



# Distance Education Handbook

Lamar State College Orange

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## I. Introduction

The mission of the Distance Education Program at Lamar State College Orange is to provide quality distance education opportunities for students in support of the vision and mission of the college. In support of this mission, the purpose of the Lamar State College Orange Distance Education Handbook is to collocate the definitions, standards, guidelines, and procedures needed for the design, development, delivery, and assessment of distance education courses and programs.

### A. Accrediting Institutions

The Distance Education Program of LSCO adheres to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) rules and best practices for distance education as well as maintains compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and School (SACSCOC) definitions and standards. LSCO was approved to offer distance education courses from THECB before the year 2000, and SACSCOC on March 15, 2007.

Additionally, LSCO complies with the Higher Education Act of 1965 from the US Department of Education. Specifically:

*If an institution is offering post-secondary education through distance or correspondence education to students in a State in which it is not physically located or in which it is otherwise subject to State jurisdiction as determined by the State, the institution must meet any State requirements for it to be legally offering post-secondary distance or correspondence education in that State. An institution must be able to document to the Secretary the State's approval upon request.*

*(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1001 and 1002)*

Pursuant to the provisions of 2012 Edition of the U.S. Code, Title 20-Education, on request, LSCO will provide the stipulated documentation to the Secretary of the Department of Education regarding instruction offered to Distance Education students living outside of Texas. In addition, Lamar State College Orange is a member of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is a voluntary nationwide reciprocity agreement for provision of distance education and is open to Lamar State College Orange as a consequence of the College's accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

### B. Definitions

The following are the definitions of distance education modalities as used by LSCO and from our accrediting institutions. LSCO's definitions details how online, hybrid, and HyFlex courses will be taught.

#### 1. LSCO

##### *a. Face-to-Face Courses*

Face-to-Face courses are the traditional instructional method where students attend classes on campus at specified dates and times. Face-to-face courses are still required to provide basic course requirements in the Blackboard LMS.

##### *b. Hybrid Courses*

Hybrid courses combine traditional, face-to-face instruction and online instruction. Students will conduct coursework online and may be required to come to campus for some instruction. Examples may include lectures, orientations, laboratory sessions, presentations, or exams.

##### *c. HyFlex (HF) Courses*

Definition: A Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) course uses a blended course design that allows students to choose how they will attend. Students can attend live sessions in-person on campus or online via video conferencing software such as Blackboard Collaborate or MS Teams without physically attending the campus.

- Students may attend the course via a combination of in-person, online synchronous, or online asynchronous formats.
- Students who do not ever plan on attending an in-person session or remote synchronous session are highly encouraged to enroll in an online section.
- Students may attend asynchronously no more than:
  - 3 classes in an 8-week term
  - 5 classes in a 16-week term

#### *d. Online Courses*

Online Courses are those in which all instruction and evaluation methods are delivered online using the Blackboard LMS system. Courses identified as “online” in LSCO’s schedule should NOT require a student to come to campus for ANY reason, including but not limited to taking an exam.

## 2. THECB

*a. Distance Education*--The formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are in separate physical locations for the majority (more than 50 percent) of instruction.

*b. Distance Education Course*--A course in which a majority (more than 50 percent) of the instruction occurs when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations. The definition of distance education course does not include courses with 50 percent or less instruction when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations. Two categories of distance education courses are defined:

(1) 100-Percent Online Course – A distance education course in which 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations. Requirements for on-campus or in-person orientation, testing, academic support services, internships/fieldwork, or other non-instructional activities do not exclude a course from this category.

(2) Hybrid Course—A distance education course in which more than 50 percent but less than 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations.

## 3. SACSCOC

For the purposes of SACSCOC’s accreditation review, distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or other digital media if used as part of the distance education course or program.

## C. Complaints

In compliance with the language passed in the Higher Education Opportunities Act of 2008, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) conducted a Negotiated Rule Making Process in 2010, institutions offering distance education must provide enrolled and prospective students with contact information for filing complaints with its accrediting agency and with the appropriate state agency for handling complaints in the student's state.

Lamar State College Orange is committed to providing equal access and opportunity for all persons regardless of race, sex, color, religion, national origin or ancestry age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status, in employment, educational programs, and activities and admissions. With this in mind, a student

complaint may encompass dissatisfaction or perceived injustice a student may have while associated with the college as a student.

Additional information regarding complaints can be found here: [Complaints - Lamar State College Orange - Acalog ACMS™ \(lsc.edu\)](#)

*a. THECB*

**To file a formal written complaint with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)**, a complainant must first exhaust all institutional options for resolving the complaint.

