Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (2012) & Council of Regional Accrediting Commission (C-RAC) Guidelines

Guideline Analysis/Evidence (These items illustrate actions, processes, and facts that institutions may use to demonstrate that they meet SARA requirements.)	SACS COC Standard(s) (Appendix A, Column 6 of the 2012 manual indicates standards, which require an institutional policy.)	Possible Questions	Evidence of documentation and practices to consider
Guideline 1: Online learning is appropriate to the institution's mission and purposes.			
The mission statement explains the role of online learning within the range of the institution's programs and services;	• 2.4 Institutional Mission • 3.1.1 Mission	• Does your mission statement reflect online learning?	• Mission Statement
Institutional and program statements of vision and values inform how the online learning environment is created and supported;	• 2.4 Institutional Mission • 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 2.7.2 Program Content • 2.10 Student Support Services • 3.1.1 Mission	• Do your program statements include online learning?	• Program Level Statements • Vision Statements • Value Statements
As appropriate, the institution incorporates into its online learning programs methods of meeting the stated institutional goals for the student experience at the institution;	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 2.10 Student Support Services • 3.4.12 Technology Use • 3.3.1.3 Institutional Effectiveness – Academic & Student Support Services	• Are all student services offered online?	• Website • Online Student Services • LMS
The recruitment and admissions programs supporting the online learning courses and programs appropriately target the student populations to be served;	• 4.6 Recruitment Materials	• Do all marketing materials clearly outline/state admissions process for online students?	• Recruitment Materials • Admissions Policies • Admissions Processes
The students enrolled in the institution's online learning courses and programs fit the admissions requirements for the students the institution intends to serve;	• 3.4.3 Admission Polices • 3.4.4 Acceptance of Academic Credit • 3.4.5 Academic Policies	• Are there any differences in the way online students are processed?	• Admissions Policies • Admissions Processes

Senior administrators and staff can articulate how online learning is consonant with the institution's mission and goals.	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 3.1.1 Mission	• Can appropriate employees articulate?	• Ask Key Administrators To Articulate

Guideline 2: The institution's plans for developing, sustaining, and if appropriate, expanding online learning offerings are integrated into its regular planning and evaluation processes.

Development and ownership of plans for online learning extend beyond the administrators directly responsible for it and the programs directly using it;	• 3.4.1 Academic Program Approval • 3.4.10 Responsibility for Curriculum	• Is online learning part of the planning process?	• Academic Council • Curriculum Committees • Strategic Planning
Planning documents are explicit about any goals to increase numbers of programs provided through online learning courses and programs and/or numbers of students to be enrolled in them;	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 3.1.1 Mission • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs	• If a College has plans to expand online learning, are planning documents (at the College-level and Program-level) explicit about any goals to increase numbers of programs or students?	• College-level Planning Documents • Program-level Planning Documents • Academic Councils Minutes • Curriculum Committees Minutes • Distance Learning Committee/Team Minutes
Plans for online learning are linked effectively to budget and technology planning to ensure adequate support for current and future offerings;	• 2.8 Faculty • 2.11.1 Financial resources • 3.4.12 Technology Use • 3.10.1 Financial Stability	• Do planning documents include adequate resource support for online programs?	• Distance Learning Plan • Annual Equipment Plan • Program Annual Plan • Technology Plan
Plans for expanding online learning demonstrate the institution's capacity to assure an appropriate level of quality;	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs	• If a College has plans to expand online learning, planning documents (at the College-level and Program-level) must demonstrate capacity to assure quality.	• Course Standardization Documents • Syllabus Templates • Course Templates • ADA/OCR Compliance • Quality Matters

The institution and its online learning programs have a track record of conducting needs analysis and of supporting programs.	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs	• Is a needs analysis conducted as part of program planning? • After the program is launched, is support provided?	• Technology Plan Responses • Online Orientation Reports • Moodle Orientation • Advisory Board recommendations • Graduate Surveys

Guideline 3: Online learning is incorporated into the institution's systems of governance and academic oversight.

