

Lamar State College Orange  
Distance Education Handbook

### Distance Education Mission

Lamar State College Orange delivers high quality distance education, providing students convenient access while maintaining rigor and integrity of courses.

### Distance Education Vision

Lamar State College Orange strives to maximize student access to education through synchronous and asynchronous online courses, helping students meet the needs of an ever-changing workforce. Implementing best practices, keeping abreast of current and future trends in distance learning, and providing resources for student success create the framework of the Distance Education program.

### Definitions of Distance Education

- The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board defines distance education in this fashion:
  - "The formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50 percent) of instruction." Distance education can include courses and programs offered online, off-campus face-to-face, and electronic-to-groups.
  - Additionally, Coordinating Board rules recognize 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.
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges defines distance education in this way:
  - "For the purposes of the Commission on College's accreditation review, distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD's, and CD-ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program."

- Lamar State College Orange accepts both of these definitions, and LSCO adheres to the percentage recommendations offered by THECB for fully online and hybrid/blended courses.

### Types of Virtual Instructional Learning Environments

**Synchronous distance learning** occurs when the teacher and pupils interact in different places but during the same time.

- Students enrolled in synchronous courses are generally required to log on to their computer during a set time at least once a week.
- Synchronous distance learning may include multimedia components such as group chats, web seminars, video conferencing and phone call-ins.
- Synchronous learning generally works best for students who can schedule set days and times for their studies. People who like structured courses heavy on student interaction often prefer synchronous learning.

**Asynchronous distance learning** occurs when the teacher and the pupils interact in different places and during different times.

- Students enrolled in asynchronous courses allow students to complete work at their own pace within the confines of due dates assigned by the instructor.
- Asynchronous distance learning often relies on technology such as email, e-courses, online forums, audio recordings and video recordings. Snail mail is another medium for asynchronous learning, to be used by instructors at their discretion.
- Students with complicated schedules often prefer asynchronous distance learning. It also tends to work well for self-motivated learners who do not need direct guidance to complete their assignments.

### Office of Learning Technology

The Office of Learning Technology is managed by the Director of Learning Technology. Working closely with the Director are the Application Supports Analyst and Learning Technology Development and Training Assistant.

### Distance Education Committee

The Distance Education Committee is a standing committee with representation from both faculty and staff. This committee's focus is to provide oversight, guidelines, and best practices for the LSCO distance education program.

The Distance Education Committee is charged with:

- Maintaining the *Distance Education Handbook*.
- Reviewing and adhering to the [Principles of Good Practice for Academic Degree and Certificate Programs Offered at a Distance](#).
- Approving new distance education courses, ensuring alignment with course standard quality requirements

- Reviewing prior distance education courses, confirming alignment with course standard quality requirements
- Recommending and designing proper evaluation tools for distance education
- Researching and discussing new learning technologies
- Reviewing and recommending policies for distance education student success
- Evaluating and responding to issues/needs regarding the Learning Management System
- Acting as a liaison for the distance education committee and corresponding educational departments
- Recommending and designing pedagogical training for distance education faculty
- Creating an ongoing list of best practices for faculty
- Addressing areas of concern for distance education

The Distance Education Committee includes:

- Director of Learning Technology (*Committee Chair*)
- Application Supports Analyst
- Learning Technology Development and Training Assistant
- One representative from the Information Services Department
- Three representatives from the Health, Workforce, and Technical Studies Department
- Three representatives from the Academic Studies Department
- One representative from the Learning Center
- One representative from the Library
- The Provost (*ex officio*)
- The Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (*ex officio*)
- The Chair of the Curriculum Committee (*ex officio*)
- The President of the Faculty Senate (*ex officio*)
- Dean of Health, Workforce, and Technical Studies (*ex officio*)
- Dean of Academic Studies (*ex officio*)
- SGA representative (*ex officio*)

Members of the Distance Education Committee serve a minimum of a two-year term. Appointments are made by the appropriate director or dean. Members of the DEC can serve more than one term on the committee with permission from their director or dean. All voting members of the DEC must have completed the Blackboard Certification.