If after that the matter is unresolved, the complainant must follow the procedure outlined on the THECB's Student Complaints portal, accessible via the following link:

<https://www.highered.texas.gov/links/student-complaints/>

*b. SACSCOC*

**To file a formal written complaint with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)**, a complainant must submit two signed copies of the SACSCOC Complaint Form, sent via ground mail, to:

President  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges  
1866 Southern Lane  
Decatur, GA 30033-4097

The complaint form can be accessed via the following link: <https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/ComplaintPolicy-1.pdf>

*c. Students Enrolled in Distance Education Courses*

Complaints should be filed in the state where the student is receiving instruction, not in the state in which the student resides. For example, a student residing in Louisiana but taking courses in Texas should file his/her complaint with the state contact for Texas.

Lamar State College Orange is a member of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). SARA is a voluntary nationwide reciprocity agreement for provision of distance education and is open to Lamar State College Orange as a consequence of the College's accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

Complaints against a SARA participating institution, including LSCO, must first go through the institution's own grievance procedures. All complaints regarding student grades or conduct violations are governed by the institution and the laws of the institution's home state

If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the institutional grievance process, the student may appeal, within two years of the incident, to the SARA portal agency of the institution's home state.

For all complaints regarding Texas degree-granting postsecondary institutions participating in SARA, complete the Student Complaint and Release Form and email the form to [Student.Complaints@highered.texas.gov](mailto:Student.Complaints@highered.texas.gov)

#### D. Authentication

Lamar State College Orange currently uses the Blackboard learning management system to manage all distance learning courses. Blackboard is also used throughout all of LSCO in support of hybrid courses, and of in-person courses wishing to use the tools available through the online LMS. Access to Blackboard is provided through the [MyGator portal](#) on the LSCO website. LSCO employees and students are provided a unique LSCO username upon joining LSCO and must follow a series of steps to set their initial password upon their first login. LSCO does not issue nor have access to user passwords.

As an added level of account security, faculty, staff, and student users are further prompted to set up and use DUO security for multi-factor authentication upon logging into to MyGator.

The acceptable use of access to MyGator, Blackboard, and any other LSCO application is explicitly stated on the MyGator portal webpage but is also provided here for convenience.

*It is a violation of college policy, state laws, and federal laws if you gain or help others gain unauthorized access to MyGator or any LSCO application or service. If unauthorized access or use is gained, you will be subject to college disciplinary action and/or criminal prosecution, to the fullest extent of the law. By logging into MyGator, you are responsible for strictly adhering to college policy, state laws and federal laws governing computer security. Penalties exist for unauthorized access, unauthorized use, or unauthorized distribution of information from LSCO Experience. Usage may be subject to security testing and monitoring. Applicable privacy laws establish the expectation of privacy. College [Information Resources Policies](#) provide guidance for the appropriate use of LSCO's information resources.*

Further guidance on the appropriate use of LSCO information resources can be found in the Administrative Policies and Procedures document in Section 7.

## II. Governance

### A. Distance Education Committee

The Distance Education Committee (DEC) is the body which provides the Distance Education Program with the oversight needed to empower faculty to provide quality distance education opportunities for students in support of the vision and mission of the college.

The members of the DEC are charged with:

- Maintaining the *Distance Education Handbook*.
- Reviewing and adhering to the [Principles of Good Practice for Academic Degree and Certificate Programs Offered at a Distance](#).
- Reviewing distance education courses, confirming alignment with course standard quality requirements
- Recommending and designing proper evaluation tools for distance education
- Researching and discussing new learning technologies
- Reviewing and recommending policies for distance education student success
- Evaluating and responding to issues/needs regarding the Learning Management System
- Acting as a liaison for the distance education committee and corresponding educational departments
- Recommending and designing pedagogical training for distance education faculty
- Creating an ongoing list of best practices for faculty
- Addressing areas of concern for distance education

The DEC shall include:

- Associate Dean of Off Campus Instructional Services (Committee Chair)
- Application Supports Specialist
- Learning Technology Development and Training Specialist
- One representative from the Information Services Department
- Two representatives from the Allied Health Programs Department
- Four representatives from the Academic, Technical, and Workforce Programs Department
- One representative from the Gator Success Center
- One representative from the library
- The provost (ex officio)
- Dean of Institutional Effectiveness & Educational Support (ex officio)
- The Chair of the Curriculum Council (ex officio)
- A representative of the Faculty Senate (ex officio)
- Dean of Allied Health Programs (ex officio)
- Dean of Academic, Technical, and Workforce Programs (ex officio)
- SGA representative (ex officio)

Members of the Distance Education Committee serve a minimum of a three-year term. Appointments are made by the appropriate director or dean. Members of the DEC can serve more than one term on the committee with permission from their director or dean. All voting members of the DEC must have completed the Blackboard Certification.

The DEC will meet monthly during the fall and spring semesters unless there are no pressing issues for the committee to address. The DEC will not meet during the summer semesters unless necessary. The Associate Dean of Off Campus Instructional Services will coordinate meetings to best meet the committee's needs. The DEC will appoint a secretary to take minutes of the meetings. The committee minutes and materials will be provided to a closed group consisting of the current DEC on Blackboard.

