



# FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

777 GLADES ROAD • P.O. BOX 3091  
BOCA RATON, FLORIDA 33431-0991

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
(561) 297-3062 • Fax: (561) 297-3942

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** College Deans

**FROM:** John Pritchett, University Provost and  
Chief Academic Officer

**SUBJECT:** Distance Learning Scope and Policies

**DATE:** April 25, 2005

Attached you will find Florida Atlantic University's *Distance Learning Scope and Policies*. As you know, this has been in development for several years. It was drafted by the IRM Distance Learning Advisory Committee and reviewed by the Distance Education Committee of the University Faculty Senate. I want to express my special appreciation to Jeff Schilit, Associate Provost of IRM, and the IRM Distance Learning Advisory Committee for all their efforts in developing this needed policy.

As we have discussed previously at Council of Deans, this university-wide policy on Distance Learning establishes some broad guidelines. Within this framework, colleges may now develop their own policies and procedures for faculty development and approval of courses for Distance Learning formats. Once finalized, we would appreciate receiving a copy of your policy for our files.

cc: Provost's Advisory Council

IRM Distance Learning Advisory Committee

Roy Levow, President  
University Faculty Senate

David Lee, Interim President  
FAU Chapter, United Faculty of Florida

# FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

## Distance Learning Scope and Policies

### Introduction

Distance learning policies at FAU must recognize the variety of distance learning modes and the respective stages of development of each mode. The long-established Florida Engineering Education Delivery System (FEEDS) courses that are produced on DVD from live; regularly scheduled courses should be treated differently than new and emerging course delivery modes that utilize Web-based or web-enhanced approaches to learning. Therefore, the following policies are couched in terms of the delivery mode, as well as the stage of development of that mode and the instructor's experience and level of involvement. Policies are provided for designation of course type, reuse of materials and software, intellectual property rights, and registrar interfaces. Policies herein apply existing University policies or Board of Trustees - United Faculty of Florida (BOT-UFF) Collective Bargaining Agreement requirements to Distance Learning (DL) teaching and learning environments.

### Mission

- The program or course is consistent with the institution's role and mission.
- Review and approval processes ensure the appropriateness of the technology being used to meet program or course objectives.

### Distance learning Delivery Modes\*

FAU is a leader in the use of digital media in instruction. The nature of our distributed campuses requires extensive support from state-of-the art digital technologies. Students should be advised that any course may require use of a computer, computer labs, e-mail, the World Wide Web, or other digital resources and support software and these requirements are not necessarily in the course schedule.

The principal delivery modes of distance learning courses at FAU and their respective class schedule descriptions are:

BP - Regular class using Blackboard for some activities

BT - Fully online class that uses Blackboard

EC - Fully online class using eCollege

EP - Regular class using eCollege for some activities

IC - Fully online class using the Internet

MX - Mixed Mode regular class more than 25 percent Web

VW - Video Conf. with more than 25 pct Web Instruction

WA - Web-Assisted regular class less than 25 percent Web

\* Subject to change as needed

## Principles of Good Practice

FAU adheres to *The Principles of Good Practice* as defined by the Southern Regional Electronic Campus. They identify the expectations and requirements for participation in the Electronic Campus. *The Principles of Good Practice* suggest that:

### *Curriculum and Instruction*

- Each program or course of study results in learning appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.
- A degree or certificate program or course offered electronically is coherent and complete.
- The course provides for appropriate interaction between faculty and students and among students.
- Qualified faculty provides appropriate supervision of the program or course that is offered electronically.
- Academic standards for all programs or courses offered electronically are the same as those for other courses delivered at the institution where the programs originate.
- Student learning in programs or courses delivered electronically should be comparable to student learning in programs offered at the campus where the programs originate.

### *Institutional Context and Commitment*

#### Commitment to Support

- Policies for faculty evaluation include appropriate recognition of teaching and scholarly activities related to programs or courses offered electronically.
- The institution demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program or course for a period sufficient for students to complete a degree or certificate.

#### Students and Student Services

- The program or course provides students with clear, complete and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty-student interaction, prerequisite technology competencies and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services, financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.
- Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services and resources appropriate to support their learning.
- The institution has admission and acceptance criteria in place to assess whether the student has the background, knowledge, and technical skills required for undertaking the course or program.
- Advertising, recruiting and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the program and the services available.

#### Faculty Support

- The university provides faculty support services specifically related to teaching via an electronic system.
- The institution assures appropriate training for faculty who teach using technology.
- The program or course provides adequate equipment, software and communications to faculty for interaction with students, institutions and other faculty.

### Resources for Learning

- The university ensures that appropriate learning resources (such as online library resources) are available to students.
- The program or course evaluates the adequacy of, and the cost to students for access to learning resources. It also documents the use of electronic resources.

### *Evaluation and Assessment*

- The institution evaluates program and course effectiveness, including assessments of student learning, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction.
- At the completion of the program or course, the institution provides for assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course.
- Program or course announcements and electronic catalog entries provide appropriate information.
- Colleges offering courses and degree programs via distance education must establish a process for collecting and assessing comparative data in these courses and programs, to ensure comparability with more traditional programs, especially in regard to retention and student learning outcomes.

