

DISTANCE EDUCATION TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

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Auburn University is committed to increasing access to higher education for the citizens of Alabama and beyond by developing and offering credit and non-credit distance courses and programs for professional development, advancement, and pursuit of degrees, as well as for personal fulfillment.

This document suggests definitions, policies, and procedures for Auburn University distance courses based on the current, distributed nature of distance course offerings. Exceptions to any policies recommended here may be requested by the offering unit and negotiated with the Provost to address specific circumstances and program requirements.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Distance Education (ACHE): A formal educational process using technological delivery in which instruction occurs where students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ audio, video, or computer technologies. Distance education, distance learning, and e-learning are recognized by the Commission (ACHE) as being synonymous terms. Academic courses or programs are considered to be distance education entities when over 50 percent of the content is delivered through distance education modes.

Outreach distance courses - courses delivered remotely to off-campus students

On-campus distance course - any Banner-scheduled course designed for on-campus students which usually meets in an assigned classroom on a specific schedule; may include remote and/or online delivery to distance students

Resident Student - a student whose permanent domicile is in the state of Alabama or a student who meets non-resident exceptions (e.g., students in the military)

Non-Resident Student - any student whose permanent domicile is not in the state of Alabama

Regularly Admitted Student - any student who has met the University admission criteria

Degree-Seeking Student - any regularly admitted student who is enrolled in an Auburn degree program

Non Degree-Seeking Student - any regularly admitted student who is not currently enrolled in a degree program at Auburn University (e.g., transient students)

On-Campus Student - any student taking courses locally; might involve remote delivery

Off-Campus Student - any student who is taking remotely delivered courses

Remote-delivery - all course material is provided in technologically-enhanced formats (recordings, faculty-developed presentations, etc.)

Offering unit - the college, program, or department chiefly involved in developing and teaching distance courses

Locked-out - situation describing the plight of on-campus students who need (for graduation or pre-requisite work) courses that are closed to enrollment, not offered, or cause scheduling conflicts

Blocking course - undergraduate (freshman-/sophomore-level) core and service courses offered as on-campus distance courses because of lock-out situations

Distance Learning at Auburn University

Auburn University will continue to offer and will develop new distance offerings:

1. Non-credit/non-degree courses for advancement or personal fulfillment;
2. Credit courses which count toward fulfillment of an undergraduate degree;
3. Credit courses which count toward fulfillment of a graduate degree program;
4. Courses in Consortia Agreements.

Because some students are locked out of on-campus courses, and because some graduate students may need to fulfill degree requirements, this document describes policies by which full- or part-time, on-campus, degree-seeking students could take distance courses intended for remote delivery to off-campus students. All regularly admitted students will be eligible to take distance education courses.

1. Non-credit/Non-degree Courses and Programs

Auburn University will continue to develop and offer non-credit/non-degree courses and programs for professional development, advancement, and/or personal fulfillment. Students enrolled in these courses or programs will continue to be subject to tuition rates determined by market forces and internal cost analyses.

Students enrolled in these courses are not subject to Auburn University admission requirements.

2. Credit Courses in Undergraduate Degree Programs

Colleges, schools, departments, and programs will continue to develop and offer credit courses for remote delivery.

Off-campus, degree/non-degree seeking students must meet Auburn University minimum admission requirements. All regularly admitted undergraduate students will be eligible to take distance courses.

Tuition Rates

Student tuition for distance courses will be based on official state of residence and on student status:

- ❖ non-degree seeking students will be subject to tuition rates determined by market forces and internal cost analyses, but should not be less than tuition charged to on-campus students not enrolled in distance courses;
- ❖ full-time (registered for 12 or more credit hours), off-campus, degree-seeking, resident students will pay the same tuition as on-campus resident students;
- ❖ part-time, off-campus, degree-seeking, non-resident students will pay the same tuition rate as on-campus students, based on residency;
- ❖ full-time, on-campus, degree seeking, resident students will pay existing tuition rates.

Fees

Off-campus distance students will not be required to pay student fees related to benefits and services provided only to on-campus students (e.g., dining, transit, etc.)

With the appropriate approvals, the offering unit and/or DLOT may set an additional per-credit distance education fee to recover any additional distance education costs not covered by the university.

3. Credit Courses in Graduate Programs, First Professional Degree Programs, and Certificate Programs

Existing graduate courses and programs will continue to be offered to off-campus students in formats developed by the offering unit.

Colleges, schools, programs, and departments will continue to develop distance learning courses and programs at the graduate level.

Off-campus, degree/non-degree seeking students must meet Auburn University minimum admission requirements.

All regularly admitted graduate students will be eligible to take distance courses.

