



2024-2025

Distance Education

Policies & Procedures Handbook

A Guide to Effective Distributed Teaching and Learning Strategies

Contents

- Distance Education Mission..... 4
 - Introduction..... 4
 - Mission.....4
 - Goal.....5
 - Overview and Welcome..... 5
- Federal Requirements..... 6
 - State Authorization..... 6
 - Physical Presence..... 6
 - Distance Education Complaint Process for Out of State Students..... 6
 - National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements..... 7
 - Attendance.....7
 - After Week 1..... 8
- Student Authentication.....8
 - Secure Login.....8
 - Proctoring..... 9
- FERPA..... 10
 - FERPA Guidelines..... 10
- Academic Integrity..... 11
 - Best practices for Promoting Academic Integrity.....11
 - Alternative Assessments..... 11
- Accessibility.....12
 - Providing Extended Time for Online Quizzes and Exams..... 12
- Copyright.....13
 - The Fair Use Doctrine.....13
 - Copyright Compliance Checklist..... 14
 - Additional Copyright Guidelines..... 14
- eLearning Platforms..... 16
 - Instructional Delivery Platforms..... 16
 - Learning Management System..... 16

Quality Assurance in Courses.....	20
Faculty Information.....	21
Policies & Procedures.....	21
Delivering a DE Course.....	21
Administrative Policies.....	22
DE Course Management.....	23
Development.....	23
Effective Engagement and Communication.....	23
Meaningful Feedback.....	26
Final Examinations.....	26
Academic Integrity and Assessment Verification.....	27
Student Information.....	28
DE Topics in the Student Handbook.....	28
Grievance Process.....	28
Student FAQ's.....	28
Appendices.....	32
Appendix A - General Distance Education Guidelines.....	32
Appendix B – Interactive Matrix for DE Courses.....	34

Distance Education Mission

Introduction

Distance Education at Ranger College is a campus-wide resource for faculty members and departments interested in promoting teaching excellence, improving student learning outcomes, and encouraging ongoing professional development and scholarly engagement. Distance Education promotes and supports the innovative use of technology in teaching, advising, and mentoring students while emphasizing academic excellence within a supportive environment.

The Distance Education Policies & Procedures Handbook is intended to serve as a guide for faculty teaching:

- A. Hybrid courses – courses in which a majority of instruction is delivered in a structured alternative delivery format including, but not limited to, the Internet and/or other off-campus formats. Hybrid courses have synchronous online instruction.
- B. Web courses – courses in which instruction is delivered entirely online through Canvas, a learning management system that uses the Internet for delivery and interaction. Web courses are asynchronous and do not require instruction on campus.

While this handbook is designed to assist faculty in developing and teaching Distance Education and blended courses, it does not replace nor supersede the Ranger College Handbook. If you have any questions about the policies and procedures for Distance Education, please feel free to contact the office of Distance Education for further clarification or information.

Mission

The mission of Distance Education at Ranger College is to facilitate and promote the creation and delivery of quality Distance Education courses to meet the continuous and changing educational needs of students served by the College.

Goal

The goal of Distance Education is to offer the technology, flexibility, and opportunity that allow all students to excel.

Overview and Welcome

Distance Education (DE) focuses on utilizing technology and teaching methods to provide an effective teaching and learning experience to students outside the regular classroom and thereby increase flexibility and scheduling options. DE courses require that students have computer and Internet access that meet at least minimum technical requirements as defined by the RC. Additionally, DE courses require computer literacy and reading comprehension skills as well as self-discipline and motivation. Students register for Distance Education courses in the same way they register for traditional courses. Visit the RC Webpage for more information about the process.

Please take some time to familiarize yourself with this information. This is your guide for designing, delivering, and facilitating Distance Education classes and should be frequently referenced. Online instruction is hard work that requires a lot of time but it can be very rewarding for both the faculty members and students if done well. Hopefully, this manual will be a great help with achieving that rewarding experience.

This is to be viewed as a dynamic document that will be updated as Distance Education grows and technology changes. Should you have any questions or concerns, contact the Chair of Distance Education.

Federal Requirements

Distance Education Complaint Process for Out-of-State Students

Ranger College desires to resolve student grievances, complaints and concerns in an expeditious, fair and amicable manner. Students residing outside the state of Texas who desire to resolve a grievance regarding any Ranger College Web course(s) should follow the College's Student Grievance Procedure as outlined in the **Ranger College Catalog and Student Handbook**.

National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements

A voluntary process of state oversight of distance education has been created to redress these problems. The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (NC-SARA) has developed a voluntary agreement for member states and U.S. territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance-education courses and programs. This agreement is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state.