### III. Distance Education

#### A. Instructor Requirements

Faculty who teach online, hybrid, or HyFlex courses must have the academic credentials and experiences relevant to the courses taught in their respective programs. The minimum academic credentials and experiences are dependent on the course(s) being taught. Online, hybrid, or HyFlex instructors must meet the same minimum requirements as face-to-face instructors.

Faculty who are teaching online, hybrid, or HyFlex courses at LSCO, however, must complete additional credentials before teaching online courses. Each online instructor must complete the Blackboard training course developed by the Office of Learning Technology.

*LSCO is currently in the middle of transitioning from Blackboard Original Course View to Blackboard Ultra Course View. Faculty are enrolled in the new Blackboard Ultra training course and must complete by February 2024 in order to teach online for Fall 2024.*

#### B. Program Requirements

Each program LSCO offers via distance education shall be within the role and mission of the academic unit responsible for offering the instruction. No differentiation shall exist between programs delivered via distance education and those provided on campus. Unless specified otherwise, all policies, standards, and guidelines governing on-campus instruction are applicable to programs delivered through distance education. Instruction via distance education must adhere to the same standards of quality as on-campus instruction.

#### C. Instruction

The primary role of all faculty members encompasses classroom preparation in the creation of course content, facilitating instructional delivery, and assessing student advancement across online, hybrid, HyFlex, and traditional in-person courses. All online instruction shall be administered by the same academic unit administering the corresponding on-campus instruction. All LSCO students will receive comparable instruction irrespective of their instructional location or modality.

#### D. Student Achievement/Institutional Effectiveness

LSCO identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's missions, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered that is relevant to all students irrespective of their instructional location or modality. The student achievement goals, outcomes, criteria, and targets are the same for face-to-face and distance education students alike.

#### E. Admissions

Consistency in policies and procedures concerning admissions, withdrawals, and attendance is upheld across all modes of delivery at LSCO. Admission to the college does not automatically admit students to a specific distance education program or course.

When registering for courses, students are notified that if they register for an online, hybrid, or HyFlex course they may accrue additional fees. Students taking online, hybrid, or HyFlex courses are charged an internet fee of \$50 per course. This fee revenue goes into 'Computer Use Fee,' and contributes to the same fund balance that is used to purchase IT equipment and services.

#### F. Library/Learning Resources

All LSCO students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources. LSCO students and faculty have access to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs.

## G. Student Services

LSCO advertising, recruiting, and admissions information adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available to all students. LSCO students have adequate access to the range of services appropriate to support the programs and courses offered through distance education, including but not limited to:

- An adequate procedure for resolving their complaints, and the institution follows its policies and procedures. Additional information regarding complaints can be found here:
  - [Complaints - Lamar State College Orange - Acalog ACMS™ \(lSCO.edu\)](#)
  - [Compact with Texans | Lamar State College Orange \(lSCO.edu\)](#)
- Procedures that assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.
- Ensuring that students enrolled in distance education courses are able to use the technology employed, have the equipment necessary to succeed, and are provided assistance in using the technology. The Office of Learning Technology offers consistent and timely training on utilizing the learning management system and other distance education resources. Both scheduled and on-demand guidance in technology utilization, Blackboard navigation, and accessing other online learning resources are accessible to all users. Group instructional sessions and individual consultations are accessible both in-person and virtually, using synchronous and asynchronous formats. Off-campus users can contact staff by e-mail, telephone, or virtual appointment by using the Booking button listed on the Distance Education webpage - <https://www.lSCO.edu/programs/online/distance-education/index.php>

## H. Facilities and Finances

LSCO makes available the appropriate equipment and technical expertise required for distance education by providing adequate funding for faculty, staff, and technological infrastructure to support the methodology. The Department of Information Technology provides the computing network, telephone system, information processing infrastructure and services to support the different educational programs, effective teaching, administration, and students at LSC-O.

## IV. Course Design

Instructors should work with their dean and the Director of SACSCOC Reporting to determine if the online course will constitute a change in modality for the overall program(s).

### A. Required Course Components

Each course taught at LSCO is required to utilize the current LMS to house specific information regardless of the course format. Those components are:

- Syllabus
- Course Schedule
- Communication (instructor email/how the student should reach the instructor)
- Office/Virtual hours
- Attendance
- Grade book

### B. LSCO Course Standards

LSCO hybrid, HyFlex, and online courses are evaluated using the LSCO Online Course Evaluation Rubric, which is derived from Quality Matters Higher Ed Rubric Standards for online courses. Instructors seeking to create or adapt a course for hybrid, HyFlex, or online delivery should consult these standards during the design process in order to ensure the course meets approval.

The LSCO Online Course Evaluation rubric can be found online in Blackboard>Academic Resources>Distance Education or can be requested from the Office of Learning Technology.

### C. Professional Development/Tools

Training in the use of the LMS, Office 365, and various learning tools are provided by the Office of Learning Technology. Any faculty or staff member needing training in a specific tool should reach out to this office.