Tuition Rates

Subject to appropriate approvals, the offering unit will determine whether

a. students will be subject to tuition rates set by the offering unit and determined by market forces and internal cost analyses, subject to appropriate approvals;

or

b. students will pay tuition rates based on status:

- ❖ non-degree seeking students will be subject to tuition rates determined by market forces and internal cost analyses;
- ❖ full-time (registered for 9 or more credit hours), off-campus, degree-seeking, resident students will pay the same tuition as on-campus resident students;
- ❖ full-time and part-time, off-campus, degree-seeking, non-resident students will pay the same tuition rate as on-campus graduate/professional non-residents;
- ❖ full-time, on-campus, degree-seeking, resident students will pay existing tuition rates.

Fees

Off-campus distance students will not be required to pay student fees related to benefits and services provided only to on-campus students (e.g., dining, transit, etc.)

With the appropriate approvals, the offering unit and/or DLOT may set an additional per-credit distance education fee to recover any additional distance education costs not covered by the university.

4. Courses in Consortia Agreements

Tuition and fees may vary for courses delivered or received as part of a consortia agreement.

INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

Course Delivery Limitations

The offering unit, with approval from the dean and review by Provost, will determine whether faculty teaching blocking courses will be compensated at an on-load or over-load basis.

The offering unit, with approval from the dean and review by the Provost, will determine the number of blocking courses full-time, tenured faculty will be permitted to teach.

Full-time, tenure-track faculty teaching blocking courses on an over-load basis will be limited to two courses per nine month academic year and two courses in the summer.

If blocking courses are taught on-load, the University's minimum enrollment standards will apply.

Security

All students enrolled in non-degree and degree distance courses and programs will be subject to Identity Management policies and procedures.

Technology & Enterprise Systems Support

Technical support will be provided by OIT, specifically the OIT Help Desk, IMG, and distributed IT units as appropriate.

OIT will cooperate with any offering unit to ensure sufficient technological support is available for distance course offerings.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES

Development and Funding of New Offerings

The Office of the Provost, the Graduate School, colleges, and departments, in collaboration with the Office of Distance Learning and Outreach Technology (DLOT), will identify subject areas where new distance courses are needed or desirable and negotiate funding for the development of such courses.

Start-up funds and costs incurred for developing and offering blocking courses (including faculty salaries, prep time, IT needs, etc.) will be provided by Central Administration from funds obtained through revenue sharing agreements (see below).

Funding

Through DLOT, the Office of University Outreach may provide funds for the development of new courses and programs. These funds will be considered a loan/grant to the offering unit. Conditions of the loan or tuition revenue-sharing will be negotiable.

Revenue Sharing of Tuition and Distance Learning Fees

Central Administration is encouraged to review distance course and program revenue distribution in consideration of support units such as the Office of Student Disability Services, the Libraries, OIT, and others.

A revenue-sharing model, based in part (levels two – five below) on a scaled plan for revenue sharing such as the one used at Pennsylvania State University (included here, revised for the Auburn University environment), is recommended:

Level One: Colleges, schools, programs, and departments will have the option to continue to submit distance learning fees collected from distance education courses to Central Administration at the rate set by the Board of Trustees.

Level Two: Central Administration assumes all financial risk and guarantees recovery of offering unit costs. Offering unit receives 10% of gross revenue*; Central Administration retains 90%.

Level Three: The offering unit funds instructional costs including new, dedicated instructional support staff. Offering Unit receives 50% of gross revenue*; Central Administration retains 50%.

Level Four: The offering unit funds instructional costs and delivers to the Central Administration (DLOT) a completed course (that meets distance course standards requirements) for implementation. College receives 66% of gross revenue*; Central Administration retains 34%.

Level Five: The offering unit assumes all financial risk and guarantees recovery of costs. Offering unit receives 90% of gross revenue*; Central Administration retains 10%.

* *Gross Revenue* - sum of tuition and fees collected; does not include any special fees charged to students for costs such as equipment, software, etc.

Instructional Support

DLOT, in collaboration with the Biggio Center, IMG, The Media Production Group, the Libraries, the Office of Student Disability Services, and other appropriate units, will provide faculty training, instructional design, and multimedia production support for faculty developing new distance courses or programs.

DLOT support may include, but not be limited to, individualized consulting in instructional design with regard to distance courses, assistance with approval process, assistance in the course development process, and administrative support for faculty teaching distance courses.

Faculty Compensation

Development funds obtained from DLOT (as described above) or through other arrangements made by the offering unit will be used to compensate faculty involved in developing new courses. The offering unit will determine whether funds for course development will be used to provide course release or as extra compensation.

Subject to approval of the Dean and review by the Provost's office, the offering unit will determine whether faculty will be compensated for teaching a distance course on a per course basis, a per student enrollment/per course basis, or as part of the faculty member's regular on-load assignment.

Distance Course and Program Approval Process

A review of the current approval process, with the intent of stream-lining the process, is strongly recommended.

Market Research, Marketing, and Publicity

Market research, marketing, and publicity of distance courses will be a joint endeavor by the offering unit, the college/school of the offering unit, and the Office of Distance Learning and Outreach Technology. DLOT will advertise Auburn University distance education courses and programs through the appropriate general channels; offering unit and the colleges/schools of the offering units will advertise to targeted audiences.