

September 14, 2004 update

***Louisiana State University at Alexandria
Status Report***

***Standards for Quality
Distance Education***

Effective September 2004¹

¹Policy will be used for Spring semester 2005. Policy will be reviewed and revised as appropriate during Spring semester

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Purpose Statement

Distance education is defined as a formal teaching and learning process in which any instruction occurs when there is physical and/or time separation of the faculty member and students. Distance education requires special techniques in course design, instruction and methods of communication, as well as special organization and administrative arrangements.

Louisiana State University at Alexandria (LSUA) recognizes the advantages of providing to students learning opportunities that are not restricted by time, place, or method of delivery. At the same time, the University recognizes that new approaches to instruction must meet the same high quality standards that exist for traditional classroom-bound education. As a member institution of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), LSUA uses the *Principles of Good Practice* (adopted from the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications) to ensure quality courses and programs.

The purpose of this document is two-fold:

1. To communicate quality standards for the delivery and assessment of distance education at LSUA, and
2. To provide an on-campus faculty guide for developing and implementing distance education.

A note on format: Bold text in this document represents specific headings and items from the *Principles of Good Practice*. Regular text denotes LSUA's current practice in meeting these standards. Italicized text denotes activities in progress that will enable LSUA to meet the standard once the activity is complete.

The major topics from the *Principles of Good Practice* are as follows:

- ❖ Basic Assumptions
- ❖ Curriculum and Instruction
- ❖ Institutional Context and Commitment
 - Role and Mission
 - Students and Student Services
 - Faculty Support
 - Resources for Learning
 - Commitment to Support
- ❖ Evaluation and Assessment

Background

Spring 2004

LSUA has been offering a variety of distance courses for several semesters. These courses have served local students whose schedules, choices or life circumstances did not permit them to attend traditionally scheduled courses. These students have all resided reasonably geographically close to the campus, because all registrations have required students to be on campus. In addition, the Internet courses offered to this point (Spring 2004) required a mandatory on-campus orientation and most required on-campus testing.

Because of these restrictions, LSUA has not made electronic courses available through the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Electronic Campus (SREC). It is anticipated that by implementing the “Standards for Quality Distance Education” and the “Distance Education Policy,” some courses will be listed with the Electronic Campus by Spring 2005. A number of on-going activities will make this possible:

1. Implementations of policies that will help guide the preparation, the delivery and the evaluation of online courses.
2. Faculty development opportunities that focus on effective development, design, and teaching of online courses.
3. Implementation of review of online courses.
4. Installation of a registration system that will allow online registration.
(Anticipated)

LSUA has taken steps to ensure quality of online courses through these initial semesters by having only full-time, fully-credentialed faculty teaching them. Furthermore, the electronically delivered courses are courses that have been taught in the traditional mode by the same faculty. In most cases, the same tests, final and other graded materials have been utilized. The Evaluation of Instruction surveys were completed by the students who were enrolled in these courses. Grade distributions were also reviewed. As LSUA looks to the expansion of its online offerings, it is necessary to establish specific guidelines for those offerings. Faculty members who have been participating in the delivery of online classes and who have taken the Teaching Online faculty development class provided guidance in developing these guidelines.

Summer and Fall 2004

It was decided that during the process of evaluating and revising policies relating to Distance Education – LSUA would not offer any Internet, Compressed Video or Telecourses for Summer and Fall 2004. At the end of the Spring 2004 semester, it was also decided to change the course management system from Blackboard to Desire2Learn. Significant training on the new platform has occurred. Fifty-six faculty members attended training at the beginning of the summer. Thirty-nine additional group training sessions have been attended this Fall with numerous additional faculty seeking individual assistance with the new system.

Campus Vision Statement

A university of choice recognized for academic excellence and a commitment to fostering student and community growth through teaching, research, and service.

Campus Mission Statement

Louisiana State University at Alexandria serves students and enriches community life by providing high quality academic programs in a learning environment that

- cultivates intellectual, professional, social, and economic growth;
- promotes research, service, and lifelong learning; and
- fosters diversity.