The institution's faculty have a designated role in the design and implementation of its online learning offerings;	• 2.7.4 Coursework for Degrees • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs • 3.4.10 Responsibility for Curriculum • 3.4.11 Academic Program Coordination • 3.7.5 Faculty Role in Governance	• What is your process to ensure that faculty have a role in online program planning?	• Lead Instructor Designation • Program-level Planning Documents • Academic Councils Minutes • Curriculum Committees Minutes
The institution ensures the rigor of the offerings and the quality of the instruction;	• 2.8 Faculty • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs • 3.4.5 Academic Policies • 3.7.1 Faculty Competence • 3.7.2 Faculty Evaluation	• How can you prove online offerings follow the same rigor and quality of traditional courses?	• Course Standardization Documents • Syllabus Templates • Course Templates • ADA Compliance • Quality Matters • Course Evaluations

Approval of online courses and programs follows standard processes used in the college or university;	• 3.4.1 Academic Program Approval • 3.7.5 Faculty Role in Governance	• What is your approval process for adding online courses or programs?	• Academic Councils Minutes • Curriculum Committees Minutes • President's Cabinet/Council Minutes • Board of Trustees Minutes
Online learning courses and programs are evaluated on a periodic basis;	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs • 3.7.2 Faculty Evaluation	• What is your evaluation timeline for online courses/programs?	• Program Review • Course Evaluations • Faculty Evaluations • Distance Learning Program Service Review
Contractual relationships and arrangements with consortial partners, if any, are clear and guarantee that the institution can exercise appropriate responsibility for the academic quality of all online learning offerings provided under its name.	• 3.2.13 Institutional Effectiveness Academic and Student Support Services • 3.4.7 Consortial Relationships/Contractual Agreements	• Do you have any contractual relationships of this nature? • If yes, does agreement clearly define academic quality responsibility?	• MOUs • ISAs • CCP Agreements • Early College Agreements • External LMS Course Content (e.g. Publisher Content) • Any Consortial Agreements

Guideline 4: Curricula for the institution's online learning offerings are coherent, cohesive, and comparable in academic rigor to programs offered in traditional instructional formats.

The curricular goals and course objectives show that the institution or program has knowledge of the best uses of online learning in different disciplines and settings;	• 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs • 3.4.1 Academic Program Approval • 4.2 Program Curriculum	• How do you show best practices are being utilized for specific courses/programs?	• Faculty Training • Best Practice Guidelines (e.g. Quality Matters) • Standardized Course Template

Curricula delivered through online learning are benchmarked against on-ground courses and programs, if provided by the institution, or those provided by traditional institutions;	• 2.5: Institutional Effectiveness • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs	• How do your online courses/programs compare to traditional courses in terms of quality, completion, and retention?	• IE Reports • Program Planning Documents
The curriculum is coherent in its content and sequencing of courses and is effectively defined in easily available documents including course syllabi and program descriptions;	• 2.7.2 Program Content • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs • 3.4.5 Academic Policies	• Does online curriculum follow the same program of study as traditional programs? • Is sequencing information easily available?	• College Catalog • College Handbook • Web Site • Advising Documents • Web Advisor/Self Service
Scheduling of online learning courses and programs provides students with a dependable pathway to ensure timely completion of degrees;	• 2.10 Degree-Granting Authority • 3.3.1.3 Institutional Effectiveness – Academic and Student Support Services	• Are your online courses offered on the same schedule as a traditional program? • What do you do in case of low enrollment for second year courses?	• Semester Course Schedule • Advising Documents • Web Advisor/Self Service
The institution or program has established and enforces a policy on online learning course enrollments to ensure faculty capacity to work appropriately with students;		• Do you have an enrollment cap to online course enrollment? • Do you differentiate in caps between online enrollment and traditional enrollment? If yes, is this differentiation documented?	• Faculty Employment Contracts • Cap Set in Web Advisor/Colleague • Faculty Compensation Formula

Expectations for any required face-to-face, on-ground work (e.g., internships, specialized laboratory work) are stated clearly;		• Do students know the requirements prior to registering? • Where are requirements stated?	• Web Advisor/Self Service • Syllabus • Web Site • Book Store • LMS
Course design and delivery supports student-student and faculty-student interaction;	• 3.4.10 Responsibility for Curriculum • 3.4.12 Technology Use	• What is the quality control method for content design and delivery? • Does your syllabus define interaction requirements?	• Course Checklist • Course Standardization Template • Best Practice Guidelines (e.g. Quality Matters) • Syllabus
Curriculum design and the course management system enable active faculty contribution to the learning environment;		• Do faculty utilize the active engagement options of the LMS?	• LMS Activities (e.g. Forums, Wiki, Journals, Etc.)
Course and program structures provide schedule and support known to be effective in helping online learning students persist and succeed.		• Are college-level resources clearly identified within the courses that assist students in success? • Is your course designed so that students can easily locate content and follow flow to ensure successful completion of the course?	• Library Resources • Writing Center • Tutoring • Course Standardization Template • Best Practice Guidelines (e.g. Quality Matters) • Syllabus Contains A Course Overview With Deadlines

Guideline 5: The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its online learning offerings, including the extent to which online learning goals are achieved, and uses the results of its evaluations to enhance the attainment of the goals.

