

POLICY #15

DISTANCE EDUCATION

While the definitions provided in Policy #15 may differ from those used by the governing organization of a nursing program, programs accredited by the ACEN must use the following definitions for ACEN-related matters.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Asynchronous Learning: Learning and instruction that do not occur in the same location or at the same time.

Distance Education: An educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when a student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ audio, video, and/or computer technologies and includes technology that is used to support regular and substantive interactions between the instructor and the students.

Hybrid/Blended Nursing Course: The nursing course content is delivered both in person/in a classroom and via distance education; 1% to 49% of the traditional in-person/in-a-classroom time is *replaced* with work via distance education, typically delivered asynchronously. The component delivered via distance education includes learning activities that reduce the time traditionally spent in the in-person/classroom component.

Hybrid/Blended Nursing Program: The nursing program is delivered both in person/in a classroom and via distance education; 1% to 49% of the credit hours or clock hours of the nursing courses are delivered in person/in a classroom, and the remaining credit hours or clock hours are delivered via distance education, typically asynchronously. The distance education component includes learning activities that reduce the time spent in the in-person/classroom component.

Online/Internet Nursing Course: A form of distance education whereby 50% to 100% of the nursing course content is delivered primarily online and asynchronously.

Online Nursing Program: A form of distance education whereby 50% to 100% of the credit hours or 50% to 100% of the clock hours of the nursing courses are delivered primarily online and asynchronously.

Synchronous Learning: Learning and instruction that occur at the same time and in the same place.

See ACEN Policy #14 Reporting Substantive Changes for requirements related to reporting the implementation of distance education.

DISTANCE EDUCATION CRITICAL ELEMENTS:

1. Congruence with the mission of the governing organization.
2. Instructional design and delivery method of the course(s).
3. Preparation and competence of the faculty members teaching each course.
4. Quality and accessibility of the support services for students enrolled in each course.

5. Quality and accessibility of the support services for the faculty members teaching each course.
6. Accessibility, currency, and relevancy of learning resources available for the students enrolled in each course.
7. Currency and appropriateness of each course relative to the method of delivery.
8. Provision for regular and substantive faculty/student and student/student interaction in each course.
9. Ongoing evaluation of student learning in each course.
10. Provision for verification of student identity in each course.

VERIFICATION OF STUDENT IDENTITY

Nursing programs offering any course via distance education must demonstrate that the governing organization:

1. Has processes in place to establish that the student who registers in each distance education course is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The governing organization may verify student identity through methods such as:
 - a. assignment of a secure login and pass code,
 - b. proctored examinations, and/or
 - c. utilization of new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identity;
2. Uses processes that protect the privacy of the students enrolled in a distance education course; and
3. Notifies students of any projected additional fees associated with verification of student identity at the time of registration for or enrollment in a distance education course.

The following guidelines contain elements of the ACEN Standards and Criteria that faculty must consider in evaluating the use of distance education within each nursing course, nursing program option, or a nursing program.

The students enrolled in each nursing course, a nursing program option, or a nursing program must have:

1. Access to the range of appropriate student services to support their learning and academic success, including but not limited to admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, placement, and counseling comparable to those support services available to the students enrolled in non-distance education courses/programs;
2. Knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed and assistance when experiencing difficulty using the required technology;
3. A means for resolving complaints;
4. Information related to advertising, recruiting, and admissions that adequately and accurately represents the course(s)/program(s), admission and completion requirements, and services available;
5. Access to learning resources and guidance in effectively using the learning resources;
6. Their use of learning resources monitored; and
7. Access to laboratory facilities, equipment, and other types of technology as appropriate to the courses or program(s).

Each nursing course, nursing program option, or nursing program provides:

1. Regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty and among the students;
2. Faculty responsibility for oversight, ensuring both the rigor and the quality of instruction;
3. Technology that is appropriate to the student learning outcomes, role-specific graduate competencies, program outcomes, and course objectives;
4. Currency and rigor of materials;
5. Clear policies concerning the ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation of intellectual property;
6. Faculty support services specifically related to distance education; and
7. Faculty development for faculty who teach in distance education modes of delivery.

Fiscal and physical provisions are made for long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes that reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment, and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of each nursing course, nursing program option, or nursing program.

Ongoing systematic evaluation is conducted to assess:

1. Student capability to succeed in each nursing course, a nursing program option, or a nursing program, and used in the review and revision of policies and procedures;
2. Achievement of student learning outcomes, role-specific graduate competencies, and program outcomes, with a comparison made to campus-based programs; and
3. The integrity of student work and credibility of the degree and credits awarded.

Policy #15 History
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