Distance Education Policy and Process

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	## Distance Education Policy and Process
	Policy Summary
	This policy applies to all academic programs and departments involved in creating distance education (DE) learning programs and/or courses for students across Fort Lewis College (FLC).

Policy Owner	Approval Date	Effective Date
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs	**January 1, 2019**	**January 1, 2019**

Search Terms	Scheduled for Review
pvpaa, d	**Spring 2023**

I. Policy Statement

The Distance Education Policy and Process is part of a comprehensive approach to faculty support, professional development, and online/hybrid course quality design to support FLC's mission and commitment to providing high-quality educational opportunities. Inherent in this commitment to quality is a recognition of the responsibility to support, in a systematic way, the professional development needs of faculty relative to teaching and learning at a distance.

II. Scope and Purpose

- This document is designed to specify DE course development or revision requirements, intellectual property arrangements, instructor qualification requirements, and relevant support for faculty at Fort Lewis College.
- This policy and process supersedes all practices that may have applied to this matter.
- This is not a document prescribing the process by which all new courses are added to the FLC catalog. This document only covers the proposal of new DE courses or courses that are changing delivery mode from face-to-face to hybrid and/or online format and have already been approved for inclusion in the FLC catalog.

III. Course Delivery

1. All approved online and hybrid courses will adhere to this policy, the Online Course Development Agreement (for online courses), and approved procedures for distance education course development.
2. FLC uses Canvas as the learning management system (LMS). All faculty teaching DE courses will use the Canvas platform and FLC will provide technical support for all DE course developers and instructors in Canvas.

IV. Modes of Delivery

"Distance Education" refers to the following modes of delivery:

- Online: Courses offered via the internet using Canvas (LMS)
- Hybrid: Combines face-to-face classroom instruction with distance education activities.

The college schedule of classes indicates what courses are being offered via distance education and the delivery format (online, hybrid).

Distance Education courses are designated as:

- "O" – 100% of course activity is done online with no required on-campus meetings. Online courses may include synchronous online meetings or assignments that engage the student in community-based activities.
- "H" - courses taught partially on campus in a classroom and 25% or more (but less than 85%) of instructional contact hours online. Students must be made aware of the meeting dates, times and locations at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the semester.

V. Teaching and Learning Services

Teaching and Learning Services works with faculty and departments on the infrastructure, design, development and delivery of distance education courses. Staff work closely with academic departments to ensure the quality of distance education at Fort Lewis College.

The Instructional Design and Development Specialist (IDD), in coordination with members of Teaching and Learning Services, Disability Services, and the Instructional Technologist, provides support in the area of distance education by providing the following services:

- Professional development opportunities in the areas of teaching and learning.
- Workshops, info sessions, discussions, and webinars on a variety of distance education topics.
- The production of audio, video, photographic and graphic media for instructional use.
- Facilitation of faculty training for hybrid/online course development.
- Assistance with the appropriate pedagogical use of technologies.
- ADA accessible materials for teaching and learning.

VI. Requirements and Expectations for Distance Education Faculty and Courses

As with traditional courses, FLC's faculty assumes primary responsibility for and exercises oversight over distance education curricula, ensuring both the rigor of courses and the quality of instruction. With noted differences between teaching distance education courses and teaching courses using "traditional" methodologies, the decision to use distance learning must be made on a course-by-course basis, with consideration given to the content of the course, the needs of the learners, and the interest of the faculty member.

All distance education courses at Fort Lewis College are considered comparable to traditional courses and must adhere to the Credit Hour Policy, Policy on Rigor, the Learning Management System Policy, and Course Syllabus Policy. Furthermore, all DE courses must go through the standard curriculum approval process as established by FLC, requiring course proposal approval from the department supervisor, Dean (or designee) , Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, and the Provost.

FLC's goal of offering high-quality distance education experiences taught by highly-trained faculty entails additional requirements and expectations. As a Quality Matters (QM) member, all courses will meet QM's Quality Standards which support the Higher Learning Commission's Guidelines for Quality Distance Education Programs and the Quality Matters rubric. Furthermore, course developers will originally develop the majority of the course content (it is acceptable to select online course materials from publisher content, OERs, or other online resources; however, these are considered supplemental to instructor-created content).

Course caps in online and hybrid courses should not exceed the course caps for traditional courses. Online and hybrid course caps may not vary from departmental course caps unless approved by the chair, dean, and provost.