Key Points of SARA

- SARA replaced the SREB's Electronic Campus Regional Reciprocity Agreement (SECRRRA) for state authorization in January 2016.
- SARA is voluntary for states and institutions.
- SARA is administered by the four regional education compacts that accept applications from states in their regions. Once states are approved, they can begin to enroll eligible institutions.
- Membership is open to degree-granting postsecondary institutions from all sectors (public colleges and universities; independent institutions, both non-profit and for-profit) accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.
- Every college or university decides for itself whether to operate under SARA. Ranger College's SARA status is managed by the President's Office.

Attendance

According to [34 CFR section 668.22](#), which addresses the treatment of Title IV funds, faculty members teaching an online course must record attendance within the first week of class by demonstrating that students have participated in a face-to-face class activity or were otherwise engaged in an academically-related online activity.

Options to Comply with Attendance Requirement

Physically attending a class where there is an opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students

Completion of an initial assignment regarding academic policies, introduction discussion board posting or graded assignment

Submitting an academic assignment

Completing an exam, an interactive tutorial, or computer-assisted instruction

Attending a study group that is assigned by the institution

Participating in an online discussion about academic matters

Initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course.

Activities that Can NOT be used for Attendance

- Logging into an online class without active participation
- Participating in academic counseling or advisement

After Week 1

After the first week, the student's "attendance record" should be based on the student's meeting course requirements such as submitting assignments or communicating with the instructor as outlined in the course syllabus. It is encouraged that students be given weekly assignments based on requirements stated in the course syllabus.

Weekly attendance is encouraged and, just as in traditional courses, if a student does not meet attendance requirements as stated in the course syllabus, the student is encouraged to officially withdraw from the course. Failure to officially withdraw from the course could result in a grade of F and adversely impact financial aid.

Options to comply with weekly attendance requirements include:

- Assignments
- Quizzes
- Discussions
- Exams

Student Authentication

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires institutions that offer distance education courses or programs to have processes in place to authenticate that the student who registers in such a course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and who receives the academic credit.

Secure Login

To verify the identity of students accessing online resources, Ranger College assigns students a unique identification number referred to as the Canvas ID. The Canvas ID is the login ID for a variety of online services offered through the College, including the following:

The Student E-mail System, where students receive announcements, notifications from the LMS, etc.

The learning management system (Canvas), where enrolled students can access course materials and course grades

Proctoring

Online Proctored Assessment Policy

The midterm and final exams for online courses must be taken under the supervision of a qualified, independent third-party witness or the instructor.

- Mid-term/Final exams are not to be administered before the designated testing week.
- At least 25% of the final grade must be based on the proctored Mid-term and Final exams or at least two proctored assessments.
- Proctor forms must be completed by the deadline provided by the VPI before each proctored exam. A universal password will be provided.
- Proctors must complete proctor training contract before administering exams.
- Students must provide one form of identification before testing (Driver's License, Student ID, Passport, State ID)
- It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with the instructor if they are unable to test onsite.

Non-Proctored Examinations

Non-proctored or take-home exams are permitted at the discretion of the instructor. Non-proctored exams enable students to take the exam at a location and time of their choosing within the bounds of a specific date range or other specified timeframe. Students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the academic honesty policy described in the [College's Student Handbook](#).

Students should plan to take exams during the timeframe specified by the instructor. This timeframe must be specified in the course materials. The exam must be completed and submitted per instructor's instructions.

Proctored Examinations

A proctored exam is a supervised exam. Proctoring is a highly effective method for promoting academic integrity, authenticating students, and is an acceptable testing requirement for both hybrid and Web courses. Recommended proctoring solutions include:

- Traditional proctoring at Ranger College's Testing Center
- Proctoring at a location that is preapproved by the instructor (DC Only)
- Electronic surveillance through the use of recording technology such as the College's Respondus Monitor

In circumstances where a student is unable to come to campus to complete a proctored exam, it is the student's responsibility to coordinate with the course instructor to get special permission to use video or a third-party as a proctor. Relatives or friends, no matter what their position, may not serve as a proctor. Persons currently enrolled in Ranger College courses may not proctor other Ranger College students.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

The four primary rights for students afforded under FERPA are:

- The right to review their own educational records
- The right to seek amendment of their own education records
- The right to limit disclosure of their own education records
- The right to file a complaint

Compliance with FERPA requires that student information be protected and not shared with a third party. There are additional common mistakes that instructors make though, which violate students' information privacy.