The DEC will meet monthly during the fall and spring semesters unless there are no pressing issues for the committee to address. The DEC will not meet during the summer semesters unless necessary. The Director of Learning Technology will coordinate meetings to best meet the committee's needs. The DEC will appoint a secretary to take minutes of the meetings. The committee minutes and materials will be provided to a closed group consisting of the current DEC on Blackboard.

#### Standards for Faculty

- Communication

- Faculty will communicate with students Monday through Friday with a 24-hour response time.
- Student emails that arrive after noon on Friday through Sunday will be answered Monday at the instructor's earliest convenience.
- Faculty should provide student clear communication guidelines in the course syllabus.
- Course Availability
  - Courses are made available to students two days prior to the official start of class.
  - Faculty should have, at a minimum, the syllabus and course textbook information posted when the course becomes available to students.
- Course Template
  - Faculty will use the approved Blackboard online course format template
- Grading
  - Faculty are charged with keeping an up-to-date gradebook. Faculty should update gradebooks each week and maintain clear guidelines for grading practices.
  - Student work should be graded within two weeks during a long semester.
  - Faculty should keep students informed concerning grading delays or other concerns.
  - Faculty are expected to use clear grading expectations, rubrics, and feedback methods to help students better understand grades earned.
- Proctoring Tests
  - Faculty should make students aware of any requirements regarding proctored tests on the first day of class.
- Faculty Online Contact
  - Faculty should be engaged in distance education courses, creating appropriate synchronous and/or asynchronous learning opportunities.
  - Faculty should check students' course progress weekly, and report students who are falling behind through the early alert system.
  - According to the LSCO Faculty Handbook, "Conference hours are to mirror the method of delivery (i.e., face-to face sections with on campus office hours, hybrid with on campus and virtual conference hours, and distance learning sections with virtual conference hours). During posted on campus conference hours, the faculty member will be available in his or her office or other designated, posted location. During posted virtual hours, the faculty member will be available via email, discussion board, or chat room."
- Archived Gradebooks:
  - All faculty will archive final gradebooks at the end of each semester. They will then submit the gradebook to the appropriate dean for the subject area.
- Online Teaching Certification:
  - All faculty wishing to teach a hybrid or a fully-online distance education course must complete the LSCO training certification, Online Bb Training.

## Distance Ed New Course Development Process

Prior to starting a new online course proposal, the instructor must be Blackboard certified.

- Course Development Process
  - Online Course Development Form is completed and signed by the Dean and the Director of Learning Technology.
  - The online course proposal is approved by the DEC.
  - After approval is granted, the instructor develops the entire course (content, assignments, etc.).
  - The DEC assigns three peer reviewers and the Director of Learning Technology to review the course.
  - Upon report from the afore-mentioned subcommittee, the DEC votes to approve or disapprove the course.
  - Any necessary revisions are made to the course.
  - Course is implemented.

Timelines and Checklists for the development and delivery of new online classes is included at Appendix A.

## Professional Development

The Office of Learning Technology will offer various professional development opportunities throughout each academic year. Additionally, the Director of Learning Technology will forward pertinent webinar and conference information to faculty who teach online.

Faculty who teach online should complete professional development each year. The confirmation of that professional development should be given to the appropriate dean and the Director of Learning Technology.

## Appendices

- A. Checklist and timeline for new course development
- B. Course evaluation rubric
- C. SACSCOC Guidelines for Curriculum and Instruction
- D. Best Practices from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- E. LSCO Distance Ed Best Practices
- F. Copyright Law and Recommendations
- G. Americans with Disabilities Act

Appendix A  
Checklist and Timeline for New Course Development

Prior to starting a new online course process, the instructor must have completed the LSCO Online BB Training.