LSUA Institutional Goals include to:

- develop systematic processes that encourage effective communication among students, faculty, administration, and staff
- strengthen the quality of existing instructional programs
- provide instruction with sufficient flexibility to meet substantiated student needs
- increase the array and flexibility of student activities and support services

Goals of Distance Education

The primary goal of distance education at LSUA is to further the campus mission and help meet campus goals by providing increased access to high quality instructional programs through:

1. following the *Principles of Good Practice* for distance learning courses
2. providing appropriate training, support and development for faculty to offer courses and programs in alternative formats
3. increasing online access to comprehensive student services
4. increasing access to degree programs (when the academic units are ready to offer full online programs)

Definitions

Electronically Enhanced course: A traditional course that uses any electronically delivered content including the Internet, a course management system course site, publisher content, etc. These courses meet for regularly scheduled face-to-face sessions and may substitute up to 25% of regularly scheduled meetings with electronic delivery. These courses require no additional review or oversight beyond that of any traditional course.

Hybrid-electronic course (E1): A course that substitutes 25% - 49% of regularly scheduled class meetings with electronic delivery of content including the Internet, a course management system course site, publisher content, etc. These courses would

require review by the Distance Learning Review Committee (see below) and are designated in the schedule as E1.

Distance learning course (E2): A course that substitutes 50% - 74% of regularly scheduled class meetings with electronic delivery of content. These courses may require students to come to campus or to arrange for proctored exams. (See course fact sheet) These courses would require review by the Distance Learning Review Committee (see below) and are designated in the schedule as E2.

Distance learning course (E3): A course that substitutes 75% or more of regularly scheduled class meetings with electronic delivery. Students may be required to come to campus for orientation, exams, and/or projects. (See course fact sheet). These courses would require review by the Distance Learning Review Committee (see below) and are designated in the schedule as E3.

Fully Online course (E4): A course that is delivered 100% electronically with **no** requirements to come to campus. (Students may be required to arrange for proctored exams at the direction of the instructor. See course fact sheet.) These courses are considered totally distance learning and require review by the Distance Learning Review Committee (see below). These courses are designated in the schedule as E4.

Distance Learning Review Committee: A group of faculty members and educational technology staff members who are designated to establish policy and to review hybrid, distance, and fully online courses. Members of the committee will be named by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs upon recommendation by the deans with input from each respective department. Committee members must have completed a course or faculty development program on designing and implementing online learning, or be recognized as having expertise in delivering courses electronically. The committee will consist of at least one faculty member from each department (when possible). The Director of Educational Technology will chair the committee. A sub-committee of three of these committee members will be responsible for reviewing specific courses, reporting to the full committee and making recommendations to the appropriate department chair.

E-Learning Course Checklist: A checklist used by the Distance Learning Review Committee to help ensure quality of electronically delivered courses. Elements of the checklist are recognized as factors that lead to student success in online curricula.

Principles of Good Practice

The Southern Region Education Board (SREB) has expanded the *Principles of Good Practice* developed through the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). These principles address issues related to courses and programs.

Basic Assumptions:

- 1. The program or course offered electronically is provided by or through an institution that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body and is authorized to operate in the state where the program or course originates.**

Louisiana State University at Alexandria is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia, 30033-4097; telephone number 404-679-4501) to award associate and baccalaureate degrees. LSUA is authorized through the Louisiana Board of Regents to offer courses *and programs* from the state of Louisiana.

- 2. The institution's programs and courses holding specialized accreditation meet the same requirements when offered electronically.**

All courses *and programs* delivered electronically will meet the same requirements as traditional courses and programs. *This includes programs that require specialized accreditation.*

- 3. The institution may be a single institution or a consortium of institutions.**

LSUA is an independently accredited institution. LSUA offers courses and programs independent of other institutions. *Consortium arrangements will be considered as appropriate to the LSUA curriculum.*

- 4. These principles are generally applicable to degree or certificate programs and to courses offered for academic credit.**

These principles apply to LSUA distance education courses *and programs* offered for academic credit.

