

## Correspondence Course Review

Online teaching supports NMSU's mission by allowing us to serve our rural populations and to meet the educational needs of students who cannot take face-to-face courses. However, this delivery mode presents challenges to traditional pedagogy because of constantly evolving technology. In addition, the federal government distinguishes between distance education and correspondence courses; students in distance education are eligible for federal Title V funding; students in correspondence courses are not eligible. Therefore, it is the responsibility of NMSU to ensure that all distance education classes are eligible for federal financial aid (see page 3 for more information).

To ensure that our courses are true distance education courses, NMSU will begin reviewing course sections that are designated as online (M70–M79) starting Spring 2016. Courses that meet the following criteria will be exempt from review:

- Courses that have been certified as passing in a Quality Matters review within the past 5 years.
- Courses taught by an instructor who has successfully completed the Online Course Improvement Program (OCIP).

### Course Review

Staff from Academic Technology will review the level of interaction between the faculty and students and the use of the technology for consistency with best practices and federal guidelines. Additional details of this review are as follows:

- Staff from Academic Technology will gather data regarding courses the third week of each term.
- By the end of the third week, courses that do not meet any criteria of the Online Course Checklist (page 2) will be flagged.
- Results of the course review will be shared with each faculty member with a request that weaknesses be remedied within two weeks (week 4 and 5). This notification will include referrals to Instructional Innovation and Quality (IIQ) for assistance. Department Heads and Deans will be copied on the notification.
- In week 6, Academic Technology will re-examine all courses flagged in the earlier review.
- Any courses with weaknesses after the second review will be referred to the Department Head and Dean for follow up.

Training is available through IIQ that can help ensure our courses are distance education rather than correspondence courses. IIQ will provide support for faculty to address weaknesses in their online course.

Information relating to this review will be stored on an in-house secure server and will remain confidential.

## Minimum Criteria for Online Courses

|               |  |                  |  |
|---------------|--|------------------|--|
| Course number |  | Instructor       |  |
| Short title   |  | Instructor email |  |
| College       |  | Department       |  |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Yes | No | NA |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|----|
| 1                | Instructor's email, phone number, office hours are provided.                                                                                                                                                |     |    |    |
| 2                | A current syllabus is available in the course.                                                                                                                                                              |     |    |    |
| 3                | Assignments are scheduled and have due dates.                                                                                                                                                               |     |    |    |
| 4                | Textbook information (with ISBN) and/or other required materials are identified and included in the LMS.                                                                                                    |     |    |    |
| 5                | Instructor is active in the course and communicating with students (e.g., logging in a minimum of once a week, updates and changes via announcements or e-mail, progress and feedback via Gradebook, etc.). |     |    |    |
| 6                | Expected turn-around time in responding to students' emails is stated (e.g., within 24 hours or 24–48 hours).                                                                                               |     |    |    |
| 7                | A variety of assessment methods and types are included.                                                                                                                                                     |     |    |    |
| 8                | Use of LMS tools to support course activities/assignments (e.g., announcements, assignments, discussions, conferences, quizzes, etc. .                                                                      |     |    |    |
| <b>Comments:</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |     |    |    |

Adapted from Online Course Basic Checklist on pages 2 & 3 and R Poulin; 2012, April 20  
 Poulin, R. (2012, April 20). Is your distance education course actually a correspondence course? [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <https://wcetblog.wordpress.com/2012/04/20/correspondence-definition/>

**Correspondence Course US DoE Definitions ( [§ 600.2 of the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations.](#))**

According to 34 C.F.R. § 600.2, a correspondence course is—

(1) A “home study” course provided by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, including examinations on the materials, to students who are not physically attending classes at the institution. When students complete a portion of the instructional materials, the students take the examinations that relate to that portion of the materials, and return the examinations to the institution for grading.

(2) A home study course that provides instruction in whole or in part through the use of video cassettes or video discs in an award year is a correspondence course unless the institution also delivers the instruction on the cassette or disc to students physically attending classes at the institution during the same award year.

(3) If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, the Secretary considers the course to be a correspondence course.

According to 34 C.F.R. § 600.2, a telecommunications course is—

A course offered principally through the use of one or a combination of technologies including television, audio, or computer transmission through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite; audio conferencing; computer conferencing; or video cassettes or discs to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between these students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The term does not include a course that is delivered using video cassettes or disc recordings unless that course is delivered to students physically attending classes at the institution providing the course during the same award year. If the course does not qualify as a telecommunications course, it is considered to be a correspondence course.