

Distance Education: The Planning and Authorization of New Distance Education Degree Programs

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Authority: Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

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Related Policies:

Additional Resources: [The UNC Policy Manual 400.1.1.2\[G\]](#)

[SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE FOR ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMISSION ON COLLEGES](#)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The UNC General Administration (UNCGA) is responsible for the authorization, coordination and monitoring of degree-related distance education activities in accordance with the governing policies, regulations, and guidelines, and procedures set forth in this statement. UNCGA must authorize degree programs and degree completion programs that are offered away from UNC campuses, regardless of the mode of instruction.

1.2 The constituent institutions and the academic units offering the instruction are responsible for the development, delivery, regular assessment, and accreditation (general and specialized) of specific degree-related distance education courses and programs.

1.3 Each institution must have a clearly defined process for the review and approval of proposals to plan, and once planning is completed, to establish distance education degree programs. The appropriate campus committees and authorities must approve any notification of planning or request to establish a distance education program before submitting it to UNCGA.

1.4 The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) is responsible for reviewing all substantive changes that occur between an institution's decennial reviews to determine whether or not the change has affected the quality of the total institution and to assure the public that all aspects of the institution continue to meet defined standards. It is the responsibility of an institution to follow the substantive change procedures of the Commission and inform the Commission of such changes in accord with those procedures.

2. NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO PLAN A NEW DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAM

2.1 Planning a distance education degree program provides an opportunity for an institution to make the case for need and demand and for its ability to offer a quality program. This notification and planning activity to follow, do not guarantee that authorization to establish will be granted.

The planning of the university's distance education programs begins in the academic department. Faculty members work with staff from the Office of Continuing Studies (OCS) to draft the Notification of Intent to Plan a New Distance Education Degree Program (NIP).

2.2 A unit proposing a new degree program begins the on campus review process by presenting the NIP to the Academic Program Development Collaborative Team (APDCT), which will collaborate with the unit to strengthen the proposal. The APDCT advises the Provost on all new academic program proposals submitted as well as advises the Dean of the Graduate School on graduate programs under consideration. The Educational Policies and Planning Committee (EPPC) is informed of those recommendations.

2.3 The APDCT will identify off-campus sites and distance learning programs that constitute a substantive change as defined by SACS when the NIP is submitted for review. If the proposed program will constitute a substantive change, the Office of the Provost will notify SACS through written correspondence and if further information is requested, the Office of the Provost will forward a copy of the Request For Authorization To Establish A New Distance Education Degree Program or Site(RTE) when it is submitted to UNCGA for final approval.

2.4 Upon receipt of the recommendation of the APDCT, staff from the OCS will post the NIP on the UNCGA web site. Such notice may be sent at any time, but at least one month prior to submitting the RTE (and three months prior to the proposed implementation date) or when the institution is required to notify SACS (whichever comes sooner).

3. REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO ESTABLISH A NEW DISTANCE EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAM OR SITE

3.1 The RTE must be submitted at least two months to prior to the proposed date of establishment.

3.2 Faculty members again work with the staff from the OCS to draft the RTE. They develop a program design that includes both the instructional requirements and the academic resources available to meet the needs of a widely dispersed group of students.

3.3 The unit returns to present the RTE to the APDCT, who will work with the faculty to strengthen the proposal. Their recommendations will then be returned to the faculty and shared with the Office of the Provost and the EPPC.

3.4 The unit then presents the RTE to the EPPC for consideration and their recommendation.

3.5 The Academic Council considers the APDCT and EPPC recommendations on new academic degree program proposals and makes a recommendation to the chancellor.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 The Academic Council includes the provost and vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, the vice chancellor for research and

graduate studies, and the vice chancellor for health sciences.

4.2 The Academic Program Development Collaborative Team (APDC Team) is an advisory body to the Academic Council. The Office of Academic Affairs, Office of Institutional Planning, Assessment and Research, Graduate School, Office of Continuing Studies, Division of Research and Graduate Studies, Division of Health Sciences, Undergraduate and Graduate Curriculum Committees as well as the Faculty Senate Chair are represented.

4.3 The Educational Policies and Planning Committee (EPPC), a standing committee of the faculty senate oversees the adequacy, balance, and excellence of the University's overall undergraduate and graduate programs.