- 5. It is the institution's responsibility to review educational programs and courses it provides electronically and to ensure continued compliance with these principles.**

The new Distance Education Policy will ensure that programs and courses offered electronically are reviewed periodically in order to maintain continued compliance with these principles.

- 6. The appropriate state agencies or organizations in the state where courses or programs are offered will coordinate participation in the *Electronic Campus*.**

In Louisiana, the Board of Regents is the coordinating body that manages participation in the “Electronic Campus.” *It will be the organization that will coordinate LSUA’s participation in the Electronic Campus.*

- 7. Institutions offering programs or for-credit courses are responsible for satisfying all in-state approval and accreditation requirements before students are enrolled.**

Prior to activating courses on the Electronic Campus, appropriate approvals will be obtained. LSUA is already a member of the Southern Region Education Board (SREB). A transition page will be created on the LSUA website to comply with rules of the Southern Regional Electronic Campus (SREC). This page will consolidate links to all resources needed by students in electronic courses.

- 8. Participating states agree to accept the listing on the *Electronic Campus* as assurance that courses and programs meet the *Principles of Good Practice*.**

As a participating state with the “Electronic Campus,” the Louisiana Board of Regents liaison works with all Louisiana institutions and provides assurance that courses and programs listed on the *Electronic Campus* meet the stated principles.

- 9. Institutions should give priority for enrolling in *Electronic Campus* courses and programs to qualified residents of the SREB region.**

LSUA will give priority for enrollment in Electronic Campus courses to Louisiana residents, then to qualified residents of the SREB region, when possible.

Curriculum and Instruction

1. **Each program or course of study results in learning appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.**

Before a course can be offered electronically, it must first meet the standards and review of all credit-bearing courses traditionally offered at LSUA. All courses must be approved through the normal campus approval process for courses and curricula. Departments proposing courses or new programs of study carefully define the scope of and closely monitor those courses and programs. Periodic reviews will be conducted on a revolving schedule. LSUA's faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight over distance education, ensuring both the rigor of courses and programs, and the quality of instruction.

2. **A degree or certificate program or course offered electronically is coherent and complete.**

Departments which offer courses and/or programs that lead to a certificate or to a degree carefully define the scope of the certificates or the degrees that are awarded. Only academic departments can create degree plans for consideration. There are numerous review points for proposed programs including teaching faculty, department chairs, dean of the appropriate college, and Academic Affairs. In addition to campus approvals, new degrees must be approved by the LSU System and the Louisiana Board of Regents. The syllabus defined for each course must follow the Master Course Syllabus used throughout the university.

LSUA faculty realize that 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 flexibility of the delivery mechanism. Courses *or programs* delivered electronically cover the same amount and complexity of content as the corresponding traditional course *or program*.

3. **The course or program provides for appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students.**

LSUA's distance education courses provide for appropriate interaction between students and faculty, and among students. LSUA meets the diverse needs of students and insures active learning in distance education coursework by incorporating course experiences such as:

- cooperative learning activities
- field experiences (e.g., observations of teaching)
- activities requiring analysis, synthesis, and evaluation with application to real-life situations
- threaded discussions
- interactive chat rooms

Interaction is critical for student success. Student-instructor interaction may unfold synchronously (in real time) during face-to-face meetings, telephone conferences, video conferencing, and online chat rooms; or asynchronously, with regular mail, taped audio-video broadcasts, e-mail, and the World Wide Web. LSUA uses a course management system which provides easy-to-use communication tools that facilitate interaction. All students are expected to participate regularly in some form of interaction. Furthermore, in addition to student-instructor interaction, student-student interactions are encouraged. Increased interaction among students and between students and the instructor promotes involvement that leads to discovery.