Instructors should not share the following student information without explicit permission from the student:

- E-mail addresses
- Course work
- Social media information
- E-portfolios and resumes
- Individual or group capstone projects, reports, and written assignments
- Non-directory information (photographs, date and/or place of birth, major field of study, dates of attendance at the school, grade level, degrees or honors received, all or part of the student ID or other unique personal identifier)

Express written consent for information sharing is not required if:

- Students are given prior notice of course posting requirements and then post their own work
- Students are not identified and there are no grades or evaluative comments
- Posted work is available only to members of the class

FERPA Guidelines

Before using any information outside of Canvas, get explicit permission from the student

Avoid posting (or requiring) students' directory information in a course

You may not release non-directory or personally identifiable information about a student to a third party (parents included) without the student's written authorization or consent to release it to a specific individual or organization

Avoid emailing student-specific information (grades, assignment critiques, or other non-directory information) to an email address not issued by the College

Use the Canvas Grade Center and Course Messages

Academic Integrity

Take appropriate measures at the course level but whatever those are, make sure that they are fostering a culture of academic integrity.

Best Practices for Promoting Academic Integrity

Provide an academic honesty policy within the online learning environment and discuss it early in the course then require the students to sign it and turn it in.

Require student engagement with the academic integrity policy. For example:

- Ask students for their input on how to create a community of integrity at the start of the course. This establishes the students as stakeholders in the community and the process of its formation.
- Develop and ask students to commit to a class honor code.
- Require students to read and sign an agreement to adhere to the campus academic integrity policy.
- Write a letter to students about integrity and post it in the course.
- Ask students to restate the academic integrity policy (this can also be used as a writing sample to use when grading and reviewing student work).
- Ask students to reflect on the academic integrity policy in the discussion board.
- Include a lesson on avoiding plagiarism.

Have assignments and activities in which appropriate sharing and collaboration is essential to successful completion. Foster a community of integrity by choosing authentic learning tasks that require group cohesiveness and effort. For example, focus assignments on distinctive, individual, and non-duplicative tasks or on what individual students self-identify as their personal learning needs.

Provide students with a course or course lesson on research and/or study skills. Work with library staff to design assignments and prepare materials on plagiarism and research techniques.

Include an ethical decision-making case study within the course.

Alternative Assessments

The use of a multi-faceted assessment strategy is a research-based best practice for promoting both academic integrity and student authentication. Frequent assessments including interactive discussions,

writing assignments, quizzes, capstone projects, group work, and online exams serve to familiarize instructors with students' comprehension and writing styles thus enabling them to better authenticate the work of their online students. Options for alternative assessments include:

Asking follow-up questions to assignments such as, "Expand upon this statement you made," "Tell me why you chose this phrase, description, or reference," and "Expand upon the ideas behind this reference"

Selecting one or two difficult concepts from a submitted assignment and ask students to restate/rewrite the information

Requiring students to share key learning by doing a self-reflection on an assignment in the discussion board

Accessibility

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 states in part, "Electronic information and data must be equally accessible to individuals with and without disabilities." In building online course materials it is important to bear in mind that as a public college receiving federal funding, Ranger College is required to meet Section 508 standards for Web-based information. Conforming to these standards requires that materials that could potentially pose problems for students with disabilities need to be altered to accommodate full access. DE instructors are responsible for ensuring that their courses comply with this federal law.

Examples of materials that need to be altered in order to be accessible include:

- Videos that have audio need captioning and/or text transcripts
- Audio files need text transcripts
- Images must have alternate text or descriptions set for them to convey meaning
- Color alone cannot be used to communicate information
- HTML tables should use the <th> tags to designate column and row headers
- Content that flickers or flashes should not be used
- Required applets, plug-ins, etc. should include links
- Unless specifically necessary to the course instruction, content should be posted in universal formats so it can be viewed in any browser and doesn't require opening a specific desktop application
- Electronic forms and worksheets should include detailed text directions
- Students should be given advance notice of timed tests so they can contact disability services if needed

Providing Extended Time for Online Quizzes and Exams

Instructors may receive notification from Student Services that a student requires extended time on in-class and Web-based tests. The *Moderate This Quiz* option in Canvas allows an instructor to provide extended time for an individual or group so only one test needs to be created.

Copyright

Copyright is of special concern in education because faculty members continually deal with the creation and communication of ideas and information embodied in copyrighted works. As both creators and users of copyrighted materials, it is vital that faculty, students, and staff understand copyright law and the rights and responsibilities afforded them under it. This is especially true as we expand our use of technologies and digital resources, which challenge the long-standing educational exemptions and interpretations.

Copyright compliance in a course is ultimately the responsibility of the instructor delivering that course. The following information is intended to aid with compliance but copyright questions are best addressed by library staff.