#### 1. Quality Matters

As a member of Quality Matters, LSCO will sponsor training in online course design, delivery, and assessment for a set number of faculty and staff each year. Quality Matters courses are typically two to three weeks long and require at least ten hours a week of commitment. Since the LSCO Online Course Evaluation Rubric is derived from Quality Matters Standards, these courses provide a solid foundation of knowledge for instructors to design successful online courses.

#### 2. Blackboard (Current LMS)

Instructors teaching a hybrid or online course must complete Blackboard certification. Instructors can find additional help with Blackboard by attending a scheduled training session from the Office of Learning Technology or by visiting:

- <https://help.blackboard.com/>
- <https://community.blackboard.com/home>

#### 3. Recording Studio

The LSCO Recording Studio is used for creating videos that will be used for faculty/ staff solely for campus projects or teaching videos. The studio offers: a teleprompter, sound proofing, backdrop, high quality microphone and camera, computer and video recording and editing software.

[Reservations must be made to use the recording studio.](#) Faculty/Staff can find the reservation form in Blackboard>Academic Resources>Distance Education>Recording Room Request Form

Faculty/ Staff are responsible for all transcription of the videos. (YouTube provides an automatically generated transcription.)

The video editor will do their best to complete editing and return it at the requested time.

Due to the location of the LSCO Recording Studio, videos will only be recorded by appointment Tuesday and Thursday after 2pm and all-day Friday.

## D. Faculty Compensation, Revenue, and Ownership of Materials

### 1. Faculty Compensation

Faculty are not compensated to create an online course.

### 2. Revenue

LSCO does not provide services that create or produce software, courses, or other media products for purposes other than instructional delivery related to LSCO. There is no revenue generated for these services.

### 3. Copyright and Ownership of Materials ([TSUS R&R Chapter III](#))

Copyright is the ownership and control of the intellectual property in original works of authorship. Copyright ownership shall remain with the creator of the work except as otherwise provided by this policy.

- **Basic Ownership**  
Component (LSCO) faculty, staff, and students own the copyright of works they create on their own initiative and own time without the use of substantial Component (LSCO) resources.
- **General Classroom Use**  
Consistent with academic tradition, the Component (LSCO) shall grant to their faculty and staff the copyright of works they create within the scope of their employment which are created in the fulfillment of their teaching and scholarly responsibilities. The Component (LSCO) shall retain a non-exclusive, nontransferable, perpetual, and royalty-free license to make educational uses of such works.
- **Joint Creators**  
Where two or more individuals create a work and their contributions are inseparable, interdependent, and intended as a single work, the work shall be deemed a joint work. Copyright of the work shall be jointly owned by the creators. Each creator may individually register, enforce, or commercially exploit the copyright with or without approval by all joint owners, provided the other joint owners receive an equal share of any proceeds, unless otherwise agreed in writing.
- **Where a Stipend was Paid**  
If a work is directed or contracted by the Component (LSCO) on a work for hire basis, then the Component (LSCO) owns the copyright.

## V. Delivery

### A. Best Practices for all Modalities

Here are some best practices to consider during the delivery of a hybrid, HyFlex, or online course. These practices should be followed in order to be considered for the Distance Education Award.

#### Pre-Semester

- Courses are made available to students two days prior to the official start of class.
- Faculty should have, at a minimum, the syllabus and course textbook information posted when the course becomes available to students.
- Faculty should make students aware of any requirements regarding proctored tests on the first day of class, especially the costs and technology required.

#### Communication/Interaction

- Faculty will communicate with students Monday through Friday with a 24-hour response time.
- Student emails that arrive after noon on Friday through Sunday will be answered Monday at the instructor's earliest convenience.
- Faculty should be engaged in distance education courses, creating appropriate synchronous and/or asynchronous learning opportunities.
- According to the LSCO Faculty Handbook, "Conference hours are to mirror the method of delivery (i.e., face-to-face sections with on campus office hours, hybrid with on campus and virtual conference hours, and distance learning sections with virtual conference hours). During posted on campus conference hours, the faculty member will be available in his or her office or other designated, posted location. During posted virtual hours, the faculty member will be available via email, discussion board, or chat room."

#### Grading

- Faculty are charged with keeping an up-to-date gradebook. Faculty should update gradebooks each week and maintain clear guidelines for grading practices.
- Student work should be graded within two weeks during a long semester, and one week during an eight-week semester.
- Faculty should keep students informed concerning grading delays or other concerns.
- Faculty should check students' course progress weekly, and report students who are falling behind through the early alert system.
- All faculty will archive final gradebooks at the end of each semester. They will then submit the gradebook to the appropriate dean for the subject area.

