



NAECOB

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION AND
EQUIVALENCY COUNCIL OF THE BAHAMAS

DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Accreditation and Evaluation
Guidelines

2016-2018

Published by the
National Accreditation and Equivalency Council of The Bahamas
RND Plaza West. JFK Drive.
Nassau, Bahamas. N-3913

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CONTENTS

Overview	5
The institution assures that academic standards, integrity, and best practices, are upheld throughout the delivery of distance education programmes	6
The institution aligns its online pedagogy and distance education programme offerings with the organization's mission	7
The institution's planning, development and evaluation processes encompasses its online offerings where and if appropriate	8
The institution's academic procedures and systems of governance has provisions for online learning	9
The institution's distance education programmes are comparable in academic content and assessment to programmes offered in traditional formats. The online learning environment is monitored and evaluated for its effectiveness and efficiency. Monitoring & Evaluation findings are used to develop, improve and augment programme goals	10
The institution vets qualified and suitable faculty who are responsible for the delivery of the distance education programme as well as student assessment. Faculty must be continuously supported and provided with the necessary resources for effective online learning	11
The institution provides the necessary academic services and resources for students that fosters an effective online learning environment	12
The institution provides appropriate, ongoing, and adequate resources to facilitate the success and growth of the distance education programmes	13

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OVERVIEW

The following framework is provided for institutions involved in offering distance education or planning to offer distance education in The Bahamas. *“Best Practices Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education and Distance Education Programs – Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (Online Learning)”* by the Council of Regional Accrediting commissions (C-RAC) provides the platform for these guidelines. These guidelines are intended to be used in conjunction with the relevant standards and policies of each accreditation agency within an institution’s jurisdiction. NAECOB registered Institutions seeking accreditation for their programmes/courses in The Bahamas are required to provide evidence of the extent to which they meet criteria outlined.

1. THE INSTITUTION ASSURES THAT ACADEMIC STANDARDS, INTEGRITY, AND BEST PRACTICES, ARE UPHOLD THROUGHOUT THE DELIVERY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES.

- Compliance must be demonstrated by all institutions offering distance education programmes. Effective procedures must be in place to ensure that the student registered in a distance education course or programme is the same student who participates in and completes the course or programme and receives the academic credit.
- Process to protect student privacy must be in writing. Students must be notified in writing at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected cost that may be associated with the verification process.
- There must be a policy on academic integrity that articulates faculty and student responsibilities.
- Academic integrity must be addressed during student orientation.
- Faculty members engaged in online instruction must be trained on issues of academic integrity and be encouraged to report suspected violation.
- There must be processes and procedures to secure student logins and passwords to access online courses and related resources, discussions, assignments, and assessments.

2. THE INSTITUTION ALIGNS ITS ONLINE PEDAGOGY AND DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME OFFERINGS WITH THE ORGANIZATION'S MISSION.

- The role of online learning relative to the institutions' programmes and services must be evident in the mission statement.
- The online learning environment support must be evidenced in the institution's vision.
- Institution goals for the student experience and how they will be met must be incorporated into the outline programmes.
- Enrolled online students must meet the admissions requirements.

3. THE INSTITUTION'S PLANNING DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION PROCESS ENCOMPASSES ITS ONLINE OFFERINGS WHERE AND IF APPROPRIATE.

- Goals to increase online courses and programmes and/or numbers of students are planned and documented
- The institution's budget must reflect online offerings.
- Conducting needs analysis of supporting programmes must be documented.
- The effectiveness of online learning courses and programmes must be evaluated by institutions. Evaluations are to be used to enhance the achievement of goals.
- Good practice in assessment methods are employed as well as routine student course evaluations.
- Evidence of the results of evaluation regarding academic support services should be utilized for improvement.
- Appropriate goals for the retention/persistence of students are set and measured.
- Documentation of changes driven by programme assessment and evaluation is to be provided.
- Rubrics or detailed grading criteria for every assignment must be provided to students.
- Short windows for testing completion and forced completion are set to reduce access to tests and ability to re-enter the test.
- Use of a variety of assessment strategies.
- Computer-based grade book should be printed and secured.