1. Online Course Development Form is completed and signed by the appropriate dean and the director of learning technology.
2. The Distance Education Committee reviews and approves the course for development.
3. The instructor develops the entire course with due dates for the anticipated teaching semester.
4. The Distance Education Committee assigns three peer reviewers and the director of learning technology to review the course.
5. The review committee members bring their recommendation to the Distance Education Committee and the committee votes to approve or disapprove, also noting any revision that should be made.
6. Any necessary revisions are made.
7. The course is implemented.

<b>Timeline and Checklist: Summer and Fall</b>	<b>Fully Online, Hybrid, E-Pack Course</b>
December 31	Submit proposal for new course to be taught during the coming summer/fall semester. The dean for the subject area will submit the proposal to the director of learning technology.
January	The request is given to the Distance Education Committee to approve the instructor to proceed with course development
January-February	Develop the course in a Blackboard course shell
March 1 <sup>st</sup>	The course should be completed and ready for DEC approval process
March	DEC will review the course for specified and required criteria. The DEC will provide a decision to approve, disapprove, and/or suggest changes.
April 1 <sup>st</sup>	Any changes necessary for the course to meet approval are made and submitted to the appropriate dean and director of learning technology.
April	Final approval/disapproval is made by DEC, and instructor and appropriate dean are

	notified by the director of learning technology.
June-August	Teach the summer/fall course.

<b>Timeline and Checklist: Spring</b>	<b>Fully Online, Hybrid, E-Pack Course</b>
August 30	Submit proposal for new course to be taught during the coming summer/fall semester. The dean for the subject area will submit the proposal to the director of learning technology.
September	The request is given to the Distance Education Committee to approve the instructor to proceed with course development
September-October	Develop the course in a Blackboard course shell
November 1	The course should be completed and ready for DEC approval process
November	DEC will review the course for specified and required criteria. The DEC will provide a decision to approve, disapprove, and/or suggest changes.
November 15	Any changes necessary for the course to meet approval are made and submitted to the appropriate dean and director of learning technology.
November 30	Final approval/disapproval is made by DEC, and instructor and appropriate dean are notified by the director of learning technology.
January	Teach the summer/fall course.

Appendix B  
Course Evaluation Rubric

Lamar State College – Orange  
Distance Education Course Evaluation Checklist

Criteria	Exemplary (5 points)	Effective (3 points)	Needs Improvement / Not Present (1 point)	Summary Comments
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<b>Syllabus</b>				
Syllabus indicates that the instructor has set clearly-stated expectations for interaction with students via e-mail, phone, and/or office hours				
Course policies such as penalties for late work, plagiarism, make-up tests, etc., have been clearly stated in the syllabus				
Course objectives/outcomes are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to student learning activities and assessments				
Course schedule with dates for assignments is present				
Contact information for instructor is provided				

<b>Content</b>				
A course welcome page is present in the Content area or on the Announcements page				
When the Content area is opened, there is a clear, logical flow to the material present				
Course content—lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations, web links, graphics, videos, etc.—is present in this area				
Content is logically sequenced into manageable segments or chunks				
Resources needed for completing instructional activities are present				
Text is well-written with no spelling errors or typos, no grammar or punctuation errors				
Due dates for the entire course are available to students at the beginning of the course				
All date sensitive material reflects correct dates for the semester				

<b>Communication and Interaction</b>				
Instructor introduction is present				
Students are invited to introduce themselves to each other and the instructor				
The course uses a variety of technology tools that are appropriate and effective for facilitating communication				
Course utilizes discussion boards				
Course utilizes Collaborate				
Expectations for timely and regular feedback from the instructor are clearly stated (questions, e-mail, assignments)				
Expectations for interaction are clearly stated (netiquette, grade weighting, timing and frequency of contributions)				
Participation expectations are clearly defined				

