



NASASPS Distance Education Best Practices Checklist

This checklist represents a sampling of best practices for state authorization agencies to use in assessing schools that wish to administer courses online.

Specific criteria and minimum standards can be adapted and developed by regulators charged with assessing institutions providing distance education.

Regulatory area	The Institution...
<p>Student Support Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes available online library/learning resources for 100% online programs. • Includes use of online library/learning resources as part of the curriculum. • Verifies that the student who registers is the same student who participates in, completes, and receives credit for the course. • Provides access to a range of student support services necessary to support the delivery of distance education and the achievement of program objectives. • Provides knowledgeable, reliable and timely technical support during regular business hours that can train and troubleshoot technical issues for both students and faculty. • Securely stores student records and specifically catalogs the dates of submissions and the institutional feedback of major assignments and retains all documents according to the institutional retention policy. • Documents how student advising comparable to that provided to direct instruction students is occurring (contact should be available in a minimum of two methods: telephone, web-based discussions, email, etc.). • Documents the offering of tutoring services, career placement/counseling and financial aid assistance as well as how such services are comparable to those provided to direct instruction students. • Makes available an online learning orientation program prior to the start of the students' programs. • Clearly defines student complaint processes that can be executed electronically.

<p>Admissions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizes admission materials that clearly articulate academic learning objectives and address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising • Accessibility and Disability Accommodations • Library Resources • Technology Assistance • Academic Success Support • Assesses potential students' abilities to succeed in a distance education environment and assures their consistent access to necessary technological resources (internet and computer access) and necessary equipment prior to enrollment. • Employs appropriate entrance assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, Smarter Measure, Learning Readiness, Competency Based Education Readiness, Teaching w/Technology Readiness, Writing Readiness, Math Readiness, and Test Anxiety Scale • Discloses each of the following to students seeking admission to its programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State approvals and authorizations • Student complaint process (adhering to the requirements of state reciprocity as well) • Withdrawal and completion rates, if calculated by the state • Specifies refund policies applying to distance education, and, if applicable, explains the calculations related to the percentages of refunds. • Publishes Professional Licensure Disclosures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides the applicable educational prerequisites for professional licensure or certifications in each state in which the program's students reside for the occupation for which the program prepares the student, as well as any other state for which the institution has determined prerequisites • Determines whether the program satisfies the state requirements for professional licensure or certification, and if the program does not meet state requirements, issues a statement to that effect • Notifies enrolled students within 14 days of discovery if the program in which they are enrolled will cease to lead to licensure
<p>Course Design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attests that it has ultimate control over the curriculum when it is sourced from a third-party provider. • Uses assessments appropriate for a distance education environment, which accurately assess the achievement of learning outcomes. • Instructs only in subject matter appropriate for delivery through distance education methods. • Designs curriculum and instructional materials to promote effective distance education study by including interactive content and requiring students to achieve outcomes in order to successfully progress through the program. • Regularly reviews and updates curriculum and instructional materials to maintain and/or improve effectiveness. • Employs technology and provides for necessary equipment that consistently supports effective delivery of the curriculum. • Provides regular, comprehensive, and quality feedback from faculty, necessary for the achievement of course objectives. • Uses accepted best practices to 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. • Ensures online programs are comparable in rigor to those offered via direct instruction. • In competency-based programs, ensures student work, learning objectives and corresponding assessments are comparable in rigor to traditionally structured programs. • Ensures curriculum observes accessibility standards. • Ensures curriculum developers are adequately trained and appropriately qualified.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures online class capacities do not exceed a threshold that would prohibit meaningful educational experiences for students. • Accurately quantifies both asynchronous and synchronous instructional hours.
<p>Attendance/ Progress Requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains clear guidelines for determining Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the periods of SAP evaluation (e.g., every four weeks, end of payment period, quarterly, etc.) • Identifies the maximum timeframe for completion of graduation requirements (typically 150% of the program duration) • Specifies minimum GPA or passing percentage to be considered as maintaining SAP • Specifies minimum attendance requirements to be considered as maintaining SAP • Specifies the actions the institution will require if the student fails to meet SAP at an evaluation checkpoint. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies parameters for an appeal, as applicable, to remain active and eligible for financial aid • Defines the use of an academic plan • If the school places the student on probation, identifies the length of probation and what would constitute success or failure. For example, probation to the next evaluation checkpoint during which time the student must bring grades and/or attendance up to minimum standards or face dismissal, loss of Title IV funding, etc. • Provides support services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes a SAP component in student orientation • Has IT staff available for troubleshooting if SAP violations are technology related • Ensures students are aware of office hours as well as any tutoring or mentoring services available through the institution • If advisors are assigned, alerts advisors when a student fails to meet SAP and/or needs an academic plan, so they can make contact and provide guidance • Maintains clear guidelines for “attendance.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes an attendance component in student orientation • Works with faculty to develop attendance guidelines/rubrics and publishes in course syllabi • Clearly defines what academic instructional activities are attendance-bearing and the schedule and deadlines for posting • Informs students that logging in does not constitute attendance; rather, academic engagement is required • Explains make-up policy for absences • For competency-based models: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes guidelines for academic progress (mastery of competencies), including minimum numbers of competency units and timeframes for successful completion of assessments • Establishes guidelines for regular interaction as a component of SAP/attendance • Develops individualized plans for all students based on their engagement and progress in assessments • Uses acceptable methods for interaction, which could include telephone, live chat, live streaming, etc. • Requires students to activate courses, complete pre-assessments, view recorded lectures or faculty-led events during a specified academic term, etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires faculty/mentors/coaches to contact students who miss scheduled interactions (establish what constitutes “contact students”) • Clarifies failure of students to respond or repeated failure to abide by established plans are grounds for dismissal
<p>Faculty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employs online instruction faculty qualified to teach using distance education methods, effectively supported, and competent in the use of necessary software and instructional design tools (in addition to their meeting the education and experience requirements established). • Establishes faculty achievement of proficiency in the online platform(s) being utilized through comprehensive and documentable training in the delivery of online instruction. • Regularly assesses faculty’s abilities regarding student success, student satisfaction, and retention. • Provides faculty with quality professional development on subjects including the specifics of teaching online, online learning andragogy, instructional design methods, the specific LMS, online assessment and communication with students (including strategies for effective interaction). • Maintains clear and reasonable policies regarding faculty workload, compensation, ownership of intellectual property housed in or created to support the platform, and expectations regarding student success and retention (which may impact faculty evaluations). • Provides faculty with appropriate, ongoing technical, design, and production assistance and support. • Ensures faculty are appropriate and sufficient in number to achieve stated outcomes. • Ensures faculty provide regular feedback and assistance to students in support of the achievement of learning outcomes.