4. Qualified faculty provides appropriate supervision of the program or course that is offered electronically.

All faculty who deliver a course *or courses in a program* electronically for LSUA credit hold appropriate credentials to supervise those courses. Faculty who teach online will demonstrate proficiency in online delivery [or complete LSUA's training program]. LSUA's faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight over distance education, ensuring both the rigor of courses and programs and the quality of instruction.

Prior to offering an online course, faculty must possess the following basic computer skills:

- Working knowledge of computer hardware used to deliver electronic courses
- Computer file management
- Document preparation
- E-mail
- Web browsing

Faculty members utilizing compressed video delivery must be proficient in the following areas:

- Operation of the equipment
- Presentation techniques
- Contingency planning for equipment breakdown and problems
- Class interaction strategies

Instructors will become familiar with the following topics related to distance education course design and instruction (these topics are covered in the Teaching Online class offered as a faculty development program at LSUA):

- Processes involved in the development of distance education courses, including contact information, timelines, preferred content formats, materials submission protocols, and best practices.
- Instructional design issues in developing or converting courses, including syllabus concerns, formulation of student-centered learning objectives and

course outcomes, development of appropriate assignments/activities for the distance education environment, varying information/activity presentation to allow for different learning styles, assessment strategies including an early assessment of student capability to succeed, and choosing the best technologies available for course delivery, i.e., Internet, video conferencing, etc.

- The needs and expectations of distance education students.
- Course Management System features. Faculty who deliver online courses will complete at least one training session on the current course management system used by the university.
- Organization of websites to ensure user-friendliness (for course management system users, this will cover content management and file management).
- Communication techniques including e-mail, discussion board, and chat.
- Creating an online community.
- Conversion of existing documents, PowerPoint presentations, etc., into format for web delivery, if applicable.
- Library services available to distance faculty and distance learners.
- Strategies to help identify and prepare for future problems (i.e., contingency plans for equipment failure, etc.).
- Administrative strategies for managing communication, content, and feedback in distance education courses.

Electronic courses will be reviewed prior to initial offering and again at periodic intervals. The course review will reveal the extent to which the faculty member addresses each of the above issues. Faculty members who need assistance in any of these areas have access to performance-based training sessions offered each semester by the Educational Technology Department. The training sessions are offered through group meetings, individual consults, hands-on training in a computer lab and/or through web-based instruction.

5. Academic standards for all programs or courses offered electronically are the same as those for other courses or programs delivered at the institution where they originate.

All courses offered for LSUA credit must meet the same academic standards regardless of delivery method. Distance and hybrid courses are reviewed periodically to ensure currency of materials and continued compliance with expectations of course requirements as well as with the Principles of Good Practice. (See the Distance Education Policy and corresponding Checklist.)

6. Student learning in programs or courses delivered electronically should be comparable to student learning in programs or courses offered at the campus where they originate.

LSUA has taken steps to ensure quality of online courses through these initial semesters by having only full-time, fully credentialed faculty teach online.

Additionally, the courses offered have been courses taught by these same faculty members in the traditional environment. In most cases the same exams, final and other grading activities have been utilized. Evaluation of Instruction surveys were completed by students in these courses through an online survey. Grade distributions were also reviewed.

The course syllabus will clearly document that the contents of the course is the same as would normally be expected if the class were a traditional classroom-based course, and therefore requires an equivalent amount of time and dedication on the part of the student. Grade distributions will be reviewed as part of the continuing long-term study of student outcomes. Evaluation of instruction surveys for online courses will be compared to evaluation of instruction surveys for the same instructor teaching traditional courses when possible.

Institutional Context and Commitment

Role and Mission

- 1. The program or course is consistent with the institution's role and mission.**

Louisiana State University at Alexandria serves students and enriches community life by providing high quality academic programs in a learning environment that:

- cultivates intellectual, professional, social, and economic growth;
- promotes research, service, and lifelong learning; and
- fosters diversity.

Delivering quality courses *or programs* through electronic means is consistent with all aspects of the university mission and role.

