

Policy Name: Standards for Distance Education

Approval Authority: RBHS Chancellor

Originally Issued: 02/19/01

Revisions: 04/13/10, 04/09/13

1. **Who Should Read This Policy**

All Rutgers University faculty, staff, and students within Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, School of Health Related Professions, Rutgers School of Dental Medicine, New Jersey Medical School, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, School of Public Health, and School of Nursing (former UMDNJ School of Nursing).

2. **Related Documents (refer to policies.rutgers.edu for additional information)**

A. Intellectual Property: Copyrights and Royalties

3. **The Policy**

RBHS seeks to foster innovation in instructional technology while ensuring the quality and academic integrity of courses, programs and degrees. Distance education courses and degree/certificate programs shall comply with all of the standard practices, procedures and criteria which have been established for traditional courses and degree/certificate programs to ensure appropriate faculty control and the highest standards.

Distance education is a type of instruction. Nothing in this policy shall imply that distance education is a preferred or required mode of instruction.

A. Definition:

“Distance Education”: formal educational process in which the student and instructor are separated by time or space and the instructional interaction, synchronous or asynchronous, may include correspondence, audio, video or computer technologies. “Distance education” in this policy shall refer to both courses and degree/certificate programs.

B. Institutional Context, Commitment and Administration

1. The content, purposes, organization and enrollment objectives of distance education shall be consistent with the educational mission of the University and the School.

2. New distance education may be offered only after successful completion of the same internal University and external review processes required for new traditional courses and degree/certificate programs. Previously approved traditional degree/certificate programs which are converted to distance education do not require additional review or approval other than informing the Office of Academic Affairs of significant changes, if any, from the original objectives/curriculum, and of any significant change in the administrative arrangements such as partners, tuition, billing and program duration.
3. The University shall ensure the adequacy of technical and physical plant facilities, including appropriate staffing and technical assistance, to support distance education.
4. Admission standards, enrollment processes and course requirements for distance education shall be equivalent to those of traditional education and clearly indicated in School catalogs and promotional materials. Established policies for registration, financial aid, withdrawal, etc. shall apply equally to distance education students.
5. Faculty shall work with the Office of Information Technology to develop safeguards to ensure academic honesty and protect student privacy.
6. The Dean shall ensure that accountability in distance education partnerships with entities outside the University is clearly determined and described in writing.

C. Curriculum and Instruction

1. Distance education shall be offered on the same level, with equivalent requirements, the same title and credit as would the traditional version. The faculty shall ensure the rigor and the quality of instruction and materials.
2. Specifications for technology required for participation and completion of distance education must be disclosed to students. The faculty shall ensure that the instructional technology is appropriate for the nature and objectives of the course or program.
3. The opportunity for substantial, personal and timely interactions between faculty and students and among students participating in distance education shall be comparable to that offered in traditional education and appropriate to the subject matter and objectives of the course or program.
4. Distance education curricula should be as transferable as traditional curricula so that students may, if they wish, transfer from one program to another.
5. The faculty shall evaluate the academic quality of any course materials or technology-based resources developed outside the University for use in distance education.
6. Individuals outside the traditional campus community who act in capacities such as tutors or proctors for students enrolled in distance education shall be approved by the faculty offering the course or program.

D. Faculty Support

1. The Dean shall ensure that faculty engaged in the development of distance education have the requisite skills and access to ongoing training opportunities to select and implement the appropriate media and learning strategy for distance education.
2. Issues of faculty workload and compensation shall be addressed by the Dean and coordinated, if necessary, across the University by the Office of Academic Affairs.
3. Distance education shall be subject to the copyright ownership stipulations described in University policy, Intellectual Property and Copyrights.

E. Student Support

1. Students enrolled in distance education must have the requisite skills to complete the requirements of the distance education program.
2. The School shall ensure that students enrolled in distance education have:
 - a. access to the range of student services appropriate to support the program including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, library services including electronic scholarly resources, placement and counseling;
 - b. adequate means for resolving student issues/concerns;
 - c. advertising, recruiting and admissions information that adequately and accurately represents the programs' requirements and student support services; and,
 - d. complete information about the technological requirements of the distance education media required by the program.
3. Technical support staff shall be identified and accessible to students enrolled in distance education. The Vice President for Information Technology, in conjunction with Schools shall ensure the designation and availability of qualified technical support staff to assist students.
4. In the design of distance education, consideration will be given to the selection of formats that are suitable for adaptation to reasonably accommodate the needs of qualified students with disabilities.

F. Evaluation and Assessment

1. The School shall conduct evaluations to assess the standards, requirements, educational effectiveness and outcomes of distance education to ensure that the quality is comparable to traditional education and in conformance with prevailing standards in the field of distance education.
2. The School shall conduct assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention and student satisfaction.

G. Financial Arrangements

1. The tuition and fee charges for distance education must be approved by the University Board of Governors and clearly indicated in catalogs and promotional materials.
2. No individual, program, or department shall agree in a contract with any private or public entity to deliver distance education courses and degree/certificate programs on behalf of the University without prior approval from the Dean and Office of Academic Affairs.