



I. 2.7.4 Distance Education

Chapter 2 - General	Original Effective Date: April 2013
Section: 2.7 Academic Policies & Procedures	Date Last Reviewed: June 2025
Responsible Entity: Vice President for Academic, Faculty, and Student Affairs	Date Last Revised: June 2025

II. Purpose

The University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio’s (UT Health San Antonio) commitment to academic excellence includes consistency between traditional classroom instruction and distance education. The purpose of this operating policy is to provide a framework for the development, implementation, and maintenance of formal degree and certificate programs and courses offered via distance education for academic credit.

III. Scope

This policy applies to all schools of UT Health San Antonio.

IV. Policy

- A. All schools of UT Health San Antonio shall have an opportunity to participate in providing distance education courses and/or programs and shall be encouraged to provide distance education as appropriate. Through the schools, UT Health San Antonio shall ensure that all academic programs, including those delivered through distance education, are afforded an adequate resource support structure.
- B. The school-specific administration is responsible for the administration of distance education programs and course delivery. The school-specific deans report to the Senior Executive Vice President for Health Affairs & Health Systems.
- C. UT Health San Antonio policy mandates that programs offered via distance education shall be consistent with the institution's role, scope, and mission and will meet quality practices and delivery protocols as stipulated by state and federal policies as well as accreditation entities. Development of new distance education programs and courses will follow the same development and approval procedures as programs and courses offered through in-person instruction on the main campus of UT Health San Antonio.
 - 1. UT Health San Antonio distance education programs have student learning outcomes appropriate for the rigor and breadth of the degree awarded. As a component of the overall assessment, documented assessment of student

2.7.4 Distance Education

achievement is conducted at the completion of the program, by comparing student performance to the intended student learning outcomes.

2. UT Health San Antonio evaluation of distance education programs (including electronically delivered programs) takes place in the context of the regular evaluation of all academic programs.
3. Selection of programs to be offered via distance education is the purview of the school-specific leadership. The school-specific administrators and faculty shall provide oversight of a distance education program in the same manner as traditionally delivered face-to-face programs. Academically qualified persons participate in the decisions concerning program curricula and program oversight.
4. School-specific leadership have the primary responsibility for developing and implementing effective distance education policy, procedure, assessment, and evaluation for all distance education courses and academic programs, in consultation with the vice president for academic, faculty and student affairs (AFSA).
5. Courses delivered via distance education (whether or not they are credit or non-credit) are academic department courses approved through the normal curriculum process. Credit-bearing courses must be recorded with the Registrar's Office.
6. Distance education students shall have equivalent access to the range of student services appropriate to support their successful completion of coursework.
7. Faculty members who teach through distance education technologies are responsible for acquiring sufficient technical skills to present their subject matter and related material effectively.
8. Schools dedicate resources to provide those responsible for distance education program development the appropriate orientation and training to help them become proficient in the uses of the program's technologies, including potential changes in course design and management.
9. Distance education students are accountable to the admission standards and enrollment processes as appropriate for the degree program.
10. The academic department and/or school shall ensure academic integrity for all distance education exams. School-level procedures are in place that includes authentication of student identification and consistent with institutional information technology (IT) policies.
11. UT Health San Antonio employs a secure log-in authentication to access course materials and educational resources.
12. Each distance education course or degree program shall be evaluated by students in the same manner as on-campus course offerings. School-specific leadership shall review the student evaluation results with faculty and support staff to facilitate the continuous refinement of distance education courses. Consistent with the policies governing on-campus course evaluation, documentation of distance education course evaluations and of the proactive use of the results shall be maintained in the school-specific departments.

2.7.4 Distance Education

13. Learning management technology systems used to deliver distance education instruction must be approved by the school dean, chief information officer (CIO), or designee, in coordination with the vice president for AFSA.

V. Definitions

When used in this document, the following words have the meaning set forth below unless the context requires a different meaning.

Distance Education – a formal educational process in which the majority (more than 50%) of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when the student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may employ correspondence study, or video, audio, or computer technologies. *[UT Health San Antonio utilizes the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges definition for distance education for this policy.]*

The THECB recognizes two categories of distance education courses: 100-Percent Online Course and Hybrid Course

100-Percent Online Course – A distance education course in which 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations. Requirements for on-campus or in-person orientation, testing, academic support services, internship/fieldwork, or other non-instructional activities do not exclude a course form this category.

Hybrid Course – A distance education course in which more than 50 percent but less than 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations.

VI. Related References

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)
<https://www.highered.texas.gov/>

VII. Review and Approval History

The approving authority of this policy is the University Executive Committee.

Effective Date	Action Taken	Approved By	Approved Date
08/2013	Policy Origination		
08/2017	Policy Revision		
06/2021	Policy Update/new template		
09/2021	Policy Review, discretionary edits	VPAFSA/ICPO	09/03/21

2.7.4 Distance Education

05/2022	Policy Revision/moved & renumbered to new section 2.7 Academic Policies & Procedures	VPAFSA/ICPO	05/31/22
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