Distance Education Policy and Process

	Policy identification number: **To come...** File: **Academic Policies > Curriculum Policies** **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	**October 12, 2022**	**October 12, 2022**

Search Terms	Scheduled for Review
pvpaa, d, distance, education	**Fall 2024**

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. Any exceptions to this policy should be requested through the appropriate Dean. Final approval of any requested exception rests with the Provost in consultation with the Dean and Teaching and Learning Center, and if approved, must be stated in writing.

II. Scope and Purpose

- This policy sets forth DE course definitions, development or revision requirements, intellectual property arrangements, instructor qualification requirements, and relevant support for faculty at Fort Lewis College.
- 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 and have already been approved for inclusion in the FLC catalog.

III. Course Delivery

1. All approved DE courses will adhere to this policy.
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
- Hybrid
- HyFlex

The college schedule of classes indicates what courses are being offered via distance education and the delivery format.

Distance Education courses are designated as:

- Online - "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.
- Hybrid - "H" - courses taught partially through synchronous instruction (on campus or distance) and partially online, with 25-85% of instructional contact hours being synchronous. Students must be made aware of the meeting dates, times and locations at the time of registration.
- HyFlex - "Y" - courses delivered with fully remote option(s) – synchronous or asynchronous – along with regularly scheduled in-person classes, allowing students to transition seamlessly between the two learning environments.

V. The Teaching and Learning Center

The Teaching and Learning Center works closely with faculty and departments on the infrastructure, design, development and delivery of distance education courses.

The Teaching and Learning Center provides support in the area of distance education by providing the following services:

- Professional development opportunities in the areas of inclusive teaching and course design

- 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 distance 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. All courses will meet FLC's quality standards based on the Higher Learning Commission's *[Guidelines for Quality Distance Education Programs](#)* and the FLC Course Quality Review (CQR) 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 DE courses should reflect the course caps for traditional courses. DE course caps may not vary from departmental course caps unless approved by the chair, dean, and provost.

VII. Qualifications

The Higher Learning Commission and NC-SARA require that *"Educational quality is supported through continuing investment in technology and professional development for faculty as well as other academic, technical, and student support staff. Professional development is ongoing and includes attention to: technology, instructional design, learning science, pedagogy, assessment, and methods of using data for improvement." (*21 CenturyDistance Education Guidelines, 2021)

All faculty to develop or teach an existing distance education course are required to show competence in online instruction by (1) participating in the FLC distance education training with

the Teaching and Learning Center, 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 Teaching & Learning Center and the faculty member's department chair and as approved by the faculty member's dean.

The Teaching and Learning Center 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 training and individual consultations in a format that prepares faculty to develop courses that are in accordance with FLC's Course Quality Review.

VIII. Course Quality Review

Based on national standards of best practice, as well as research and instructional design principles, FLC uses an adapted version of the Course Quality Review (CQR) rubric to support continuous improvements to distance education courses.

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

- Course Orientation and Information
- Course Navigation and Accessibility
- Content and Activities
- Interaction, Community and Engagement
- Assessment and Feedback

Each course will be evaluated collaboratively with the CQR Rubric by both the SME and the Teaching and Learning Center.

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 2019, FLC Faculty Senate approved the inclusion of 7 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 Course 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.

The ownership rights to course materials for DE courses follows Fort Lewis College's Intellectual Property Policy.

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 Academic Affairs. 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 at least **one semester prior to the semester of delivery** to allow for sufficient instructor training and course development. The process for developing and delivering existing DE courses 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. Department chair submits the Distance Education Course Proposal Form via Curriculog.
3. The proposal goes to the department chair, dean or designee, Teaching and Learning Center, and Provost for review and approval.
4. Meeting times and dates for hybrid and hyflex courses must be available to the Registrar at the time of scheduling in WebOpus.
5. SME meets with Teaching and Learning Center to review requirements and expectations outlined in Distance Education Policy.
6. For their first development experience, the SME works with Teaching and Learning Center and other course developers through the training and the course development process. For subsequent DE course developments, the SME will work directly with the Teaching and Learning Center to set up a collaborative development plan.
7. Prior to the course being made available to students, the course is reviewed collaboratively by the Teaching and Learning Center and the SME using the QM Rubric.
8. Students will be made aware of course delivery mode at time of registration. Students must be made aware of meeting dates, times and locations of hybrid and hyflex courses at time of registration.

9. In accordance with FLC's LMS policy, the course is made available to students two weeks before the start of the term.
10. The course is delivered with continued support, as needed, by Teaching and Learning Center staff.

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 Center. Review consists of completing DE course development training if faculty has not already done so and working with the Teaching and Learning Center to explore new instructional techniques to revise and improve the course. Courses will be reviewed using the following three areas:

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

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 online 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 require between 25-85% of the instructional contact hours to be synchronous.
4. **HyFlex Courses** are delivered with fully remote option(s) – synchronous or asynchronous – along with regularly scheduled in-person classes, allowing students to transition seamlessly between the two learning environments.

XIV. Contacts

1. Director of Teaching and Learning Center, 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, Elvira England: **email** or 970-247-6776
4. Instructional Designer, Ayla Moore: **email** or 970-247-7615

XV. Related Resources

- Higher Learning Commission: [Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (Online Learning)](#)

XVI. Responsibilities

For following the policy: Fort Lewis College Faculty and Deans

For enforcement of the policy: Director of Teaching and Learning Center

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

For notification of policy: Policy Librarian

For procedures implementing the policy: Director of Teaching and Learning Center