#### Attendance

- Attendance for fully online classes is determined by the last participation in a course assignment or activity. Student attendance is not determined based on the last login attempt.
- Keep attendance records for your course and utilize the GATOR Pass alert for students who are falling behind, not submitting work, not attending class, or failing assignments.
- **Non-Attendance and Financial Aid:** If you are receiving financial aid, federal regulations require you to have begun attending the courses for which you are enrolled on or before the census date (e.g., 12<sup>th</sup> day of each fall and spring long semester and 4<sup>th</sup> day of class each 8-week session). Attendance in an online course is verified by substantial participation in the course on or before the census date. LSCO defines substantial participation in online courses as logging into the online course **AND** completing/participating in at least one requirement of the course. **NOTE: Logging in to your online course does not warrant "attending". For this course, you will be required to complete the start here quiz before the census (12<sup>th</sup> class day for fall/spring or 4<sup>th</sup> class day for 8-**

**week session) date in order to be marked as “attending” for purposes of financial aid.** Students documented as “not attending” a course upon the census date are assumed (for financial aid purposes) to have NOT begun attendance for that course, negatively affecting their financial aid disbursements.

## B. Responsibilities for HyFlex Course Instructors

- Define HyFlex for students by LSCO standards as outlined by the Office of Learning Technology and the Distance Education Committee.
- Define in-person, synchronous, and asynchronous for students.
- Faculty will work with their respective Deans, Associate Deans, and/or Program Directors to determine which course sections will be offered as HyFlex.
- Communicate expectations.
  - Do students need to make you aware before class if they are attending remotely? In-person?
  - Students don’t always understand the concept of a blended course and the relationship between the classroom and online components.
  - Communicate to students the expectations for both in-person and online participation during synchronous sessions.
  - Clearly outline all the expectations in the syllabus and provide students with a map for the course.
- The instructor will be physically present in the designated classroom at the specified time lecturing, performing lab demonstrations, etc.
- Extenuating circumstances allow the instructor to hold a class from a location other than the classroom with prior approval from their immediate supervisor.
- The instructor will have a Bb Collaborate or MS Teams link set up to allow students to attend remotely synchronously.
- The instructor will record the class meetings and post each class recording in Blackboard no later than the end of the class day.
- The modes, though not the same, must provide equivalent learning outcomes.
  - How will students achieve the same outcomes from the different modes?
  - Assessment given in the classroom versus at home - will they be proctored?
- Artifacts from learning activities in each mode are captured and can be reused in other modes. Representation of in-class activities is available online for all students; activities produced by online students connect to and support all students.

## C. Proctoring

### 1. Online Proctoring

LSCO offers online students the opportunity to take their exams at home by using BioSig-ID and BioSight-ID which ensures the academic integrity of the exam for the institution. This proctoring service allows students to complete their assessment at any location with a webcam, microphone, computer, and reliable internet access. There are no fees associated with this service. LSCO instructors may also require students to use Respondus Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor when taking exams.

- A. BioSig-ID is an authentication tool that uses biometrics to make it more difficult for unauthorized users to access secure data or commit fraud as another individual. It is also used to minimize academic dishonesty in online courses. It is a requirement of SACSCOC that member institutions verify the identity of distance education students, and BioSig-ID helps us to fulfill that requirement.
- B. BioSight-ID is an exam monitoring alternative to traditional live proctoring methods by providing a passive, proven way to monitor students during exams.

- C. Lockdown Browser is a custom browser that locks down the testing environment within Blackboard. LockDown Browser prevents access to other applications including messaging, screen-sharing, virtual machines, and remote desktops. Assessments that are set up for use with LockDown Browser cannot be accessed with other browsers.
- D. Respondus Monitor is a fully-automated proctoring solution. Students use a webcam to record themselves during an online exam. Afterward, flagged events and proctoring results are available to the instructor for further review.

## 2. On-Campus Proctoring

LSCO provides a Testing Center on campus for students who wish to take a test with an in-person proctor. For scheduling and contact information, students are encouraged to visit the [Testing Center webpage](#) .

## 3. ISD Campus Instructional Site Proctoring

LSCO strongly encourages the ISD to ensure that dual credit courses taught via distance learning are assigned a facilitator for proctoring and monitoring the dual credit course and students. Each ISD Campus should review the LSCO Dual Credit Proctoring Center Agreement and complete a separate form for each individual who will assume proctoring responsibilities at the district. A signed copy will remain on file with the LSCO Dual Credit Coordinator for the entire academic year. This form can be located in Blackboard>Employee Resources>Academic Resources>Dual Credit>LSCO Dual Credit Proctoring Center Agreement.

## 4. Student-Arranged Proctor

At the instructor's discretion, students who do not wish to use online proctoring or who live far from the College and are not able to take exams on the campus, must identify a proctor and make appropriate arrangements with their instructors. It is the responsibility of the student to identify an appropriate proctor and confirm arrangements regarding the scheduling and administration of the exam directly with the proctor. It is the student's responsibility to find an appropriate testing facility to proctor exams and obtain instructor's approval.

The form and instructions for procuring a student-arranged proctor can be found by instructors in Blackboard>Academic Resources>Distance Education. Students can locate the form in Blackboard>Employee Resources>Academic Resources>Distance Education Resources.