- 2. Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of the technology being used to meet program or course objectives.**

The Distance Learning Review Committee will use the course checklist to ensure the appropriateness of the technology being used to meet program or course objectives. All hybrid and distance courses will be reviewed by the Distance Learning Review Committee prior to being delivered the first time and then on a regular recurring schedule consistent with departmental reviews which occur at least every four years.

Students and Student Services

- 1. The program or course provides students with clear, complete and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, prerequisite technology competencies and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services, financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.**

The new Distance Learning Policy requires that electronically delivered courses be reviewed by the Distance Learning Review Committee. As stated above, the reviews will be conducted prior to being delivered the first time and then again at each department review (at least every four years). The review ensures that course requirements are clear, prerequisite technology competencies and skills are described, and communication/interaction expectations are identified as required components of the syllabus. The review committee also ensures that the technology is appropriate for the specific course.

Online orientation is being prepared and will be ready for review by October 2004. This orientation will identify what it takes to be a successful online student and will introduce students to the support resources available to all LSUA students including online databases, online tutoring, counseling, and financial aid services.

The course catalog and schedule of classes, including the semester calendar for each semester, are available on the LSUA website.

2. Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to student services and resources appropriate to support their learning.

LSUA provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. The university offers a variety of services that are designed to support and enhance the learning experience of students on campus and provides for those students who register for a distance learning course.

A computer-based career assessment instrument, DISCOVER, is available to students through the network of on-campus computers which are reserved for student use. In addition, a student may visit or call the office of Student Services (318-473-6545) to obtain a code that will allow him/her to access this career assessment tool at home via the Internet. As a follow-up to DISCOVER, career counselors are also available to assist students in deciding on a college major.

Assistance with resumes, interviewing skills, and networking is available through seminars, workshops, and on an individual basis. Some students come to Student Services for information, while others email questions or resumes.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: University Policy Statement 242 provides guidelines for Services for Students with Disabilities. Students may receive appropriate accommodations or interventions based on documented disabilities. Complete guidelines of the program are available for review in the Services for Students with Disabilities Handbook. They include: interventions in the classroom, special seating, wheel chair tables, books on tape, note takers, interpreters, assistance with registration, and others appropriate to need.

ACADEMIC PLACEMENT: LSUA is an open admissions university. Entering freshmen are required to submit scores on the American College Test (ACT). The ACT scores are used for placement purposes. The university offers the ACT on campus on the published national test dates and also provides residual testing through the Testing Center. Appropriate placement of entering freshman is essential to their academic success, therefore, all freshmen as well as new transfer students who have not completed freshman English and math must take the ACT assessment before registration. LSUA guidelines designed to support student success are published in the university catalog.

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS: The Financial Aid and Scholarship office administers a number of federal, state, and institutional financial aid programs. Students may complete the application form for Federal Financial Aid as well as online applications for scholarships. They are offered access to the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP), General Pell Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, and Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (LEAP) - Formerly SSIG. Other federal financial aid available to students comes from Vocational Rehabilitation Grants and Veterans Benefits. LSUA also participates in the State of Louisiana's TOPS program. This program provides financial aid to high school graduates who complete a specified high school curriculum with a specified grade point average, attend college full time, and maintain satisfactory academic progress. The university also provides a number of institutional scholarships and awards to students who meet eligibility criteria.

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY: Educational Technology personnel generate network logon information for all students, provide course management system instruction, set up student e-mail accounts, identify hardware and software needs of the campus, and provide training for students and faculty.

Technology at LSUA is supported in part through a student technology fee plan. This fee is used to acquire, install, maintain, and foster intelligent use of state-of-the-art technology for the purpose of supporting and enhancing student life and learning, and preparing graduates for the workplaces of the twenty-first century. The Student Technology Fee Committee makes recommendations to the administration on appropriate uses of the Technology Fee each fiscal year. The administration ensures that all expenditures from the Student Technology Fee account are consistent with the goals and objectives of the program.

