

Distance Education: Maintaining and Documenting Compliance

Strategies for Addressing and Documenting Key Areas of Compliance - Advice from Reynolds

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1. Follow guidance in the *Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, Third Edition: 2018*, as listed below:
 - a. **Questions to Consider Related to Distance Learning**
 - Are courses and programs offered through distance given the same attention in terms of the quality and integrity of the offerings as is given to other courses and programs?
 - What types of academic and student support services and activities are offered to distance learning students?
 - Are distance learning offerings included when collecting data for assessing expected student learning outcomes?
 - What type of oversight is there for distance learning?
 - What is the role of full-time faculty for distance learning?
 - b. **Sample Documentation**
 - Institutions offering distance learning should **mention it throughout** a Compliance Certification, Application for Membership, or Fifth-Year Interim Report.
 - Use subheadings and other similar means to clarify site/modal differences when responding to the charge to apply “all appropriate standards and policies.”
 - c. **Reference to SACSCOC Documents, as Applicable**
 - SACSCOC document: *Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews*
 - SACSCOC policies:
 - ***Distance and Correspondence Education**
 - Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports
 - Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions
2. Use the document “Guidelines for Addressing Distance and Correspondence Education, Off-Campus Instructional Sites, and Branch Campuses” (Appendix C of the *POA Resource Manual*) for advice regarding standards in which it is important to address distance education in the narratives.
3. Pay attention to the new standard: **14.3 - The institution applies all appropriate standards and policies to its distance learning programs, branch campuses, and off-campus instructional sites.** (*Comprehensive institutional reviews*).
 - This standard provides an opportunity to include in one place a summary of the institution’s application of relevant standards and policies to its distance learning

offerings throughout the compliance report and hopefully drive home to the reviewers that the institution is in compliance.

- A recommended organization for the narrative is as follows:
 - Overview: a brief description of distance learning offerings and reference to the Institutional Summary
 - Summarize the application of standards and policies to distance learning in the report by grouping standards within relevant sections of the Principles. Provide links to narratives for each standard.
 - Basic Eligibility
 - Faculty
 - Student Achievement
 - Educational Program Structure and Content
 - Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices
 - Library and Learning Information Resources
 - Academic and Student Support Services
 - Physical Resources
 - Summary