The Fair Use Doctrine

Copyright law permits some "fair use" of copyrighted materials without written permission of the owner. To fall under "fair use," a majority of the four factors of fair use should be met. If the analysis indicates that the use meets only one or two of the factors, then it is up to the user to get written permission from the owner.

Guidelines for Determining Fair Use:

- *The purpose and character of the use, including whether it is for commercial use or for nonprofit educational purposes* - In evaluating the purpose and character of the use, courts favor non-profit educational uses over commercial ones. However, there are instances in which commercial uses would qualify as fair use and other instances where educational uses would not meet the criteria.
- *The nature of the copyrighted work* - This factor focuses on the work itself. The legislative history states that there is a definite difference between reproducing a short news note and reproducing a full musical score because of the nature of the work. Moreover, some works, such as standardized tests and workbooks, will never qualify for fair use because by their nature they are meant to be consumed. Uses of factual works such as scientific articles are more likely to fall within fair use.
- *The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyright-protected work as a whole* - This factor considers how much of the copyrighted work was used in comparison to the original work as a whole. Generally, the larger the amount used, the less likely a court will find the use to be a fair use. Amount and substantiality is also a qualitative test; that is, even though one takes only a small portion of a work, it still may be too much if what is taken is the "heart of the work."
- *The effect of the use on the potential market for or value of the copyright-protected work* - Courts use this factor to determine whether the use of a work is likely to result in an economic loss that the copyright holder is otherwise entitled to receive. It looks at whether the nature of the use competes with or diminishes the potential market for the use that the owner is

already exploiting or can reasonably be expected soon to exploit. Even if the immediate loss is not substantial, courts have found that, should the loss become great if the practice were to become widespread, then this factor favors the copyright holder.

While these four factors are helpful guides, they do not clearly identify uses that are or are not fair use. Fair use is not a straightforward concept; therefore, any fair use analysis must be conducted on a case-by-case basis considering all four factors and the circumstances of the situation at hand.

Examples of fair use:

- Quotation of short passages in a scholarly or technical work for illustration or clarification of the author's observations
- Spontaneous and unexpected reproduction of material for classroom use—for example, where an article in the morning's paper is directly relevant to that day's class topic
- A parody that includes short portions of a work
- A summary of an address or article, which may include quotations of short passages of the copyright-protected work

Copyright Compliance Checklist

Material may be posted to a password-protected learning management system (LMS) such as Canvas WITHOUT PERMISSION only if the following conditions are met:

- The instructor owns the copyright. NOTE: Authors of academic papers are often required to transfer copyright to publishers, and therefore retain no rights in the work. In this case, permission to post a digital copy must be obtained from the publisher
- The College has a license in place that permits posting to an LMS (examples include library databases and NBC Learn)
- A publisher has provided digital supplements (ePacks, course packs, course cartridges) with a textbook and the license explicitly permits posting to an LMS, or WRITTEN permission has been obtained from the publisher
- The material has been obtained under a Creative Commons license or from Open Access sources
- Creative Commons: <http://creativecommons.org/>
- Open Access Journals: <http://www.doaj.org/>
- The material is in the public domain. Material enters the Public Domain 50 years from the death of the author(s) (or translator)
- Federal documents and publications are NOT eligible to be copyrighted so they may be used without written permission

Additional Copyright Guidelines

Access to audio/video recordings that are on the public Internet, such as those found on YouTube, should be provided using a link rather than by uploading a file directly to the LMS

- Access to online resources is provided via links rather than uploading the items directly into the LMS
- Published material that is not covered by a suitable license, not in the public domain, and not available through a Creative Commons or Open Source provider, should not be uploaded to the course
- Copies of published worksheets or other materials intended as “consumables” by students (i.e. study guides, workbooks, etc.), or any copyrighted book or video in its entirety, should not be included in the LMS without obtaining appropriate written permission
- After ensuring that copyrighted material can be legally used in a course, the instructor should include a citation of the original source and a copyright notice

eLearning Platforms

Instructional Delivery Platforms

All Ranger College instructors have access to a variety of technologies to aid in the delivery of online instruction. The following policies and procedures pertain to the use and administration of these systems.

The Ranger College Computer Usage Policy subsumes these policies. Furthermore, pursuant to the Electronic and Communications Privacy Act of 1989, Title 18, United States Code, Sections 2510 and following, notice is hereby given that there are no facilities provided by the College that guarantee the confidentiality of files. The computing system administrator, and his or her designates, may have the ability to view all messages and files of any user. However, it is not the routine policy of the administrator to view others' files, and the intention is to keep files private, even though such privacy cannot be guaranteed.

The Information Technologies (IT) and Distance Education (DE) departments administer and support the technology platforms that are used to deliver online course materials.