LIBRARY SERVICES ensure that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources. The Bolton Library provides students on-campus and off-campus electronic access to library resources, including:

- the Library Online Catalog
- approximately 90 academic databases and/or indices to periodicals
- Library web pages

- full-text electronic journals and electronic books
- online tutorials and user guides, and
- electronic reserves requested by faculty

Distance education instructors are encouraged to use written remote access instructions with links to Library resources prepared by the Library staff, and to link from class websites to library resources.

Specialized services offered for distance learners include:

- online Interlibrary Loan Request forms with prompt document delivery via mail, fax or e-mail
- reciprocal borrowing privileges at participating Louisiana academic libraries
- e-mail reference assistance

The STUDENT SERVICES webpage is currently undergoing a review for its design and reconstruction. A new web master has been hired and will assist the department in providing links and articles directly from the webpage. The Student Services Webpage will develop links and/or articles concerning study, personal, and career issues, as well as student activity announcements and information concerning all services provided by this unit. *The department of Student Affairs is preparing a comprehensive set of services that will be available to students via the Internet.*

ACADEMIC, VOCATIONAL AND PERSONAL COUNSELING: Counseling provides students a confidential environment in which they can obtain support and alternatives to pressing problems that may interfere with their academic progress. Counseling is provided free to students, faculty and staff. Two qualified counselors are on staff. In addition, the Director of Student Services is a Louisiana Licensed Professional Counselor and a National Board Certified Counselor. Both staff counselors are experienced and work well with college students. While career, personal, and academic counseling are available, students requiring long-term personal counseling are referred to community resources.

SMARTHINKING is the online tutoring service used by the university. Their instructors hold a minimum of a master's degree. Tutoring is provided in basic mathematics through Calculus II, Economics (Macro & Micro), Accounting, Statistics, Chemistry, and Writing. Students may access SMARTHINKING at home or in an LSUA lab. The Office of Student Services was able to fund this project through a grant from the Student Technology Fee Committee. The addition of SMARTHINKING expands the subject matter and times of day for tutoring.

- 3. The institution has admission/acceptance criteria to assess whether the student has the background, knowledge and technical skills required for undertaking the course or program.**

Students taking electronically delivered courses *or programs* must meet the same admissions and course pre-requisites that are required of on-campus courses. Admissions requirements for each program are set at the program level and can be found in the Catalog *as well as on the web site for each program*. Course prerequisites are approved as part of the normal Courses and Curricula Committee approval process. These can also be found in the catalog. Specific course requirements will be stated in each syllabus and in the course fact sheet published to the web each semester. *Additionally, an online assessment will be available for students to assess whether or not they possess the skills and study habits typically found in successful online students.*

4. Advertising, recruiting and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the program and the services available.

LSUA students are provided with advertising, recruiting, and admissions information that adequately and accurately represent program requirements and services available. The university, the departments offering the courses, and the faculty members teaching the courses use various means for communicating expectations and assessing student capability for success in distance education. Some of these include notices on the web page, e-mails, and surveys. Additionally, course fact sheets, and each course syllabus details the requirements for student success.

In all university communication, marketing, and recruiting efforts regarding specific distance education opportunities, the expectation for student capability is described globally in the Distance Education Course Fact Sheet. For example, the Course Fact Sheet for an online course specifies that the student should have a home computer and should be able to send e-mail, be able to access the Internet, and have proficiency in word processing.

The university class schedule bulletin indicates what courses are being offered via distance education and what mechanisms for delivery are to be used e.g., Internet, compressed video, or telecourse.

Internet courses are designated as Section “93-95” in the schedule bulletin. Alpha characters attached to the description of internet courses also indicate information about the course. For example, Internet courses designated as:

“E1” - A course that substitutes 25-49% of regularly scheduled class meetings with electronic delivery of content including the Internet, a course management system course site, publisher content, etc.

