Distance Learning and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Background:

Characteristics of distance learning (DL) courses at LBCC have been established collaboratively between the Course Evaluation Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee and the Distance Learning Program. The “Course Evaluation Subcommittee views distance learning as an alternative instructional methodology to the on-campus course. All other aspects of the DL course must be equivalent to the on-campus course.”

Quality:

Following Title 5 Regulation, the Course Evaluation Subcommittee expects a distance learning course’s equivalency to the traditional course to be reflected in the course outline of record. Correspondingly, the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (ASLO) Subcommittee expects that distance learning courses outcomes assessment tasks will be comparable to the course's established assessment plan. This is due to the fact that distance education instruction is viewed as an alternative instructional methodology only. Therefore, the existing course outline’s expectations (and SLO assessment plan parameters) establish these requirements for the course.

Published with the college’s Distance Learning Guidelines, the ASLO Subcommittee endorses these guidelines in relationship to the outcomes assessment process. These guidelines specifically reference that a course taught at a distance “must adhere to the approved course outline in terms of depth and breadth of content and student learning outcomes. Methodologies, assignments, interaction, and evaluation methods should be comparable to the equivalent on-campus class.” Moreover, “methods of evaluation used should ensure the same level of integrity, security, and scrutiny associated with equivalent on-campus classes.”

The concept of comparable also applied to the outcomes assessment process. The purpose of ASLO, as a continuous process of collecting, evaluating, and using information to determine how well learning expectations are being met in a course, demands the utilization of equivalent assessment tasks for all offerings, regardless of delivery mode. The use of assessment results to stimulate meaningful dialogue about how instruction and curriculum may be modified to effectively engage students in the learning process for a course necessitates comparable assessment information for courses delivered in any modality.

The “assessment of student learning outcomes is an effort that must remain under faculty control and under faculty direction in all cases and thus required an inclusive

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Thus, the department faculty in consultation with the ASLO Subcommittee and the Distance Learning Program, determines the development, use, and integration of comparable SLO assessments for distance learning courses with on-campus course offerings. The evidence obtained should be included in any assessment dialogue and reports for a designated course.

**Accountability:**

The primary purpose of an accredited institution is to foster learning in its students. An effective college ensures that its processes support student learning and continuously assesses that learning. The Accreditation Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has adopted a policy based on principles of good practice to help ensure that distance learning is characterized by the same expectations for quality, integrity, and effectiveness that apply to more traditional modes of instruction.

Any institution offering courses or programs through distance education is expected to meet the requirements of accreditation in each of its courses and programs at each of its sites. The Commission’s policy specifies that all learning opportunities provided by accredited institutions must have equivalent quality, accountability, and focus on student outcomes, regardless of mode of delivery.

The Commission’s expectations of equivalency are also noted in the accreditation standards themselves.

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**Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education** (Adopted June 2001; Edited August 2004; Revised June 2005, January 2010, June 2011; Edited August 2012).

**Background:** Recognizing that most accredited institutions are making use of the growing range of modalities for delivery of instructional and educational programs and services, including various electronic means, the Commission has adopted a policy based on principles of good practice to help ensure that distance learning is characterized by the same expectations for quality, integrity, and effectiveness that apply to more traditional modes of instruction.

**Policy:** Commission policy specifies that all learning opportunities provided by accredited institutions must have equivalent quality, accountability, and focus on student outcomes, regardless of mode of delivery. This policy provides a framework that allows institutions the flexibility to adapt their delivery modes to the emerging needs of students and society while maintaining quality. Any institution offering courses and programs through distance education or correspondence education is expected to meet the requirements of accreditation in each of its courses and programs and at each of its sites.

**Policy Element:** Institutions are expected to have clearly defined and appropriate student learning outcomes for all courses and programs, including those offered via distance education or correspondence education.

**Element:** Institutions are expected to provide the resources and structure needed to accomplish these outcomes and to demonstrate that their students achieve these outcomes through application of appropriate assessment.

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**Standard II.A. Instructional Programs**

**Standard II.A.2.**
The institution assures the quality and improvement of all instructional courses and programs offered in the name of the institution, including collegiate, developmental, and pre-collegiate courses and programs, continuing and community education, study abroad, short-term training courses and programs, programs for international students, and contract or other special programs, regardless of type of credit awarded, delivery mode, or location.

**Standard II.A.2.d.**
The institution uses delivery modes and teaching methodologies that reflect the diverse needs and learning styles of its students.

**Standard II.B. Student Support Services**

**Standard II.B.1.**
The institution assures the quality of student support services and demonstrates that these services, regardless of location or means of delivery, support student learning and enhance achievement of the mission of the institution.

**Standard II.B.3.a.**
The institution assures equitable access to all of its students by providing appropriate, comprehensive, and reliable services to students regardless of service location or delivery method.
Standard II.C. Library and Learning Support Services

Standard II.C.1.
The institution supports the quality of its instructional programs by providing library and other learning support services that are sufficient in quantity, currency, depth, and variety to facilitate educational offerings, regardless of location or means of delivery.

Standard II.C.1.c.
The institution provides students and personnel responsible for student learning programs and services adequate access to the library and other learning support services, regardless of their location or means of delivery.