<b>Design and Layout</b>				
A logical, consistent, and uncluttered layout is established. The course is easy to navigate (consistent color scheme and icon layout, related content organized together, self-evident titles)				
Large blocks of information are divided into manageable				
There is enough contrast between text and background for the content to be easily viewed				
Course is free of grammatical and spelling errors				
Text is formatted with titles, headings, and other styles to enhance readability and improve the structure of the document				
Flashing and blinking text are avoided				
A sans serif font with a standard size of at least 12 pt is used				
When possible, information is displayed in a linear format instead of as a table				
Slideshows use a predefined slide layout and include unique slide titles				
For all slideshows, there are simple, non-automatic transitions between slides				

<b>Assessment and Feedback</b>				
Course grading policies, including consequences of late submissions, are clearly stated in the course information area or the syllabus				
Course includes frequent and appropriate methods to assess students' mastery of content				
Criteria for the assessment of a graded assignment are clearly articulated (rubrics, exemplary work)				

Students are informed when a timed response is required. Proper lead time is provided to ensure there is an opportunity to prepare an accommodation				
Students have easy access to a well-designed and up-to-date gradebook				
More than one type of assessment strategy has been implemented				

Note: A user-friendly version of this document is available in the Distance Ed Blackboard organization space.

Appendix C  
SACSCOC Guidelines for Curriculum and Instruction

Follow this link to the SACSCOC Guidelines:

<https://sacscoc.org/pdf/DistanceCorrespondenceEducation.pdf>

## Appendix D

### Best Practices for Distance Education—Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Follow this link to the THECB Best Practices:

<http://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/sites/docid/cache/file/801171AA-D6F1-B416-71F569F8980FEA1D.pdf>

Appendix E  
LSCO Distance Education Best Practices

1. Keep Course Menu and Design Simple and Consistent
2. Create a Read Me First Document
3. Create a Welcome Video
4. Provide Clear Links to Blackboard Student Help and Orientation
5. Create an Inviting and Supportive Course Environment
6. Promote an Active Learning Environment
7. Model Effective Online Interaction
8. Sustain Students' Motivation
9. Be Present in the Course
10. Compose Clear Guidelines and Policies
11. Create reasonable time on task deadlines
12. Provide clear learning objectives tied to measurable assessments.

## Appendix F

### Copyright Law and Recommendations

It is important to LSCO that faculty understand copyright law and Blackboard. Blackboard does not exempt a faculty member from his or her responsibilities to adhere to copyright law because it is a password-protected program.

Faculty should observe the following guidelines:

1. Only post materials on the LMS for a non-profit, educational use.
2. Include proper attributions and citations for all posted materials.
3. Access to the LMS course materials should be limited to faculty and students enrolled in a particular course, and students should not have access to the course materials once the course is completed.
4. Web content should be directly linked rather than copied in Blackboard.
5. Carefully consider whether materials can be used under fair use. According to Rich Stim of Stanford University, "The four factors judges consider are:
  - a. the purpose and character of your use
  - b. the nature of the copyrighted work
  - c. the amount and substantiality of the portion taken, and
  - d. the effect of the use upon the potential market" ("Measuring Fair Use: The Four Factors").
6. Be careful! If in doubt, ask permission from the copyright holder.
7. Faculty are encouraged to use E-Reserves and work with the library to protect copyright issues.

## Appendix G

### Americans with Disabilities Act

Blackboard is in compliance with Section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act guidelines. Blackboard provides a text equivalent for every non-text element which allows screen readers and users to interact with the software. Blackboard documents are organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet, and the frames of Blackboard are titled with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation. Blackboard also continues to research and evaluate the current software and will release patches or upgrades as needed to comply.

In addition, LSCO currently uses Ally, the Blackboard ADA compliance feature. Faculty will be provided with training opportunities to learn more regarding ADA compliance. Since technology constantly evolves, so will ADA needs. The DEC and Director of Learning Technology will continue to address ADA issues and work to review guidelines put in place. Deans and the Director of Learning Technology will continue to monitor all classes to ensure ADA compliance.