“E2” - A course that substitutes 50-74% of regularly scheduled class meetings with electronic delivery of content. These courses may require students to come to campus or to arrange for proctored exams. (See course fact sheet)

“E3” – A course that substitutes 75% or more of regularly scheduled class meetings with electronic delivery. Students may be required to come to campus for orientation, exams, and/or projects.

“E4” – A course that is delivered 100% electronically with no requirements to come to campus. These courses are considered totally distance learning.

Compressed video courses are designated as:

Section “96” - are compressed video courses taught on campus, while

Section “97” - are compressed video courses taught off campus.

Finally, telecourses, designated as:

Section “90” – are courses taught with the use of videos provided through the Louisiana Public Broadcasting system.

In some cases, distance education courses require the permission of the instructor or the department for registration. These are indicated in the schedule bulletin. Registration for these courses is the same as for any other course that requires prior approval.

Lastly, and most importantly, the key to promoting success for any learner is appropriate orientation to the expectations and responsibilities in a distance-learning environment. *The distance learning web site, which will be complete in October of 2004, will provide students access to orientation which includes expectations, tips for success, and explanation of the course management system.*

Faculty Support

1. The program or course provides faculty support services specifically related to teaching via an electronic system.

LSUA provides faculty support services for distance education in the following ways:

- When needed, priority consideration is given for new technology purchases and updates at the departmental or college level
- Priority technical support in the maintenance of delivery systems
- Stipends, as appropriate, for completion of comprehensive online faculty training called “Teaching Online”
- Regular faculty training seminars and support staff dedicated to faculty distance learning concerns
- Development of user-friendly templates for designing course materials that optimize the full range of university resources
- As needed, other forms of support may be provided by the academic department and the dean (e.g., release time for course development)

- Coordination of schedules, proctors (for compressed video) and troubleshooting

2. The institution ensures appropriate training for faculty who teach using technology.

Electronic courses will be reviewed prior to initial offering and again at periodic intervals. The course review will reveal the extent to which the faculty member has addressed issues defined in the Distance Learning Policy as necessary to receive approval to offer the course. Faculty may become proficient in development and delivery of distance education courses and programs, web delivery and compressed video delivery by successfully completing performance-based training sessions offered by the Educational Technology Department. The training sessions are a combination of group meetings, individual consults, hands-on labs and web-based instruction.

3. The program or course provides faculty with adequate equipment, software and communications for interaction with students, institutions and other faculty.

LSUA has a comprehensive infrastructure to provide faculty with adequate resources. All faculty offices have computers with Windows XP operating system, Microsoft Office XP or Office 2003, Internet Explorer, and anti-virus software. Computers are configured to receive security patches and updates regularly.

Most classrooms now have multi-media equipment available for faculty to utilize.

Every faculty member (including adjuncts) have a campus e-mail account. The campus also provides a course management system (D2L) and various other software packages and equipment requested by faculty or departments. (i.e. TI-Presenters, SPSS software, Nursing simulations, NCLEX preparation software etc.)

Training is available for students and faculty through the Educational Technology staff.

Resources for Learning

1. The program or course ensures that appropriate learning resources are available to students.

Commercial materials needed for distance instruction are handled through the LSUA Bookstore in the same manner as for all other credit courses. Distance education instructors, likewise, communicate their needs to the Bookstore as they would do for their traditional courses.

At the beginning of a distance education course, instructors indicate to students what materials will be required. Students can then contact the Bookstore to request the needed books and materials. The costs can be charged to a credit card, and a nominal shipping fee is included. In any course, supplementary materials can always be made available in printed or electronic form as long as copyright policies are followed.

The library system is also an integral part of distance education. Electronic reserves, inter-library loans, and online databases can be accessed electronically from the LSUA homepage. Instructors provide students with directions on how to access library materials such as books, periodicals, journal articles, etc. Additionally, online tutorials on the use of online library resources are available to all LSUA students.