Learning Management System

Canvas is the learning management system used for the delivery of instruction from Ranger College. Canvas is a Web-based platform that provides faculty and students with features including:

- Course content for posting articles, assignments, and resources
- Calendar for posting due dates for assignments and tests
- Folders for organizing content
- Assessments for administering quizzes and exams online
- Assignments for posting assignment areas for student submissions and online grading
- Grade Center for posting grades on Canvas for students to view

Login Credentials

Canvas uses Ranger College email credentials to login.

Upgrades

Technology upgrades that require significant downtime are conducted between academic terms with a minimum of one week's notice. Canvas is updated constantly every 3 weeks.

Technical Requirements

To access the Canvas system, users need a computer that meets the minimum technical requirements defined on the Instructure website, [Technical Requirements for Distance Learning at Ranger College](#).

Course Creation and Enrollment Management

Courses are automatically created based on information from Jenzabar. Course creation and instructor enrollment for each semester is coordinated by the Distance Education and IT department.

Course Creation: Courses are automatically created based on information from Jenzabar. Course creation and instructor enrollment for the new semester occurs one week prior to registration opening for that semester.

Student Enrollment: Student enrollment data for Canvas courses is imported from Jenzabar one week prior to the beginning of the term. Enrollment information is then updated every four hours through the drop/add period at which time enrollment updates are run on a limited basis.

Dropped Students: Students may drop a course until the end of the add-drop period for the semester. After a student drops a course, they are removed from their Canvas courses.

Withdrawn Students: Students may withdraw from a course from the first day after the add-drop period through the last day to withdraw as identified by the College. Students who withdraw from a course are set to conclude their enrollment in their Canvas courses.

Course Management

Course Merge: For convenience, multiple sections of a single course may be merged into one course shell in Canvas. The instructor of record for a course can submit the merge request to the IT Help Desk allowing 3 days for completion. Faculty may also be trained to do this for their own courses.

Course Availability: All courses are automatically set to the "unpublished" status when they are created. All courses should be "published" to students 24 hours prior to the beginning of the session in which they are being delivered. Instructors have the ability to select the courses they wish to display on their course lists in Canvas so they can have easy access to courses even if the course is unavailable.

Tracking and Usage

All instructional delivery platforms used by the College have tracking capabilities and can generate usage reports to show logins and access. Information Technology and Distance Education staff may check usage statistics for any course and user at the College. Data will only be shared with authorized personnel.

Faculty members have access to the activity data for any Canvas course and any user enrolled in a Canvas course for which the faculty member has instructor permissions. Faculty members may not check activity data for users enrolled in courses for which they have no instructor permissions.

Quality Assurance in Courses

The technologies available to Ranger College faculty are aimed at improving teaching and learning. In order to assure that these technologies are being appropriately integrated into the curriculum to achieve the desired outcomes, the College has developed a quality assurance program for Distance Education courses. All DE courses need to show evidence of sound and varied use of technology and are subjected to a formal evaluation.

Accessibility

The objective of the DE accessibility requirement is to assure that the College's Web-based course materials are available to all who attempt to access them, in full compliance with the legal and ethical responsibility to do so, and consistent with the protocols of Universal Design.

Faculty members posting any instructional materials online should plan to assure accessibility. Accessibility is evaluated as part of the course review process.

Section 508 compliance

Section 508, an amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, requires that electronic information and technology resources are accessible to people with disabilities, including employees and members of the public. This means that Ranger College faculty and staff are required to ensure that all materials students need to access for a course be made accessible. This is true with all course materials whether used in a face-to-face class or placed in an online learning environment. These materials include, but are not limited to, MS Word documents, PowerPoint Presentations, PDF documents, etc.

Cross-platform

To make the most of their online learning experience, students are provided with several technical requirements. A list of these requirements is provided on the Instructure Webpage. In order to assure that students can access course material, faculty need to make sure that the resources they select can be accessed according to the technical requirements that are provided to the students.

Faculty Information

Policies & Procedures

Delivering a DE Course

The appropriateness and viability of Distance Education courses and programs must be carefully considered in the planning process. Distance Education should be aligned with the College's strategic goals and mission. In order to accomplish this, Distance Education courses and programs must be vetted through an internal review process.

Approval

Faculty members must obtain approval before delivering an online course. A faculty member can only be approved to deliver a DE course that has already been reviewed and approved.

Distance Education Training

All new distance learning instructors must complete the "Growing with Canvas" course.

Administrative Policies

Much of the information in the Distance Education Policies and Procedures manual is intended to help guide faculty in the development and maintenance of new and existing Distance Education courses and to provide an overview of the procedures for managing Distance Education at Ranger College. This information does not supersede official College policy and procedure statements.