More information about *The Principles of Good Practice* can be found on the web at <http://www.srec.sreb.org/student/srecinfo/principles/principles.html>

## **Academic Conventions, Formats, and Practices for Distance learning**

*The Principles of Good Practice* provides three essential elements for setting pedagogical guidelines for academic practices in DL courses: (a) academic conventions, (b) formats, and (c) practices. Academic conventions are required elements of every DL course. Colleges assure that *The Principles of Good Practice* are met and each of the academic conventions meets established college standards when DL courses are approved by curriculum committees and offered in the college's schedule of classes. Formats and practices provide guidelines and examples that colleges can use to establish standards of acceptable practice that will ensure the quality of DL course delivery needed for learner achievement and satisfaction, faculty success, and gaining and maintaining accreditation. Each of these elements is defined below.

### *Academic Conventions*

Conventions refer to course elements that must be included in all distance learning courses. These components should include, but are not limited to, course orientation, course content, interaction, assessment, feedback, and evaluation.

### *Formats*

Formats refer to the tools or strategies that may be applied for a specific convention. For example, course content can be presented via face-to-face instruction, instructor authored content placed on the Web, Web links to instructional sites, assigned textbook readings, video recordings, CD ROMs, and so forth. Faculty make decisions about the formats they will use in distance learning courses based upon considerations such as course content, skills to be taught, available tools, student readiness, and primary instructional modality.

### *Practices*

Practices refer to the actual methods faculty choose to accomplish the formats or strategies under a particular academic convention. For example, instructor-to-learner interaction can be accomplished via live classroom sessions, e-mail, Web forums, chat rooms, or phone calls.

### **Faculty Development**

Well-trained, prepared and supported faculty is key to quality distance learning course delivery and student success. Therefore, the university provides faculty development opportunities to help faculty prepare to teach distance learning courses. The Instructional Technology Support Services (ITSS) provides faculty development and support for teaching and pedagogy in any course modality.

Faculty selected to teach a distance learning course must complete training as appropriate for their delivery method. By accepting the assignment to teach a DL course, they agree to participate as necessary in training sessions on the use of electronic media, promotion of student interaction and management of situations unique to the delivery of distance education. Colleges may wish to designate faculty experienced with distance learning delivery methods as mentors for faculty interested in teaching these courses.

### **Evaluation**

Student evaluations of instructors are conducted for all courses including distance learning modalities. Special institutional assessment of the impact of distance learning instruction and student learning is conducted **for all distance learning** courses. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analysis provides faculty support for assessing instructional effectiveness in distance learning courses and provides university administrators with data and information on the impact of distance learning on faculty and students. Longitudinal research and data collection include student demographics, withdrawal and retention rates, success rates, student and faculty satisfaction, and student learning styles.

For courses taught via the Videoconferencing process, the student evaluation must be administered differently. These courses, unlike distance learning courses conducted over the Internet, will not have access to the on-line evaluation instrument. Likewise, since these courses do meet in traditional classroom settings, albeit without an instructor present, the traditional process of providing someone to administer the paper and pencil version of the faculty evaluation instrument is not viable.

To assure the integrity of the evaluation, for both students and faculty, it will be the responsibility of the sponsoring department to arrange to have a proctor present who will administer the paper and pencil version of the faculty evaluation instrument. The sponsoring department must make sure there is a proctor available on all campuses that have students enrolled in the course.

## **General Policies on Intellectual Property Rights, Disclosure of Interest, Outside Employment or Conflict of Interest**

All policies listed below stem from existing Board of Trustees and university rules, policies, and requirements of the BOT/UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement as they apply to distance learning.

### ***Intellectual Property Rights***

Intellectual Property Rights are governed by FAU's Intellectual Property Policy (<http://www.fau.edu/research/ott-ipp.html>) and the 2003-2006 BOT/UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement (<http://www.fau.edu/facstaff/FAUBOTUFFCBA2003-2006.pdf>).

CD/DVD for FAU FEEDS courses are returned to the FEEDS office at the conclusion of the course and are destroyed. The FEEDS CD/DVD is not reused or resold; therefore, intellectual property rights of these materials are not normally an issue. Should the sale or license of such materials be proposed, the policies and procedures found in Sections C.1.j. and C.4 of the FAU Intellectual Property Policy would apply.

VW or Web-based courses developed with appreciable University Support as defined Sections C.1.j. and C.4 of the FAU Intellectual Property Policy are the property of FAU. The sale or licensing of these materials are governed by the FAU Intellectual Property Policy which complies with Florida Statute 1004.23 and the BOT/UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement.

### ***Sale or License Agreements***

In accordance with the FAU Intellectual Property Policy, if the faculty member (creator) believes that the VW or Web-based courses developed with University Support have commercial potential or the FAU faculty member (creator), department or college wish to make the VW or Web-based courses available for use other than for FAU courses the faculty member (creator) must disclose such VW or Web-based courses to FAU through the FAU Office of Technology Transfer per Sections C.2, C.4 and D.2 of the FAU Intellectual Property Policy prior to taking any action to sell or license the materials.