## VI. Assessment

The Distance Education Committee will work with faculty to conduct a self-assessed course review to foster a culture of continuous improvement for LSCO's online, hybrid, and HyFlex courses. The following assessment process will commence implementation in Fall of 2023 with twenty faculty volunteers. Beginning in Fall of 2024, this assessment process will become mandatory for all faculty teaching an online, hybrid, or HyFlex course in a four-year rotation schedule determined by the Office of Learning Technology.

### A. Course Review Subcommittee Composition

Each member of the Distance Education Committee will be assigned to a course review subcommittee by the DEC Committee Chair. There will be four subcommittees with three DEC members per committee. Each subcommittee will have at least one QM certified peer reviewer. The faculty member participating in the self-review will join one of these subcommittees for the duration of the review.

#### 1. Training

The Office of Learning Technology will register faculty Distance Education Committee members for two Quality Matters workshops: Applying the QM Rubric and Peer Reviewer Workshop.

The Committee Chair and other certified QM Peer Reviewers may conduct in-house Peer Reviewer training.

### B. Process

Approximately twenty faculty members will be selected to be reviewed on a course of their choosing each year beginning in Fall 2023 and will continue a four-year cycle.

Reviews will only be conducted during the following months: January, February, March, April, September, October, and November. This will allow each review group to conduct one review each active month for a total of at least 21 reviews conducted during the academic year.

A faculty member must teach for at least one year before going under review. New hire faculty interested in developing their course and receiving feedback should utilize the resources provided by the campus such as the Office of Learning Technology, the Sam Houston State University instructional design team, and/or scheduling a one-on-one, informal review with a Distance Education Committee member.

#### 1. Timeline

- The Office of Learning Technology will notify the selected faculty by May 31st that they have been selected for a review on a course of their choosing during the upcoming academic year.
- The Office of Learning Technology will send the Course Worksheet and the LSCO Online Course Design Rubric to each selected faculty for completion. Course Worksheets must be turned back into the Office of Learning Technology by August 1st. Self-assessment using the Rubric will be due in the month of the faculty member's review.
- By August 31<sup>st</sup> the Distance Education Committee members will be assigned to a course review subcommittee for the academic year. Each group will be assigned a set of faculty members up for review and what month to review them by the DEC Committee Chair.
- Course Review worksheets will be distributed to each appropriate review group and members granted access to the course being reviewed by the DEC Committee Chair.
- Review group members will review the assigned course against the LSCO Online Course Rubric.
- Once self-assessment is complete, each faculty member will meet with his/her designated DEC review subcommittee. The subcommittee will reconvene until at least 75% of the rubric is met and considered passing.

### C. Criteria for Completion

- A grade of at least 75% must be earned for the course review to be considered complete.
- Courses that reach 85% or higher will be granted the Gator Certified Course badge.
- Met/not met rating will be based off majority rules for each substandard.

### D. Records

The Office of Learning Technology will retain documentation of all course reviews and will determine and keep a record of which faculty and courses will be reviewed each year.

## VII. Recognition

### A. The Distance Education Award

The Distance Education Award recognizes superior online teaching, creative methods of using technology and the learning management system, and instructors who demonstrate best practices in online learning pedagogy, assessment, learning engagement, and use of tools.

LSCO employees can nominate themselves or peers for the award. To nominate an LSCO employee, complete the link sent with the award criteria or send an email to the Office of Learning Technology with the instructor's name, a brief explanation as to why they are a candidate for the award, and a list of exemplary classes.

All nominations are due by March. Once nominations are complete, the Distance Education Committee will organize a subcommittee to begin the process of reviewing candidates using the Distance Education Award Rubric. The award winner's name will be sent to the President's Office by April 1. The award will be presented at the spring LSCO employee lunch.

To be eligible to receive the award the employee must,

- have LSCO Blackboard Faculty Training course completed
- meet the requirements of the Delivery section of the Distance Education Handbook
- teach a fully online course
- work 40% for the college

The Distance Education Award Rubric addresses four main areas of criteria outlined by the United States Distance Learning Association: pedagogy, assessment, learning engagement, and use of tools. Please see the LSCO Distance Education Award Rubric for more information about award criteria.

## VIII. Appendices

- A. LSCO Online Course Evaluation Rubric
- B. Copyright Law and Recommendations
- C. Americans with Disabilities Act
- D. Distance Education Privacy Statement
- E. Blackboard and ADA
- F. SACSCOC Guidelines for Curriculum and Instruction
- G. Best Practices for Distance Education—Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