Faculty Evaluations

Faculty and program evaluations are conducted in accordance with the Ranger College Personnel Handbook. Evaluation, both summative and formative, is an integral part of the instructional process at Ranger College, affecting both personnel and students. Both full- and part-time faculty are evaluated on a regular basis by students and supervisors. Students' evaluations of their courses and instructors are conducted through an online survey system.

Faculty Load

Distance Education courses utilize teaching methods and technology aimed at delivering instruction to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom. Faculty may teach Distance Education as part of their regular load or as overloads. The Distance Education portion of a full-time instructor's normal teaching load of 15-16 credit hours should be determined by the Division Dean, in consultation with the Dean for Instruction and Student Success. This policy shall

apply during Fall and Spring semesters. The policy shall also apply during Summer semesters except where it conflicts with any rotation or seniority policies that may be in effect. Regardless of the number of Distance Education courses a faculty member teaches, it does not alter the requirement that a minimum of 35 hours a week must be spent at the College's campus or online office hours (indicated below) as part of the duties and responsibilities of the faculty member.

Office Hours

Faculty are required to work a total of 35 hours a week.

Copyright Compliance

It is the policy of Ranger College to abide by all applicable laws governing computer software use, privacy, copyright, and recognition of intellectual property.

All materials associated with a course are the responsibility of the designated course instructor. Faculty can get more information on copyright law for Distance Education from the government site, [Copyright and Digital Distance Education](#).

Intellectual Property

The College shall own copyrighted or trademarked materials or patented inventions developed totally or partially on college time with the use of college materials or facilities or with college funding (State Board Policy 321.01). Under certain circumstances and pursuant to this policy, royalties received by the College may be disbursed to the author according to Ranger College Policy Concerning Supplemental Compensation of Instructors for Contributions to Copyrighted, Trademarked or Patented Works. A portion of the college's proceeds shall be allocated to Distance Education.

DE Course Management

As distance education has flourished, faculty have begun to realize that one of the most daunting parts of teaching online is managing the course. The challenge is particularly serious because without efficient and effective management, keeping students motivated and actively engaged in learning is virtually impossible.

Development

Development of new Distance Education courses and the revision of existing courses is the responsibility of the faculty member(s) assigned to the courses and their respective Dean.

Effective Engagement and Communication

Designing for interaction and communication is a vital factor when developing a DE course. It is important to consider the methods and frequency of communication as well as the message and tone. Good communication is a key factor in student retention and success because students who feel engaged in a course are more likely to complete the course and report a positive distance education experience. Interaction may occur via telephone, email, electronic chats, on-site meetings, video teleconferencing, or other methods. Appropriate interaction for a course depends upon the course delivery mode and the technologies used by the faculty member.

Technology

The Interactivity Matrix in Appendix B was developed to assist faculty with identifying technologies and methodologies to meet their course interaction and communication goals. It identifies various options available to instructors based on the nature of an interaction (instructor to student, student to instructor, student to student) as well as the type of interaction (i.e. asynchronous versus synchronous).

Techniques

Faculty are responsible for instructing students and managing their online courses with appropriate and innovative teaching techniques to engage students in active learning in order to achieve desired learning outcomes.

Moderating Discussions

Asynchronous discussion forums are a mechanism for communication, collaboration and interaction in an online environment. They allow learners to have learning experiences beyond the course content by providing the learner with interactions that are vital for building 'virtual-relationships' among the learners.

By moderating course discussion forums, a DE instructor can help ensure that a respectful social community is established and maintained for a DE course. For example, instructors can moderate a synchronous chat session by specifying a specific date and time that the session will be held. The

instructors can moderate and facilitate the session, guide and direct the discussion, offer feedback, pose questions, etc. An instructor can make this part of the overall participation grade a student receives for the course.

The following list includes tips and techniques for moderating discussion forums within an online course environment so that it yields greater student participation and highly engaging interactions.

Clarify the objectives and the time frames for contributing and responding to messages in the forum

Create engaging activities that encourage and motivate students to use the discussion forum

Insist on the use of proper grammar and spelling when students participate in the discussion forum

Divide large classes into smaller discussion groups

Establish guidelines for communication that include respect and constructive feedback while making it clear that sarcasm and negativity will not be tolerated

Indicate what your response time will be and stick with it so that students don't feel like you are not involved

Because moderating discussions can be quite an onerous task, teach students moderating skills as and rotate the moderator schedule

Instead of replying to each discussion posting, reply to a prominent posting from each student

Students whose postings do not receive much response from other users may feel discouraged.