Assessment of student learning follows processes used in onsite courses or programs and/or reflects good practice in assessment methods;	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs	• How do you show best practices are being utilized for assessment methodologies? • What professional development is offered to train faculty to develop/utilize relevant assessments?	• Program Review • Course Evaluations • Faculty Evaluations • Professional Development Activities
Student course evaluations are routinely taken and an analysis of them contributes to strategies for course improvements;	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs • 3.7.2 Faculty Evaluation	• How often are courses/faculty evaluated via student course evaluations? • Are the results of the evaluations used to develop improvement strategies?	• Student Surveys/Feedback • Program Review • Course Evaluation
Evaluation strategies ensure effective communication between faculty members who design curriculum, faculty members who interact with students, and faculty members who evaluate student learning;		• What role do faculty play in designing online content and evaluation methods?	• CCSEE • Noel-Levitz • Student Surveys/Feedback • Program Review • Course Evaluation • Rubrics

The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of the academic and support services provided to students in online courses and uses the results for improvement;	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs • 3.3.1.3 Institutional Effectiveness – Academic and Student Support Services • 3.4.9 Academic Support Services	• How do you show best practices are being utilized for academic and support services? • Are the results of the evaluations used to develop improvement strategies?	• Service Reviews • CCSEE • Noel-Levitz • Student Surveys/Feedback • Program Review
The institution demonstrates the appropriate use of technology to support its assessment strategies;	• 3.4.12 Technology Use	• What tools/technologies are used to support assessment strategies for online programs?	• Survey Monkey, Remark, etc. • Noel-Levitz • CCSEE • Compliance Assist
The institution documents its successes in implementing changes informed by its programs of assessment and evaluation;	• 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs	• What are your documentation requirements for successful program changes?	• Updated Programs of Study • Updated Course Content • Program Review Documents • Academic Councils Minutes • Curriculum Committees Minutes
The institution provides examples of student work and student interactions among themselves and with faculty;		• Do faculty utilize the active engagement options of the LMS?	• LMS Activities (e.g. Forums, Wiki, Journals, etc.
The institution sets appropriate goals for the retention/persistence of students using online learning, assesses its achievement of these goals, and uses the results for improvement.	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 4.1 Student Achievement	• How do you assess the success of your retention/persistence goals? • Are the results of the evaluations used to develop improvement strategies?	• Retention/Persistence Reports • Completion Reports

Guideline 6: Faculty responsible for delivering curricula and evaluating the student's success in achieving the online learning goals are appropriately qualified and effectively supported.

Online learning faculties are carefully selected, appropriately trained, frequently evaluated, and are marked by an acceptable level of turnover;	• 2.8 Faculty • 3.7.1 Faculty Competence • 3.7.2 Faculty Evaluation • 3.7.3 Professional Development	• What are your processes and procedures for faculty selection?	• Faculty Job Description • Professional Development Requirements • Faculty Evaluations • Full-time/Part-time Faculty Ratio • Faculty Turnover Ratio
The institution's training program for online learning faculty is periodic, incorporates tested good practices in online learning pedagogy, and ensures competency with the range of software products used by the institution;	• 3.4.5 Academic Policies • 3.4.12 Technology Use • 3.7.3 Professional Development	• Does your institution have a professional development program for online faculty? • What technology skill sets are required to teach online?	• Best Practices (e.g. Quality Matters). • Professional Development Schedule
Faculty are proficient and effectively supported in using the course management system;	• 3.7.3 Professional Development	• Are faculty new to online teaching required to take LMS training? • Does your college provide LMS support to faculty?	• Professional Development Schedule • Help Desk/Distance Learning Services
The office or persons responsible for online learning training programs are clearly identified and have the competencies to accomplish the tasks, including knowledge of the specialized resources and technical support available to support course development and delivery;	• 3.7.3 Professional Development	• Does your Distance Learning Office have appropriate/qualified staff to support online programs/courses?	• Organization Chart • Distance Learning Job Descriptions

Faculty members engaged in online learning share in the mission and goals of the institution and its programs and are provided the opportunities to contribute to the broader activities of the institution;	• 3.4.1 Academic Program Approval • 3.4.10 Responsibility for Curriculum • 3.4.11 Academic Program Coordination	• What role does your faculty play in institutional success?	• Institutional Effectiveness Planning Documents • Strategic Planning Documents
Students express satisfaction with the quality of the instruction provided by online learning faculty members.	• 3.3.1.1 Institutional Effectiveness – Educational Programs	• Is your course evaluation process different for online compared to traditional courses? • What is your course evaluation process?	• CCSEE • Noel-Levitz • Student Surveys/Feedback • Course Evaluations

Guideline 7: The institution provides effective student and academic services to support students enrolled in online learning offerings.

