Shenandoah University
Distance, Hybrid, and Blended Education Guidelines
(A Checklist follows)

Academic Excellence

In its continuing efforts to provide rich, high quality learning environments, Shenandoah University distance, hybrid and blended courses shall be highly interactive, shall promote a community of learners, and shall maintain academic integrity.

Definitions

Distance education, distance course: shall refer to any course in which the instruction is more than 50% online. (SACS standard [1])

Hybrid course: shall refer to a course in which less than 50% of the instruction is taught online.

Blended course: shall refer to a course in which some students attend face-to-face, while others attend from a remote site.

Synchronous: learning activities occur at the same time.

Asynchronous: learning activities do not occur at the same time.

Regulatory Requirements

Courses must adhere to federal requirements (Department of Education), state requirements (SCHEV), and regional accreditation requirements (SACS). In addition, some programs may be required to meet disciplinary specific accreditation requirements.

Federal/SACS Requirements

Identification of Students

Faculty are required to utilize some means to identify students participating in distance courses. This requirement can be met by having students login to a university system using a university issued login and password, by conducting proctored exams, or through some technology that verifies student identity. Shenandoah University must notify students at time of enrollment of any charges associated with meeting this requirement.

> **Examples:**
> Meets requirements: Students in SHEN 101 login to the university learning management system using their Shenandoah network login credentials for most of their course work.
>
> Does not meet requirements: Students in SHEN 101 generally receive assignments via their personal email and return these via email to the instructor.

Credit Hours

The credit hour is important, both as a unit of student financial aid eligibility, as well as serving as an academic standard. The federal standard is the Carnegie unit.[2]

Coursework is divided into instructional contact hours and proxy hours. Instructional contact hours should be interactive and there should be some means for students to get feedback.

Classes must include 15 <u>instructional contact hours</u> per credit. Each contact hour must be a minimum of 50 minutes. So for a 3 credit course, there must be 45 contact hours, or 37.5 (60 minute) hours of interactive instruction. This can include examinations, excepting the final exam if there is one.

Additionally, there should be 2 hours (100 minutes) of <u>proxy instruction</u> for each instructional contact hour. Proxy hours are generally not interactive and may include projects, readings, audio/visual media, and other assignments.

Simple course time calculator:

(60 minute) hours = instructional contact time + proxy time where
       instructional contact time = 12.5 (60 minute hours) * number of credits
       proxy time = 25 (60 minute hours) * number of credits

Note that the federal standard gives faculty latitude as long as their courses "reasonably approximate" the amount and type of work defined above. [3] The accrediting agency (SACS) will make the determination as to whether the standard is met.

> **Examples (using 60 minute hours):**
> Meets requirements: The syllabus for SHEN 101, a distance course, includes 12 hours of asynchronous content delivered via pre-recorded podcasts to introduce basic concepts to be followed by asynchronous discussion using a blogging tool. An additional 12 hours of interactive content, discussion, and group problem solving is delivered synchronously.   Students interact with the instructor and each other via audio or chat. 10 hours are designated for peer-reviewed student presentations or group projects, to be delivered synchronously via web cast. The remaining 3.5 hours are designated for interactive review and testing. Proxy activities include an estimated 15 hours of reading, 15 hours of research, 20 hours of homework, 15 hours of writing, 10 hours of presentation/project preparation.
>
> Does not meet requirements: The syllabus for SHEN 101 includes 20 hours of prerecorded lectures, 12 hours viewing online materials, and 5.5 hours of review and testing. Proxy materials are the same as above.

Online Student Privacy Policy
The university must have a written policy for protecting the privacy of students in distance courses. As with any form of instruction, every effort should be made to protect the privacy of student academic records. In the case where student activities are recorded and re-used, students must be notified in advance in the syllabus.

Copyright
Copyrights apply to creative works in any kind of fixed medium (including digital media). This confers to the copyright holder the right to control distribution or display of the work, the integrity of the work, any derivative works, and attribution of authorship.

It is always safest to use materials that are in the public domain, those for which you have a license, or those for which you have explicit, written permission to use from the copyright holder.

The 2002 TEACH Act The 2002 TEACH Act brought copyright laws with respect to distance education into line with those for face-to-face classes.[4] Note:

- The institution must provide "notice to students that materials used in connection with the course may be subject to copyright protection."
- The content must be restricted to students enrolled in the class.
- There are exceptions, such as for full length films.

Complaint Process
Distance education students need to be informed of how they may file a complaint and receive feedback as to the complaint's resolution.

Additional SACS requirements
- Faculty are responsible for communication of technical requirements to students via the syllabus.
- Faculty who teach online have had appropriate training.
- There are criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of faculty teaching online.

State Reciprocity: NC-SARA [5]
Institutions must be authorized to deliver online instruction to students in other states or to place students in clinicals, internships, or practica out of state. Shenandoah is a participant in NC-SARA which allows us to operate in most states. (See the NC-SARA website for frequent updates.) Note that for programs leading to licensure, programs must disclose to potential applicants whether or not the program meets licensure requirements in the student's home state. See the policy on the NC-SARA website for details.

REFERENCES
[1] SACS, "Guidelines for Addressing Distance and Correspondence Education." 2011.

[2] Shedd, Jessica (2003). "The History of the Student Credit Hour". *New Directions for Higher Education*. 122 (Summer). doi:10.1002/he.106

[3] GEN-11-06, US Department of Education, "Guidance to Institutions and Accrediting Agencies Regarding a Credit Hour as Defined in the Final Regulations Published on October 29, 2010."

[4] For more details, see the American Library Association article on the 2002 Teach Act.

[5] NC-SARA-National Council for State Authorization for Reciprocity Agreements.

Checklist	Explanation and/or examples:
Authorization	Shenandoah is authorized in the state from which distance students are enrolled or in states where students are places in clinicals/practica/internships.
Credit hours	There are 12.5 (60 minute) hours per credit of instructional contact time + 25 (60 minute) hours of proxy instruction. Instructional contact time is defined by student-faculty interactivity and there must be an assessment to provide students with feedback and to determine whether learning was successful.
Expectations are clear	Policies, pre-reqs, learning objectives are clear.
Content	Concepts are organized into building blocks that link new knowledge to existing knowledge. Delivery mode supports learning.
Learning Community	Ice breakers. Group work/Team work. Tone is upbeat.
Milestones	Students can self-assess progress; assignments and tests are formative.
Interaction	Students get quick feedback and a lot of it.
Assessment	Learning objectives are linked to assignments. Effectiveness plan is in place. Outcomes are measureable and can be reported.
Academic Integrity Plan	Lots of assignments. Open book exams. Course materials respect copyrights and are properly cited. Faculty discuss how integrity is valued in the field.
Accessibility	Resources are available to support learner needs.
Technology and course materials	Students have been informed of what course materials, technical tools and skills are needed for the course.
Privacy	The syllabus includes a link to the Online Privacy Policy.
Support Services	The syllabus includes links/contact information for Student Support Services.
Copyright	Course materials are compliant with copyright laws. Students are notified that materials are subject to copyright.
Authentication	Students sign in using a Shenandoah issued login and password.
Complaint Process	Syllabi include a link to the catalog and refer students with complaints to the policy there. Syllabi include instructions for contacting the departmental office or dean's office as appropriate.