4. THE INSTITUTION'S ACADEMIC PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS OF GOVERNANCE HAS PROVISIONS FOR ONLINE LEARNING.

- Online courses and programmes follow standard processes used in the institution's tradition offerings.
- There should be evidence of faculty participation in design and delivery of online learning offerings.
- The rigor of the offerings and the quality of the instruction are assured.
- Institution has documented contractual relationships and arrangements with consortial partners stipulating the instructions responsibility for the academic quality of its online offerings.

5. THE INSTITUTION'S DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES ARE COMPARABLE IN ACADEMIC CONTENT AND ASSESSMENT TO PROGRAMMES OFFERED IN TRADITIONAL FORMATS. THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IS MONITORED AND EVALUATED FOR ITS EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY. MONITORING & EVALUATION FINDINGS ARE USED TO DEVELOP, IMPROVE AND AUGMENT PROGRAMME GOALS.

- The academic rigor for online offering must be aligned to traditional instructional formats.
- Curriculum is coherent in its content and sequencing of courses that is evident in documentation.
- Pathways for students to complete degrees within a reasonable timeline must be provided.
- Online policies are enforced.
- The requirements for any face-to-face/onsite work must be clearly outlined.
- Design and delivery supports student-to-student and faculty-to-student interactions.
- Objectives and goals of curricula denote best uses of varied disciplines on online learning offerings.

6. THE INSTITUTION VETS QUALIFIED AND SUITABLE FACULTY WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME AS WELL AS STUDENT ASSESSMENT. FACULTY MUST BE CONTINUOUSLY SUPPORTED AND PROVIDED WITH THE NECESSARY RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE ONLINE LEARNING.

- Appropriately qualified faculty with the necessary support must have responsibility for delivery and evaluation of the curricula.
- Frequent evaluation of faculty must be carried out.
- Faculty must receive periodic training and must be competent in utilizing the technology of the institution.
- Proficiency and support in the use of the course management system is necessary
- There must be evidence of student satisfaction with the quality of instruction provided by online learning faculty members.
- Effective student and academic services are provided for online students.

7. THE INSTITUTION PROVIDES THE NECESSARY ACADEMIC SERVICES AND RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS THAT FOSTERS AN EFFECTIVE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

- The admissions programme for online learning provide information to assist students to determine if they possess requisite skills to succeed
- An online learning orientation programme is provided
- Appropriate support services for the delivery of the online courses and programmes must be provided.
- Online students have access to student services inclusive of tuition assistance, course registration and advisement
- Access to 24/7 tech support is available.
- Adequate learning resources are available i.e. library, information resources, laborites, equipment and tracking systems.
- Students must demonstrate proficiency in the use of electronic forms of learning resources.
- The electronic process for student complaint is clearly defined.
- Accurate informative publication and advertisement of online learning programmes, goals, requirement, and academic calendar, and faculty is provided.
- Reasonable and cost effective ways to participate in the institution's system of student authentication is available to online students.

8. THE INSTITUTION PROVIDES APPROPRIATE, ONGOING, AND ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO FACILITATE THE SUCCESS AND GROWTH OF THE DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES.

- The budget for online learning provides for assessment of programmes, marketing demand, adequate levels of faculty and staff, staff development, and information resources.
- Technology plans for achieving online learning goals and a technical infrastructure is provided.

Reference

Institutions are encouraged to consult Best Practice Strategies to Promote Academic Integrity in Online Education, prepared by WCET and available at <http://www.wcet.wiche.edu>

Standards for Accreditation and Requirements for Affiliation Thirteenth edition
Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2011).

Interregional Guidelines for the evaluation of Distance Education Programs Middle States
Commission on Higher Education (Online Learning, 2011).