

The U.S. Department of Education has established specific rules and regulations for distance education to ensure quality, protect student interests, and maintain federal financial aid eligibility. In alignment with these regulations and the standards set forth by our accrediting body, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), please carefully review the following guidelines and ensure that your proposal comprehensively addresses these items.

### **Distance Education**

A program is considered a distance education program when 50% or more of the program (units for completion of the program) will be offered utilizing distance education. WSCUC considers a distance education course to be one in which 50% or more of the instruction and interaction occurs using one or more of the technologies included in the definition of distance education, with the faculty and students being physically separate and pertains to the entire set of courses/units a student undertakes to complete the program.

An institution will undergo peer review by a Substantive Change Committee panel for its first three distance education programs, at a minimum. Additional Committee panel reviews may be required based on the institution's accreditation history, institutional context, or recommendation of staff.

### **Definition**

Distance Education is defined as:

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support faculty initiated regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies that may be used to offer distance education include:

- The internet;
- One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband, fiber optic, satellite, or wireless communication devices;
- Audioconference;
- Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in this definition

*For purposes of this definition, substantive interaction is engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and also includes at least two of the following:*

- *Providing direct instruction;*
- *Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework;*
- *Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;*
- *Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or*
- *Other instructional activities approved by the institution's or program's accrediting agency.*

*An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by, prior to the student's completion of a course or competency -*

- (i) Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and*
- (ii) Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.*

*(Distance education definition adopted from Code of Federal Regulations 34 CFR § 600.2)*

### **State Authorization**

The U.S. Department of Education requires institutions offering distance education courses to be authorized by each state in which the institution enrolls students (if such authorization is required by the state). Each state has a different set of requirements when it comes to allowing out-of-state universities to offer online degree programs to its residents. [Please review the states that UC San Diego is authorized to accept applications from.](#)