## Appendix A: LSCO Online Course Evaluation Rubric

Standard	Criteria	Points Possible
<b>1: Course Overview and Introduction</b>		
1.1	Learners are introduced to the purpose and structure of the course.	3
1.2	Communication expectations for online discussions, email, and other forms of interaction are clearly stated.	2
1.3	Course and institutional policies with which the learner is expected to comply are clearly stated within the course, or a link to current policies is provided.	2
1.4	Learners are asked to introduce themselves to the class.	1
<b>2: Learning Objectives / Competencies</b>		
2.1	The course learning objectives, or course/program competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies.	3
2.2	The module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies.	3
2.3	Learning objectives or competencies are stated clearly, are written from the learner's perspective, and are prominently located in the course.	3
2.4	The relationship between learning objectives and learning activities is clearly stated.	3
2.5	The learning objectives or competencies are suited to the level of the course.	3
<b>3: Assessment and Measurement</b>		
3.1	The assessments measure the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	3
3.2	The course grading policy is stated clearly at the beginning of the course.	3
3.3	Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learner's work, and their connection to the course grading policy is clearly explained.	3
3.4	The assessments used are sequenced, varied, and suited to the level of the course.	2
3.5	The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress with timely feedback.	2
<b>4: Instructional Materials</b>		
4.1	The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	3

4.2	The relationship between the use of instructional materials in the course and completing learning activities is clearly explained.	3
4.3	The course models the academic integrity expected of learners by providing both source references and permission for the use of instructional materials.	2
4.4	A variety of instructional materials are used in the course.	2
<b>5: Learning Activities and Learner Interaction</b>		
5.1	The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives or competencies.	3
5.2	Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that supports active learning.	3
5.3	The instructor's plan for interacting with learners during the course is clearly stated.	3
5.4	The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.	2
<b>6: Course Technology</b>		
6.1	The tools used in the course support learning objectives or competencies.	3
6.2	Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.	3
6.3	A variety of technology is used in the course.	1
6.4	The course provides learners with information on protecting their data and privacy.	1
<b>7: Learner Support</b>		
7.1	The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to obtain it.	3
7.2	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's academic support services and resources that can help learners succeed in the course.	3
7.3	Course instructions articulate or link to the institution's student services and resources that can help learners succeed.	1
<b>8: Accessibility and Usability</b>		
8.1	Course navigation facilitates ease of use and readability.	3
8.2	The course provides accessible text and images in files, documents, LMS pages, and web pages to meet the needs of diverse learners.	3
8.3	The course provides alternative means of access to multimedia content in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.	2
8.4	Course multimedia facilitates ease of use.	2

## Appendix B: Copyright Law and Recommendations

It is important to LSCO that faculty understand copyright law and Blackboard. Blackboard does not exempt a faculty member from his or her responsibilities to adhere to copyright law because it is a password-protected program.

Faculty should observe the following guidelines:

1. Only post materials on the LMS for a non-profit, educational use.
2. Include proper attributions and citations for all posted materials.
3. Access to the LMS course materials should be limited to faculty and students enrolled in a particular course, and students should not have access to the course materials once the course is completed.
4. Web content should be directly linked rather than copied in Blackboard.
5. Carefully consider whether materials can be used under fair use. According to Rich Stim of Stanford University, "The four factors judges consider are:
  - a. the purpose and character of your use
  - b. the nature of the copyrighted work
  - c. the amount and substantiality of the portion taken, and
  - d. the effect of the use upon the potential market" ("Measuring Fair Use: The Four Factors").
6. Be careful! If in doubt, ask permission from the copyright holder.
7. Faculty are encouraged to use E-Reserves and work with the library to protect copyright issues.

## Appendix C: Americans with Disabilities Act

Blackboard is in compliance with Section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act guidelines. Blackboard provides a text equivalent for every non-text element which allows screen readers and users to interact with the software. Blackboard documents are organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet, and the frames of Blackboard are titled with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation. Blackboard also continues to research and evaluate the current software and will release patches or upgrades as needed to comply.

In addition, LSCO currently uses Ally, the Blackboard ADA compliance feature. Faculty will be provided with training opportunities to learn more regarding ADA compliance. Since technology constantly evolves, so will ADA needs. The DEC and Associate Dean of Off Campus Instructional Services will continue to address ADA issues and work to review guidelines put in place. Deans and the Associate Dean of Off Campus Instructional Services will continue to monitor all classes to ensure ADA compliance.