Thus, the instructor needs to identify these and provide tips to increase discussion among a thread such as asking users to reply to other users' responses to the original thread, to post specific content, to use quotes from previous postings in a response, and to use examples and references in postings

Engaging Students with Interactivity and Variety

Incorporate variety into online instruction to keep interest and motivation high. Use relevant visuals or sounds to illustrate points, and if possible, bring in external references that reinforce key concepts such as a website, podcast or YouTube presentation of an expert in a specific area. Other ideas to promote interaction are to have students do some research and find some reference information which illustrates a course concept then share that information in the course discussion area.

Provide information on an opposing viewpoint or perspective which might represent another way to think about a subject, pose questions which will students are required to look at issues from a multitude of perspectives, or provide feedback on student or group projects. These are just a few examples of ways instructors can engage students.

Establish a Social Community with Student-Centered Activities

In addition to designing interaction for students, a DE instructor must create and foster an environment, atmosphere, or context in which those interactions can take place. This type of atmosphere is one which encourages social interaction among students and provides a respectful online environment for students to feel comfortable interacting with one another and where they can feel part of a community.

For example, having students post a personal introduction to the course's discussion board can help students learn about each other and promote a sense of community. Community is also fostered when students collaborate on group projects, participate in social networking, interview one another, or interact in a cyber cafe. The instructor can incorporate this into the class by posting topics for discussions and so on and giving participation points to students who post and respond to relevant course topics.

Meaningful Feedback

Providing feedback in an online environment can be challenging and time-consuming but is absolutely necessary because while students in face-to-face classes have many opportunities for informal feedback, this is not the case within an online environment.

Recommended Feedback Guidelines

For feedback to be effective, it should be provided to students in a timely manner. Feedback at the beginning of the course is usually focused on simple items such as expectations and getting to know the online environment. More specific and meaningful feedback can be provided as students undertake the formative and summative assessment tasks during the course. Below is a list of tips for improving online feedback.

- Be descriptive with your feedback
- Be specific rather than general with your feedback and focus on the positives
- If negative feedback is required, don't provide it in an online environment that other students access (for example, send a course message to an individual student rather than use a discussion post)
- When giving constructive feedback that is negative, provide alternative strategies where possible
- Provide feedback as soon as possible so that the student the assignment is still fresh in the student's head and the feedback can be applied to the next assignment
- Be mindful of the impact of your feedback on the student
- Where possible, link the feedback to the course learning outcomes or objectives
- By providing regular informal feedback, your students should not be surprised by the results of formal assessment feedback
- Formative feedback is often more effective than summative feedback

Final Examinations

Specific times for final examinations in traditional courses are published in the schedule of classes. The Faculty Handbook indicates that each faculty member must adhere to the published examination schedule and is not permitted to change the published class examination schedule without prior written approval from the Vice President of Instruction. Because hybrid courses do have a face-to-face element, faculty teaching hybrid sections should adhere to the same final examination schedule provided for traditional courses. Because online courses do not have a face-to-face element, faculty teaching online sections do not have a specific time for their final exams but should give the exam during the final examination period published in the schedule of classes.

Academic Integrity and Assessment Verification

Faculty are responsible for defining the standards to measure student success in their courses in accordance with College and department policies. Delivery of these assessments, however, must be aligned with the College's policies for being HEOA compliant. The Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA), passed into law in 2008, included a requirement that schools take adequate measures to ensure that the student enrolled in an online class is the student doing the coursework.

Instructors of online courses from Ranger College may require that students complete proctored exams. Approved proctoring methods include:

- technology-enabled remote proctoring
- instructor approved third party proctor
- Ranger College academic testing center

Testing Services

Midterm and Final testing will be held on each campus. The testing centers are open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., no exams will be started after 3:00 p.m. Testing is done on a first come/first served basis.

SITE	TESTING ROOM LOCATION	TESTING CONTACT
Ranger Campus	Room 157	Stan Feaster, , sfeaster@rangercollege.edu
Early Campus	B209	Alta Yeats, 325-203-5011, ayeats@rangercollege.edu
Erath Campus	RM# 115 Wade Hall	Cortney Kolb, ckolb@rangercollege.edu

Plagiarism-Detection Services

TurnItIn is a plagiarism prevention service built into Canvas. This service helps faculty prevent plagiarism by detecting unoriginal content in student papers. In addition to acting as a plagiarism deterrent, it also has features designed to aid in educating students about plagiarism and the importance of proper citation of any borrowed content.

Student Information

DE Topics in the Student Handbook

Grievance Process

Students who are enrolled in any course at Ranger College who might have a complaint about the course or an experience with Ranger College, can follow the College's standard grievance procedure:

Ranger College desires to resolve student grievances, complaints and concerns in an expeditious, fair and amicable manner. Students residing outside of the State of Texas while attending BSCC who desire to resolve a grievance should follow the College's Student Grievance Procedure as outlined in the "Ranger College Catalog and Student Handbook".

