DISTANCE EDUCATION

Policy
The University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio’s commitment to academic excellence includes consistency between traditional classroom instruction and distance education. The purpose of this operating policy is to provide a framework for the development, implementation, and maintenance of formal degree and certificate programs and courses offered via distance education for academic credit.

Administration
The school-specific administration is responsible for the administration of distance education programs and course delivery. The school-specific Deans report to the President.

UT Health San Antonio Commitment
All schools of UT Health San Antonio shall have an opportunity to participate in providing distance education courses and/or programs and shall be encouraged to provide distance education as appropriate. Through the schools, UT Health San Antonio shall ensure that all academic programs, including those delivered through distance education, are afforded an adequate resource support structure.

Definition
UT Health San Antonio utilizes the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges definition for distance education for its policy:

“Distance education is defined as a formal educational process in which the majority (more than 50%) of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when the student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may employ correspondence study, or video, audio or computer technologies.”

Policy Statement
UT Health San Antonio policy mandates that programs offered via distance education shall be consistent with the institutions role, scope, and mission and will meet quality practices and delivery protocols as
stipulated by state and federal policies. Development of new online programs and courses will follow the same development and approval procedures as traditional programs and courses.

UT Health San Antonio distance education programs have student learning outcomes appropriate for the rigor and breadth of the degree awarded. As a component of the overall assessment, documented assessment of student achievement is conducted at the completion of the program, by comparing student performance to the intended student learning outcomes.

UT Health San Antonio evaluation of electronically delivered programs takes place in the context of the regular evaluation of all academic programs.

Selection of programs to be offered via distance education is the purview of the school-specific leadership. The school-specific administrators and faculty shall provide oversight of a distance education program in the same manner as traditionally delivered face-to-face programs. Academically qualified persons participate in the decisions concerning program curricula and program oversight.

School-specific leadership have the primary responsibility for developing and implementing effective distance education policy, procedure, assessment, and evaluation for all distance education courses and academic programs, in consultation with the Vice President for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs.

Courses delivered via distance education (whether or not they are credit or non-credit) are academic department courses approved through the normal curriculum process. Credit-bearing courses must be recorded with the Registrar’s Office.

Distance education students shall have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their successful completion of coursework.

Faculty who teach through distance education technologies are responsible for acquiring sufficient technical skills to present their subject matter and related material effectively.

Schools dedicate resources to provide those responsible for distance
education program development the appropriate orientation and training
to help them become proficient in the uses of the program’s
technologies, including potential changes in course design and
management.

Distance education students are accountable to the admission
standards and enrollment processes as appropriate for the degree
program.

The academic department and/or school shall ensure academic integrity
for all distance education exams. School-level procedures are in place
that includes authentication of student identification.

UT Health San Antonio employs a secure log-in authentication to
access course materials and educational resources.

Each distance education course or degree program shall be evaluated
by students in the same manner as on-campus course offerings. School-specific leadership shall review the student evaluation results
with faculty and support staff to facilitate the continuous refinement of
distance education courses. Consistent with the policies governing on-
campus course evaluation, documentation of distance education course
evaluations and of the proactive use of the results shall be maintained
in the school-specific departments.

Learning management technology systems used to deliver distance
education instruction must be approved by the School Dean, Chief
Information Officer or designee, in coordination with the Vice President
for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs.

Footnote

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board recognizes two
categories of distance education courses: fully distance education
courses and hybrid/blended courses. A fully distance education course
is defined as “A course which may have mandatory face-to-face
sessions totaling no more than 15 percent of the instructional time.
Examples of face-to-face sessions include orientation, laboratory, exam
review or an in-person test.” A hybrid/blended course is defined as “A
course in which a majority (more than 50 percent but less than 85
percent), of the planned instruction occurs when the students and
instructor(s) are not in the same place.”