The institution's admissions program for online learning provides good web-based information to students about the nature of the online learning environment, and assists them in determining if they possess the skills important to success in online learning;		• Is your admissions process different for online students? • Do you have an online admissions process? • How do students access the information or resources?	• Student Readiness Checklist • New Student Orientation • LMS Orientation • Web Site • Admissions Procedure
The institution provides an online learning orientation program;	• 2.10 Student Support Services	• Does your college have an online learning orientation requirement?	• Online Orientation
The institution provides support services to students in formats appropriate to the delivery of the online learning program;	• 2.10 Student Support Services • 3.4.9 Academic support services	• Are all support services in an online format?	• Blackboard Collaborate • Adobe Connect • Online Tutoring • Online Writing Center

Students in online learning programs have adequate access to student services, including financial aid, course registration, and career and placement counseling;	• 2.9 Learning Resources and Services • 2.10 Student Support Services	• Are online support services adequate? • Do you track the demand for these services? • What is the demand compared to services provided?	• CFNC • Web Advisor/Self Service • Demand/Served Reporting
Students in online learning programs have ready access to 24/7 tech support;		• Does your college offer 24/7 tech support?	• System Office Help Desk Solution
Students using online learning have adequate access to learning resources, including library, information resources, laboratories, and equipment and tracking systems;	• 2.9 Learning Resources and Services • 3.8.1 Learning/Information Resources • 3.8.2 Instruction in Library Use	• Are online learning resources adequate? • Do you track the demand for these learning resources? • What is the demand compared services provided?	• Library Web Site • NC LIVE and Other Online Subscriptions • NCLOR • V-SCOPE • REF-STAT!
Students using online learning demonstrate proficiency in the use of electronic forms of learning resources;	• 3.4.12 Technology Use	• How do you assess student proficiency?	• LMS Orientation Results • Course Level Technology Requirements Results
Student complaint processes are clearly defined and can be used electronically;	• 4.5 Student Complaints • 3.13.1 Policy Compliance	• How do online students file a complaint?	• Web site • Email • Online Complaint Process Forms
Publications and advertising for online learning programs are accurate and contain necessary information such as program goals, requirements, academic calendar, and faculty;	• 4.6 Recruitment Materials	• Do you market online programs independent of traditional programs? • Do all marketing materials contain necessary information?	• Website • TV\Radio Ads • Program Publications

Students are provided with reasonable and cost-effective ways to participate in the institution's system of student authentication.	• 4.8.1 Distance Learning Verification	• How do students authenticate?	• IT Standards • Distance Learning Procedures Manual

Guideline 8: The institution provides sufficient resources to support and, if appropriate, expand it online learning offerings.

The institution prepares a multi-year budget for online learning that includes resources for assessment of program demand, marketing, appropriate levels of faculty and staff, faculty and staff development, library and information resources, and technology infrastructure;		• Does your institution prepare a multi-year budget for distance learning?	• Budget • Distance Learning Plan
The institution provides evidence of a multi-year technology plan that addresses its goals for online learning and includes provision for a robust and scalable technical infrastructure.	• 2.5 Institutional Effectiveness • 3.4.12 Technology Use • 3.7.3 Professional Development • 3.8.1 Learning/Information Resources	• Does your technology plan include goals for online learning? • Is the infrastructure of the plan scalable?	• Technology Plan

Guideline 9: The institution assures the integrity of its online offerings.

The institution has in place effective procedures through which to ensure that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The institution makes clear in writing that these processes protect student privacy and notifies students at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional costs associated with the verification procedures. (Note: This is a federal requirement. All institutions that offer distance education programs must demonstrate compliance with this requirement.);	• 4.8.1 Distance Learning Verification • 4.8.2 Distance Learning Privacy • 4.8.3 Distance Learning Notification	• Does your acceptable use policy include student authentication requirements?	• Acceptable Use Policies • Web Site • College Catalog • Student Handbook

The institution's policies on academic integrity include explicit references to online learning;	• 3.4.5 Academic Policies	• Does your college differentiate between online and traditional courses for academic integrity? • Does your academic integrity policy include online learning examples?	• Course Syllabus • College Catalog • Student Handbook • Web Site • Portal
Issues of academic integrity are discussed during the orientation for online students;	• 2.10 Student Support Services	• Is academic integrity part of your student orientation discussions?	• Online Orientation • Student Orientation • College Catalog • Student Handbook • Advising Sessions • Web Site
Training for faculty members engaged in online learning includes consideration of issues of academic integrity, including ways to reduce cheating.		• Does professional development include issues of academic integrity for online learners?	• Professional Development Training/Tutorials

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