Distance Learning Policy
St. John's University
Approved by the Provost's Council November 7, 2002

Definition

Distance learning includes any instruction that substitutes out-of-classroom teaching and learning for state mandated face-to-face teaching and learning.

Responsibility for Quality

The Provost is responsible for assuring the quality of all distance learning across the institution with assistance from the Associate Vice President for Online Learning and Services and the Vice and Associate Provosts. The Deans and department chairs are responsible for the quality of distance learning programs within their respective schools, colleges and departments.

Adequate Administrative Support

The Provost ensures that knowledgeable personnel administer distance-learning programs, with adequate time and resources to accomplish the task. This will be accomplished primarily through the office of Online Learning and Services and the offices of the Deans of schools and colleges and the chairs of departments.

Technology Plan

The institution will maintain a comprehensive, viable technology plan for distance learning. It will ensure that distance learning programs and related support services have appropriate technical support.

Faculty Qualifications and Development

The same faculty qualifications will be applied to distance education programs as to all other academic programs, but as in the past faculty members may not teach distance-learning courses unless approved by the Provost as appropriately prepared in distance learning pedagogy on advice of a faculty committee. The committee will develop, implement and maintain this process for preparing and approving faculty members to teach distance-learning courses and to sustain faculty professional development in online learning. The process will recognize that teaching in the distance learning environment requires student-centered pedagogical and communication strategies to function effectively, and that the faculty member and the institution share responsibility for assuring effectiveness.

Ownership of Course Materials

The institution will maintain a clear policy on ownership of course materials developed for its distance education courses; this policy will be shared with all faculty and staff involved in distance education at the institution. The current policy is that faculty members own course

materials that they develop without substantial use of University resources. The University owns course materials developed with substantial use of University resources, and faculty members are entitled to royalties from University-owned courses on the same terms as patents. Faculty members may negotiate other terms with the University prior to developing course materials. A copy of this policy will be sent to each faculty member assigned to teach a distance-learning course and each staff member involved in developing distance learning materials.

Class Size

Class size is limited to 25 per taught by an unassisted faculty member to permit appropriate interactions between students and faculty members. A lower limit may be appropriate for some courses or programs. This policy will be reviewed annually for continued appropriateness as the University has more experience and technology and techniques improve.

Program Approval and Evaluation

The Provost will maintain a process for approving programs and monitoring and evaluating them on an annual basis. They will only be approved if they are of high quality and satisfy the following requirements. They will be evaluated annually to ensure that they continue to do so:

1. The institution has committed sufficient resources to distance learning programs and related services to ensure their effectiveness.
2. Distance learning courses and programs were developed and offered by the same academic units that offer face-to-face programs.
3. The same academic standards and requirements apply to programs offered on campus and through distance learning and the same procedures also apply, except where specifically determined otherwise.
4. Faculty members are responsible for the initial and ongoing development and delivery of instruction.
5. Programs show evidence of careful planning, including identification of the need, the nature and size of the intended audiences, provisions for serving the audiences, and a plan for adding resources (financial and human, including instructional staffing and support functions) to accommodate future program growth ("scalability").
6. Programs are coherent, complete, and offered in a sequence or configuration that allows timely completion of requirements.
7. Programs have clear definitions of course and program outcomes. They produce the same learning outcomes as comparable classroom-based programs. These learning outcomes are clearly identified -- in terms of knowledge, skills, or credentials -- in course and program materials. All aspects of the program are consistent with and shaped to achieve the demonstrable learning outcomes. Distance learning programs result in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the college degree or certificate awarded.
8. Program design is informed by knowledge of content, instructional methods, outcomes, and technologies.
9. The means chosen for assessing student learning are appropriate to the content, learning design, technologies, and characteristics of the learners.

10. The technologies selected are appropriate for the intended learning outcomes, content, relevant characteristics of the learning and the learner, and student cost.
11. Programs provide for appropriate and flexible interaction between faculty and students and among students.
12. Programs include adequate verification of learners' work.
13. Program and course enrollment is appropriate for the content and learning activities, the nature of the learners, the technologies used, and the support available to faculty.
14. The program provides students with detailed information on admissions and graduation requirements.
15. Published materials clearly and accurately represent the program, including the nature of the learning experience, program and faculty responsibilities, and the nature of faculty-student, student-faculty, and student-student interaction opportunities, techniques, and requirements. They define any specific student background, knowledge, or technical skills needed to undertake and successfully complete the distance program, and describe in layman's terms any technical equipment and software required or recommended. Programs provide clear statements of learner responsibilities and expectations of student participation and learning.
16. Students receive adequate academic support, including academic advisement, technical support, and other student support services normally available on campus. Program materials clearly define how students obtain these support services.
17. The program provides adequate library and information resources, services, and support for academic programs, including training in information literacy. These resources and services are accessible at a distance on a timely basis.
18. Administrative processes such as admissions and registration are readily accessible to distance students, and program materials clearly describe how access is obtained.
19. The program provides orientation opportunities and resources for distance learners that are appropriate to the technologies used, the content, and the learners.
20. Evaluation results are being used for continuous program improvement.
21. Student demand remains strong.