VII. Qualifications

The Higher Learning Commission requires all "faculty responsible for delivering the on-line learning curricula and evaluating the students' success in achieving the on-line learning goals are appropriately qualified and effectively supported" (Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-line Learning), 2009).

All faculty requesting to teach a distance education (online or hybrid) course in the Fall 2018 and/or subsequent semesters are required to show competence in online instruction by (1) participating in the FLC course development process facilitated by the IDD or (2) providing evidence of another online course delivery training (e.g. certificate of completion) deemed equivalent to the FLC course development process as recommended by the IDD and the faculty member's department chair and as approved by the faculty member's dean.

The IDD provides professional development regarding course design and implementation and supports the SME (subject matter expert, or instructor) in aspects of course design and delivery. This support is provided through a combination of online activities, onsite workshops, and individual consultations in a format that prepares faculty to develop courses that are in accordance with FLC's Course Quality Review.

VIII. Course Design Quality Review

Based on national standards of best practice, as well as research and instructional design principles, FLC uses the Quality Matters (QM)rubric to support continuous improvements to distance education courses.

QM is designed to certify the quality and accessibility of distance education courses. The QM rubric is used as a guide throughout the course development process, addressing course quality in the following categories:

- Course Overview and Introduction
- Learning Outcomes
- Assessment and Measurement
- Instructional Materials
- Learner Activities and Learner Interaction
- Course Technology
- Learner Support
- Accessibility and Usability

Each course will be evaluated collaboratively with the QM rubric by both the SME and the IDD.

IX. Evaluation of Faculty Teaching Distance Education Courses

It is the responsibility of department chairs and academic deans to perform annual evaluations of their faculty whether they teach using a traditional format or a distance delivery format. Faculty are evaluated in accordance with the guidelines and procedures outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

In 2014, FLC Faculty Senate approved the inclusion of 10 additional questions to be added to all distance education course evaluations. These questions focus on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the online / hybrid learning environment. These responses are used to improve course delivery.

X. Course Load, Compensation, Ownership of Materials and Copyright

DE courses are typically part of the faculty member's regular teaching load, with the same rate of compensation as traditional courses. DE courses may also be taught as an overload, at the same rate of compensation as traditional courses taught as an overload. Any exceptions (e.g., reassigned time for developing courses using new distance technologies) are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and as per current procedure, must be approved by the department chair, the dean, and the provost. All faculty who develop the initial online version of any course will receive a stipend, per the Online Course Development Agreement. Hybrid course developers may qualify for a development stipend if more than 50% of the course is online.

By mutual agreement with the faculty member, the College maintains ownership of the copyright to online course materials in distance education courses that are 50% or more online. Upon the faculty member's separation from the College, the College shall retain its non-exclusive license to use, update, and market the materials. The faculty member shall retain the right to use and market the materials provided the College's name or logo is not used in connection with the materials. Copyright in course materials is governed by the College's Distance Education Policy and Process. Examples of course materials are course notes, course descriptions, outlines, syllabi, reading lists, assignments, examinations, instructor guides, content (written, visual, audio) and records of the delivery or presentation of the course in any medium. Course materials created by faculty for additional compensation by the College are considered directed works created with Substantial Use of College Resources.

As owner of the course materials, the College retains rights here specified without further financial obligation to the faculty member:

1. The right to use the course materials for purposes of the College's internally administered programs of teaching, research, and public service.
2. The right to maintain continuity beyond the original version of the course materials by creating derivative works, to the extent necessary to correct errors, keep the content current and relevant, and to maintain the usefulness and quality of the course material as a College instructional offering.
3. While the faculty member is an employee of the College, he/she will be consulted regarding the preparation of any derivative works and will be given first right of refusal to teach any sections of the course that are scheduled to be offered online (Deans can approve requests for exceptions).   Once the faculty member is no longer an employee of the College, the College may prepare derivative works without consulting the faculty member.
4. The College agrees to give credit and attribution to the faculty member in its use of the work, where appropriate.

XI. Course Development and Delivery Process

Departments or individual faculty members (with department approval) may propose new DE courses for development. To encourage high quality course offerings, proposals for creating new DE courses and programs and proposals for converting existing courses to a distance format are given careful review by Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, and administration. Courses that align with new program development, and/or with a high-demand (fulfilling a GT Pathway requirement) will be given priority.