- 2. The program or course evaluates the adequacy of access to learning resources and the cost to students for access to those resources. It also documents the use of electronic resources.**

The Evaluation of Instruction survey will include a question to evaluate the adequacy of access to learning resources.

Additionally, the Library regularly monitors book and reserve circulation, interlibrary loan requests, instructional sessions, database usage (accessed through web site or from on campus), Library web page access, in person and e-mail reference interactions. The library evaluates the costs incurred in maintaining access to these resources. The Library also periodically conducts user surveys to assess the use and adequacy of its resources.

Commitment to Support

- 1. Policies for faculty evaluation include appropriate recognition of teaching and scholarly activities related to programs or courses offered electronically.**

Distance learning classes will be evaluated, as are traditional classes, as part of the annual faculty review process. Faculty members have an opportunity to specifically highlight scholarly activities associated with distance learning course development in their annual faculty plan report.

- 2. The institution demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program or course for a period sufficient for students to complete a degree or certificate.**

LSUA's long range planning, budgeting and policy development processes reflect commitment to acquiring and supporting the facilities, staffing, equipment, and

other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education program. The university has implemented procedures to ensure proper funding of resources and training essential for the delivery of quality distance education. These include:

- Assuring that electronic delivery remains at the forefront of evolving technologies in the budget process by placing technological infrastructure as one of the university's strategic priorities.
- Articulation of university planning through the Information Technology Advisory Council which reports to the Chancellor. This committee and its subcommittees create master plans and recommendations that are in line with the university's strategic plan and anticipation of resources. If resources are needed, these plans and recommendations go to the budget hearing committee. Policy-related recommendations go to the Chancellor who then works with the committee to have them reviewed by the appropriate bodies or persons.

The university budgeting process is used to bring attention to the immediate and long range needs associated with electronic delivery. This assures that funds from the operating budget, student technology fee revenues, and state scientific equipment dollars are allocated to meet system needs.

Evaluation and Assessment

1. The institution evaluates program and course effectiveness, including assessments of student learning, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction.

Courses delivered electronically, like traditional courses, must cover and assess the learning outcomes described in the Master Course Outline. Master Course Outlines are approved by the Courses and Curricula Committee. LSUA evaluates the educational effectiveness of its distance education courses and programs (including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction) to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.

There are two levels to evaluating the success of a distance education course.

- a. Evaluation of student learning depends on defining specific demonstrable learning outcomes and then assessing students by reference to the outcomes. These course outcomes are defined in the Master Course Outline. Faculty members assess student learning and assign grades based on performance toward meeting these learning outcomes. LSUA is currently performing comprehensive comparisons of grade distributions for courses offered since FA 2001. Comparisons are being made between delivery methods, traditional vs distance for the overall campus and for individual courses offered in multiple formats and taught by the same instructor.

- b. Evaluation of instruction: Academic regulations require that students evaluate every university lecture or lab course, including distance education courses. The academic department is responsible for administering the student evaluation of instruction. Evaluation forms are administered during a scheduled class meeting or via a web-based format used for Internet courses. The procedure used for web-based evaluation ensures that:
- Only students enrolled in the class can complete the form
 - Students may only complete the form once for each class
 - Confidentiality is maintained
 - *As with traditional courses, results of evaluations are to faculty and department chairs after compilation by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness.*

It is also important to evaluate student and faculty satisfaction. LSUA conducts annual satisfaction surveys of students, faculty and staff members. *The student surveys will allow responses from traditional students to be compared to responses from distance students. Questions about distance delivery will be added to the faculty satisfaction survey.*

2. At the completion of the program or course, the institution provides for assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course.

Assessment of student achievement is required for every course. Assessment might occur via exams, projects, portfolios, discussion participation, etc.

LSUA students completing credit courses by any delivery method are provided with course grades which are applied to their transcripts.

3. Program or course announcements and electronic catalog entries provide appropriate information.

The campus catalog is prepared and updated annually. Information is carefully monitored for accuracy. *Course information sheets are approved by the faculty member and the department.*