Student FAQ's

How do students register for Distance Education classes?

Students register for Distance Education classes in the same way that they register for any other class. That is, students apply to the College, take any required placement tests, meet with an advisor as necessary, and register for classes using Campus Connect. For more information about the admission and registration process, visit the College's Web page.

Can students take both Distance Education classes and traditional face-to-face classes?

Students can take any "mixture" of hybrid, online, and traditional courses.

Are Distance Education classes more difficult than traditional classes?

Distance Education classes are the same as classes conducted in a traditional classroom in terms of objectives, readings, and assessments. The primary difference between distance and traditional courses is the way the instruction in the class is delivered. Distance Education classes offer, of course, greater flexibility for those students who work, have families, and take other classes.

Can Distance Education students use Ranger College campus resources?

All resources available to Ranger College students are available to Distance Education students.

Are Distance Education students eligible for financial aid?

Yes. Financial aid grants, loans, scholarships, and Veterans benefits may be used for Distance Education classes. Students should contact Student Services for more information.

Can students transfer Distance Education classes to another institution?

Yes. Ranger College's Distance Education courses are fully accredited, just as are its traditional courses, and so they can be transferred to another institution. For more information about transferring from Ranger College to another, please visit the Texas Common Core Numbering Systems Website at <https://www.tccns.org>. It is, of course, the student's responsibility to check with the institution to which he/she wants to transfer for full details.

What courses does Ranger College offer in Distance Education format?

The [Ranger College Website](#) may be checked for a detailed list of DE courses.

What if a student needs assistance with a DE course?

Students having academic trouble with a course should contact their instructor. Students experiencing technical difficulties should contact Canvas support at 1-844-920-2528 available 24/7.

Appendices

Appendix A - General Distance Education Guidelines

This document is for the purpose of providing “guidelines.” The Dean of Instruction and Distance Education Chair may grant exceptions to any or all of these guidelines.

1. Distance Education courses offered at Ranger College may be produced in a variety of ways.
2. The Dean of Instruction, in consultation with the office of Distance Education and the appropriate Division Dean, has final authority in deciding the courses to be included in the Distance Education Program.
3. Scheduling and assignment of courses is managed at the department level. When scheduling and assigning Distance Education courses, the following policies must be adhered to.
 - a. All instructors teaching Web or Hybrid sections, including weekend or mini-sessions, must be DE approved.
 - b. All DE courses must be delivered using an approved course shell.
 - c. According to state board policy, instructional content developed by Ranger College instructors for teaching courses at Ranger College belongs to the institution.
4. Distance Education courses will be subject to the institutional summer rotation and selection policy but must comply with the scheduling and assignment policies for Distance Education identified above.
5. The College shall own copyrighted or trademarked materials or patented inventions developed totally or partially on college time with the use of college materials or facilities or with college funding (State Board Policy 321.01).
6. Students taking Distance Education courses will be surveyed periodically to assess their perceptions of the quality of the program.
7. Faculty that teach in Distance Education and support personnel involved in Distance Education will be surveyed periodically to assess their perceptions of Distance Education.

8. Faculty designing courses to be included in Distance Education may do so as part of their regular job responsibilities, on their personal time, or a combination of these. Interested parties should review applicable documents in the Personnel Handbook.

9. Distance Education courses must maintain sufficient enrollment to be taught and are subject to the same course deletion policies as are all courses offered by the College.

Appendix B - Interactivity Matrix for DE Courses

Type of Communication	Faculty-to-Student	Student-to-Faculty	Student-to-Student
One Way (Asynchronous)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Canvas ● Relay Videos ● YouTube Content ● Narrated PowerPoints ● Announcements ● Online Surveys ● Email ● Activities ● Exercises ● Web Links 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online Surveys ● Discussion Boards ● Email ● Relay Videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discussion Boards ● Relay Videos ● YouTube Content ● Email
One Way (Synchronous)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moderated Live Chat in Canvas ● Collaboration ● Instant Messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Instant Messaging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Instant Messaging
Two Way (Asynchronous)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email ● Respondus Secure Exams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Voice Email ● Voice Boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group Projects ● Voice Discussion Boards
Two Way (Synchronous)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🔗 Video conference 🔗 Teleconferences 🔗 Canvas Live Voice Chat 🔗 Canvas Virtual Classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🔗 Teleconferences 🔗 Canvas Live Voice Chat 🔗 Canvas Virtual Classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🔗 Canvas Live Voice Chat 🔗 Teleconferences