DE courses should be approved **two semesters prior to the semester of delivery** to allow for sufficient instructor training and course development. The process for developing a DE course is outlined below:

1. Faculty member obtains approval from department chair and respective dean or designee to propose and offer the distance education course.
2. Faculty member (Also known as the SME, or Subject Matter Expert) submits the Distance Education Course Proposal Form via Curriculog.
3. The proposal goes to the department chair, dean or designee, IDD, Registrar, Curriculum Committee, Faculty Senate, and Provost for review and approval.
4. Meeting times and dates for hybrid courses must be available to the Registrar at the time of scheduling a hybrid course being offered in the FLC Course Catalog.
5. SME meets with IDD to review requirements and expectations outlined in Distance Education Policy.
6. For their first development experience, the SME works with IDD and other course developers through the training and the course development process. For subsequent DE course developments, the SME will work directly with the IDD to set up a collaborative development plan.
7. Prior to the course being made available to students, the course is reviewed collaboratively by the IDD and the SME using the QM Rubric.
8. Students will be made aware of course delivery mode at the time of registration. Students must me made aware of meeting dates, times and locations of hybrid courses at least two weeks prior to the beginning of the semester.
9. In accordance with FLC's LMS policy, the course is made available to students two weeks before the start of the term.
10. Upon successful completion of the course development process, the development stipend is released to the SME.
11. The course is delivered with continued support, as needed, by Teaching and Learning Services staff.
12. At the completion of the course, the faculty member will be asked to complete a survey focusing on their experience developing and teaching the course. Teaching stipend is released to instructor.
13. After three years, all DE courses will participate in a course review process using data from the instructor post-development survey as well as data from the DE-specific questions in the course evaluations. This is a collaborative revision process based on feedback from the instructor, the students, and the IDD. Review consists of completing DE course development training if faculty has not already done so and working with the IDD to explore new instructional techniques to revise and improve the course.

XII. Course and Program Review

Courses

After three years, all DE courses will participate in a course review process using course data as well as data from the DE-specific questions in the course evaluations. This is a collaborative revision process based on feedback from the instructor, the assessment coordinator, and Teaching and Learning Services. The Review is led by the Office of Teaching and Learning and consists of completing DE course development training if faculty has not already done so and working with the Teaching and Learning Services to explore new instructional techniques to revise and improve the course. Courses will be reviewed using the following three areas:

- Increasing student satisfaction (classroom community, feedback, etc.)
- Enhancing student learning
- Course design and management

Programs

All DE courses and programs are subject to the program review as required by state statute. In addition to the requirements of the Academic Program Review, programs with significant online presence (over 75%) need to provide evidence of the following four criteria:

- Digital accessibility & student access to learning
- Frequency and effectiveness of student-student and student-instructor interaction
- Effective student assessments and instructor feedback
- Providing technological support and transparency for students

XIII. Definitions

1. **Distance Education** (DE) includes the transmission and exchange via the Internet of any outcomes-based learning and instructional material to an audience that is physically separated from the source of the instruction. DE may include fully online courses, asynchronous or synchronous, and hybrid courses.
Distance education requires special techniques of course design, instructional techniques, assessment, and methods of communication by electronic and other technologies.
2. **Online Courses** are those courses delivered wholly online with no location requirements. These courses are generally considered to be asynchronous, but some may have synchronous components.
3. **Hybrid Courses** are those courses intentionally designed with a combination of face-to-face and Internet-mediated learning, although it could refer to a blending of other modalities (such as interactive video and online). This can apply to courses or programs. Hybrid courses must have a minimum of 25% face-to-face classroom times (but less than 85%).

XIV. Contacts

1. Director of Teaching and Learning Services, Jen Rider: **email** or 970-247-7404
2. Instructional Technology, Faculty Support Manager, Clint Jacobsen: **email** or 970-247-7683
3. Instructional Technologist and Multimedia Developer, Islay Frazier: **email** or 970-247-6776

XV. Related Resources

- Higher Learning Commission: Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-line Learning)

XVI. Responsibilities

For following the policy: Fort Lewis College Faculty and Deans

For enforcement of the policy: Director of Teaching and Learning Services, Instructional Technology Faculty Support Manager, and Instructional Technologist and Multimedia Developer,

For oversight of the policy: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

For notification of policy: Policy Librarian

For procedures implementing the policy: Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs