



Tips for Implementing Distance Education

Institutions may consider these areas when developing and improving their online instructional delivery. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of online instructional delivery considerations.

Admissions

- Assess potential student's ability to succeed in a distance education environment; assure their consistent access to necessary technology (internet and computer access) prior to enrollment.
- Specify refund policies applying to distance education.

Student Support Services

- Make available online library/learning resources for 100% online programs.
- Provide reliable and timely technical support (24/7) to train and troubleshoot for both students and faculty.
- Securely store student records including dates of major assignments' submission and the institutional feedback subsequently received.
- Provide an online learning orientation program.

Course Design

- Maintain control of the curriculum when it is sourced from a third-party provider.
- Use assessments appropriate for a distance education environment.
- Instruct only in subject matter appropriate for delivery through distance education methods (consider how theory may work but labs and practicum may not, for example).
- Include interactive content.
- Require students to achieve outcomes in order to successfully progress through the program.
- Regularly review and update curriculum and instructional materials.
- Employ technology that consistently supports effective delivery of the curriculum.
- Seek regular feedback from faculty and students.
- Measure and document the amount of time it takes the average student to achieve learning outcomes as a means for assigning academic units of measurement.
- Ensure online programs are comparable in rigor to those offered via direct instruction.
- In competency-based programs, ensure student work, learning objectives and corresponding assessments are comparable in rigor to traditionally structured programs.
- Ensure curriculum observes accessibility standards.
- Ensure curriculum developers are adequately trained and appropriately qualified.

Faculty

- Employ online instruction faculty qualified to teach using distance education methods (in addition to their meeting the education and experience requirements).
- Make sure faculty receive adequate training to be proficient in the specific online platform(s) used.
- Provide faculty with quality professional development on the specifics of teaching online.
- Maintain clear and reasonable policies regarding faculty workload; ensure faculty are sufficient in number to achieve stated outcomes.
- Provide faculty with ongoing technical, design, and production assistance and support.
- Ensure faculty provide timely, quality feedback and assistance to students—ideally even hosting regular virtual office hours.

Tips for faculty delving into online delivery for the first time:

- Define your class requirements for delivery at a distance.
- Use the syllabus as your guide and include distance education or online information.
- Stay focused on content you want to deliver and information students need to retain.
- Use video, email and phone check-ins.
- Produce a webinar of class lecture.
- When recording from home or office, find a space that will be uninterrupted, well lit, and have good audio.
- Don't forget to record sessions for later viewing.
- Remember to provide extra explanation and instruction as you would if you were in class.
- Post resources in LMS, an online classroom, or an online document management system.
- Link resources available in your online library or on the web.
- Add a discussion forum—even if it's just in a shared online document initially.
- Don't do it alone—get support from institution staff.
- Know that motivating students online is more challenging.
- Don't reduce standards or “dumb down” the material.
- When posting videos, ensure they at least have machine-generated closed captioning (it's important to adhere to accessibility standards).
- Use text, visuals, and audio.
- Don't assume students understand resources (explain each resource & reinforce connections).
- Vary modes of delivery.
- Use lots of images, graphics and video.
- Allow for student feedback and communication amongst students (chat).
- Require collaboration.
- Remind students of due dates.
- Don't rely on exams that ought to be proctored; consider the variety of ways to demonstrate competency.
- Be patient with the learning curve (technology and adjustment period).

This list was compiled in part by using the National Association of State Administrators and Supervisors of Private Schools (NASAPS) Distance Education Best Practices Checklist (2020) and lecture notes from Tom Thibodeau's 3/26/2020 presentation through Online Learning Consortium entitled *How to Survive your Hurried Switch to Online Learning Using UDL (Universal Design for Learning)*.