## Appendix D: Distance Education Privacy Statement

### 1. Protecting the Privacy of Distance Education Students

- a. The privacy of all students, including Distance Education students, is protected through strict adherence to the rules of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.
- b. LSCO's statement regarding the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act can be found in [LSCO's Policies and Procedures](#) webpage under FERPA.
- c. Distance Education students are issued a unique, nine-digit campus-wide student identification number (CWID) during the admission process at LSCO. The CWID number is the unique identifier for all individuals throughout their academic careers at LSCO.
- d. Distance Education students are issued a unique username and directed create a password known only to the student. The username and password combination are required for login to the Learning Management System.
- e. Distance Education students must follow LSCO's IT policy requirements for password length, complexity, and frequency of change, and must accept responsibility for the security of their personal passwords. The penalty for failure to protect username and password security can include
  - i. Loss of access to LSCO information resources,
  - ii. Disciplinary action up to and including termination for employees and suspension or expulsion for students, and
  - iii. Civil or criminal prosecution.
  - iv. Refer to [LSCO's Administrative Policies and Procedures](#) manual, Section 7, for more information.
- f. The privacy of Distance Education students is protected by:
  - i. Controlled access to the Learning Management System for students and faculty; and
  - ii. Username and password login requirement for course access;
- g. The Learning Management System provides protection for student and faculty information through security processes that are built in and maintained by the provider;
  - i. LSCO's Learning Management System, Blackboard, [privacy policies](#) can be found on the [Blackboard Help](#) website.
- h. Instructors in a distance education course and/or program may require proctoring of assignments; however, they must provide alternative proctoring solutions for students who wish to preserve their privacy while completing online assessments and do not wish to allow an online proctoring service to access their webcams and/or microphones in order to verify identity and/or ensure academic honesty. Alternatives may include, among other solutions, permitting use of the LSCO Testing Center or use of a remote proctor, subject to instructor approval of the proctor and site. See "Proctor Guidelines and Form" in the Distance Education module under the "[Academic Resources](#)" channel in Blackboard for additional information.
- i. Distance learning faculty will inform students of ways their information or work may be used by the college.
  - i. Any student work used in conducting institutional research will be redacted to remove all personal identifying information (PII) and/or archived in a secure physical or electronic location with closely restricted access.
  - ii. Students whose work may be used in research projects or initiatives will be asked to sign a release form and student privacy will be of the utmost importance.

### 2. Release of Student Information

- a. Federal privacy laws protect all LSCO Distance Education students. Student information will not be divulged to third parties, including parents and legal guardians of students;
- b. All requests by third parties for student information shall be directed to the Registrar's Office.

- c. Access to student information by faculty and staff is restricted by policy and practice to only those officers who can demonstrate a legitimate need to know in order to perform work-related duties such as advising, scheduling, or counseling. Additional information can be found in [LSCO's Administrative Information System/Banner](#) manual, pages 6 – 8.
- d. Release of information via the [Open Records Act](#) public information protocols can be found on our website, [www.lSCO.edu](http://www.lSCO.edu).

## Appendix E: SACSCOC Guidelines for Curriculum and Instruction

Follow this link to the SACSCOC Guidelines: [Microsoft Word - DistanceCorrespondenceEducation \(sacscoc.org\)](#)

## Appendix F: Best Practices for Distance Education—Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Follow this link to the THECB Best Practices: <http://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/sites/docid/cache/file/801171AA-D6F1-B416-71F569F8980FEA1D.pdf>

## Appendix G: Artificial Intelligence Policy

1. **Use of AI as a Source:** Students are allowed to use AI-generated responses from the ChatGPT model as a source for their assignments or discussions. However, it is important to acknowledge the AI source when citing it in your work. This includes providing the necessary information such as the name of the AI (ChatGPT) and stating that the information was obtained from an AI language model. In addition to citing the AI source, it is essential to include the parameters or instructions provided to the AI device to provide context for the generated response.
2. **Academic Integrity:** While AI technology can provide valuable insights and assistance, it is essential to maintain academic integrity when using AI-generated content. Plagiarism, including directly copying AI-generated responses without proper citation, is strictly prohibited. Students should use AI-generated content as a supplement to their own analysis, critical thinking, and research.
3. **Critical Evaluation:** When using AI-generated responses, students should critically evaluate the information provided and consider it as one potential perspective among others. AI models like ChatGPT are trained on a vast amount of data, but they may not always produce accurate or up-to-date information. Students are encouraged to cross-reference information obtained from AI sources with reliable and credible academic resources.
4. **Authentic Student Work:** Assignments, papers, and assessments should primarily reflect the original thoughts, analysis, and research of the individual student. While AI can provide guidance and ideas, students should ensure that the final work demonstrates their own understanding and effort. Overreliance on AI-generated content may compromise the authenticity and educational value of the assignment.
5. **Responsible Use of AI:** Students should use AI technology responsibly and ethically. This includes refraining from using AI to engage in harmful or unethical activities, such as generating false information, spreading misinformation, or engaging in malicious behaviors. The use of AI should align with the principles of academic integrity, honesty, and respect for others.
6. **Consult Course Instructor:** If students have questions or concerns about the use of AI-generated content in their assignments, it is recommended to consult the course instructor for guidance and clarification. The instructor can provide specific instructions and guidelines regarding the acceptable use of AI as a source within the context of the course.

## Appendix H: Artificial Intelligence Citation Examples

### APA style citation

In-text citation example:

(OpenAI, 2023)

Reference citation example:

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

Source: <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

### MLA style citation

In-text citation example:

("Describe the symbolism")

Reference citation example:

"Describe the symbolism of the green light in the book *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald" prompt.  
ChatGPT, 13 Feb. version, OpenAI, 8 Mar. 2023, chat.openai.com/chat.

Source: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>

Please note that the above examples are a general framework for citing an AI source like ChatGPT in APA and MLA format. However, it's always recommended to follow the specific guidelines provided by your instructor or institution for accurate and consistent citation practices.