance delivery. It will be kept on file in the Office of Academic and Student Services. Subsequent program requests will reference this document. **Attachment A** describes the information to be included.
- B. The **program-specific document**, as required by BOR policy, will be submitted to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, requesting approval to offer an existing academic or certificate program using distance-education delivery methods. You may use either of the following options to request this approval: the UW System distance education program request format (**Attachment B**) or the NCA format plus addendum (**Attachment C**).

Option 1: UWSA Distance Education Request Format, Attachment B, provides a framework for the request for approval. While you do not need to follow this format exactly, you do need to ensure that your proposal contains all the requested information. The request will be review by the distance education standing committee and a response provided in a timely manner. Regent approval is not required.

Option 2: NCA Format Plus Addendum, The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) requires approval to extend accreditation when an affiliated institutions initiate certain institutional changes, including offering degree programs through distance delivery methods.

Policy I.C.2.b. found on page 36

<http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/download/PolicyBookJan05.pdf>

see also

http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/download/Best_Pract_DEd.pdf

Institutions may use the NCA-required *Request for Institutional Change* and supporting documentation for the UW System Distance Education approval process in lieu of the UWS Program Specific request format, with an addendum including the information described in attachment C of these guidelines.

The NCA document requires that all necessary external approvals be identified and documentation confirming the approval be completed. Therefore, it will be necessary to obtain UWSA approval prior to submitting the Request for Intuitional Change to NCA.

ATTACHMENT A:

INSTITUTION-LEVEL INFORMATION REGARDING SERVICES PROVIDED TO SUPPORT DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Please describe how your institution will provide the following services for students enrolled in distance education programs and faculty and staff who will participate. This information need only be provided once, prior to or simultaneous, with the first request to convert a program to distance delivery.

STUDENTS

- 1. Access for Individuals with Disabilities:** Discuss the methods by which the institution will address the needs of individuals with disabilities who enroll in distance education programs. (see the *Report of the Committee on Access to Technology for Individuals with Disabilities*, December 1999, for additional guidelines and recommendations).
- 2. Access to Library and Learning Resources:** Describe how the institution will ensure that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources.
- 3. Access to Student Services:** Describe how the institution will provide adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support distance education programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling.
- 4. Technical Support:** Explain how the institution will provide "help desk" services for students in distance education programs.
- 5. Security:** Explain how the institution will ensure the integrity of student work and the credibility of degree/credits awarded.

PERSONNEL

- 1. Training:** Explain how faculty and staff who will participate in the program will be provided with appropriate training.
- 2. Support:** Explain how faculty and staff who will participate in the program will be provided with appropriate technical support services.

ATTACHMENT B:

UWS PROGRAM SPECIFIC DISTANCE EDUCATION REQUEST

A. PLAN TO CONVERT AN EXISTING ACADEMIC PROGRAM TO DISTANCE EDUCATION DELIVERY

1. PROGRAM IDENTIFICATION

- 1.1 **Title of Program**
- 1.2 **Department or Functional Equivalent**
- 1.3 **College, School, or Functional Equivalent**
- 1.4 **Explain whether the distance education degree program will replace the residential on campus program, or be offered in addition to the existing program.**

2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION

- 2.1 **Appropriate technology and Instructional Design:** Discuss why the technology used is appropriate and consistent with the nature and objectives of the program. Discuss how the faculty will ensure that instructional design appropriate to the content, student population and technology is employed.
- 2.2 **Student Orientation:** Discuss how students will be informed about expectations of the program and technical requirements that they must meet. Describe any plans for assessing student readiness for a distance education program.
- 2.3 **Curriculum:** Discuss how the program will provide timely and appropriate interaction both among students and between students and faculty. Explain how the institution will ensure quality in cases where it uses "third party" products (e.g., purchased modules, specialized software, outsourcing program components).
- 2.4 **Method of Assessment or Evaluation:** Describe how the institution will evaluate the educational effectiveness of the program. Explain how student learning outcomes and student retention will be assessed. Describe how the institution will assess student satisfaction with such things as faculty accessibility, access to advising, computing services, library services, etc.

B. DESCRIPTION OF NEEDS AND RESOURCES

1. **Regional, State and National Needs:** Provide specific/detailed market data indicating the program's potential for success. (Where appropriate, cite data from organizations such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and/or professional associations). Drawing on these data explain the reasons for offering this program through distance education. Discuss estimated future employment opportunities for graduates of this program. Provide documentation (e.g., relevant state regulations, employer policy) to support any special need for this program expressed by state agencies, industry, research centers, or other educational institutions.

2. **Student Demand--Future Enrollment:** Provide projections for anticipated enrollment and number of degrees to be granted for each of the first five years. Provide information concerning the existence of any other distance education programs in this academic area available to your students.
3. **Collaboration:** Discuss the possibility of offering the proposed, or an equivalent, program collaboratively with another institution.
4. **Costing Methodology:** If the tuition/cost for this program differs from the regular undergraduate or graduate tuition, indicate how tuition/fees will be established and which financial and administrative policies pertain.
5. **Commitment to Maintain Program:** Describe how the institution will ensure that appropriate faculty, equipment, facilities, technical expertise and financial planning exist to sustain the program over time. Describe how faculty will be provided training and on-going support for teaching in the distance environment Explain how the institution will inform students of stipulations or conditions regarding offering of courses in the program.
6. **Student services:** Will this program be providing student services and services for individuals with disabilities in the manner described in your institution-level distance education document? Is the existing capacity sufficient to meet the increased student demand created by this program?

ATTACHMENT C:

**ADDENDUM: TO ACCOMPANY NCA-REQUIRED
REQUEST FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE FORMAT**

Attach to the NCA-required document the information requested in Attachment B (above); Section B 1-6.