### ***Disclosure Process***

University personnel are required to promptly disclose all copyrightable works as set forth in Section D.2., of the FAU Intellectual Property Policy. Disclosure forms can be found online at <http://www.fau.edu/research/ott.html>. Disclosures are to be submitted to the FAU Office of Technology Transfer. If a creator believes that a given invention or work described in a disclosure is not the property of FAU, the disclosure should indicate the reasons for this belief so FAU can make an assessment. Section D.4 of the FAU Intellectual Property Policy states that the Office of Technology Transfer will assess the disclosure and make a recommendation to the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies as to the ownership interest of FAU and FAU's legal rights. FAU can elect to 1.) retain title of the disclosure and proceed with intellectual property protection and commercialization procedures; or 2.) decide the work is premature and ask the creator to resubmit the disclosure when additional information is obtained; or 3) waive FAU's ownership rights and release the disclosure to the creator.

## FAU Distance learning: Scope and Policies

### ***Outside Employment and Conflict of Interest Reporting Requirements***

An FAU VW or Web-based course may not be offered by a faculty member (creator) for use other than by FAU, such as another college, university, agency or private corporation, without disclosing the course to FAU through the FAU Office of Technology Transfer for appropriate approvals and procedure prior to engaging in such proposed activity. This process may include completing a FAU WORKS DISCLOSURE form found on line at <http://www.fau.edu/research/ott.html> and/or REPORT OF OUTSIDE BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY form, the UNIVERSITY EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES AND SERVICES form, the REPORT OF SPECIFIED INTEREST form, which are available on the Personnel Services' webpage.

### ***Academic Freedom and Responsibility***

Academic freedom and responsibility for faculty who are in the bargaining unit are described in Article 5 of the BOT/UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement . This article says in part, "The principal elements of academic freedom include the freedom to a) Present and discuss academic subjects, frankly and forthrightly, without fear of censorship, and to select instructional materials, and determine grades in accordance with University policies; b) Engage in scholarly and creative activity, and to publish results in a manner consistent with professional obligations". The implication of this language is that faculty controls the content of their courses subject to the above conditions and is free to publish results of their research. The university exercises control of course offerings as described in the following section.

## **Distance Learning Course Scheduling Procedures**

### ***Approval Process***

Credit courses must be listed in the FAU catalog before they may be submitted for consideration for delivery by distance learning unless approved as a Special Topics course.

The approval process for distance learning delivery of courses begins at the department level by submission of a request from the department chair to the college dean. Each college will establish a procedure for approval of courses for distance learning. FAU policy requires that a syllabus be on file for all courses regardless of delivery mode. For distance learning, the syllabus of the course and the strategies used to communicate the course content, testing or student evaluation procedures, i.e., the course format, will be examined against minimum standards established at the university level by a standards committee and any additional standards established by the college faculty.

### ***Process for Listing Distance Learning Courses in the Class Schedule***

The process for listing distance learning courses in the class schedule is initiated by department chairs in cooperation with the college distance learning coordinator or appropriate designee within each college. Distance learning courses will be developed and entered into the master class schedule with approval of the department chair. The Director of Online Client Services or equivalent will review the master schedule in its first and subsequent edits to **identify all** distance learning courses proposed for offering by the colleges. The Instructional Technologies Support Services (ITSS) monitors and facilitates the development of all distance learning courses in the

## FAU Distance learning: Scope and Policies

official university schedule and the registrar publishes the Distance Learning schedule. The Registrar's office, ITSS, and the professors will ensure that appropriate classrooms are scheduled for VW and mixed mode courses or that arrangements have been made to provide academic (e.g., testing or library access) and student support (e.g., registration, financial aid, advisement or orientation) to the distant learners. FEEDS courses will be listed directly in the class schedule by the College of Engineering and Computer Science distance learning coordinator.

It is important to make the distinction between determinations of course content and the decision that a course will be offered. The former decision rests with the faculty. The latter decision is made through the administrative approval process described in this section. In the event of a disagreement over whether the course will be offered, the final decision to offer any course at the university, regardless of delivery mode, is made by the Dean of the College in consultation with department chairs.

### **Course and Program Accreditation Standards Compliance**

The university is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools that has published a draft policy, *Definitions and Guidelines for Distance Education*. The Office of Academic Affairs is responsible for determining that the guidelines are met. The general areas of the guidelines that must be addressed include: Curriculum and Instruction (rigor of program, appropriate technologies, currency of materials, interaction between student and faculty and among students), Evaluation and Assessment (assess student success, educational effectiveness, integrity), Library and Learning Resources (access to library resources and technology support), and Student Services (financial aid, academic advising, placement and counseling, student grievances, informational materials, student admission standards). Many of the support systems are in the process of development and testing. The responsibility of assuring that the overall systems are in place to support distance learning programs or courses rests with the Director of Online Client Services.

April 7, 2005