

# BLUE MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

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## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**AREA:** Academic Affairs

**NUMBER:** Policy 2.29

**SUBJECT:** Distance Education

Blue Mountain College delivers educational programs and services in a variety of ways, including distance education. This policy addresses distance education that involves online and blended/hybrid courses.

1. Definition of Terms

The following definitions apply to the use of this policy.

A. Distance Education

Distance Education refers to 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.” (SACSCOC definition).

B. Online Course: refers to an Internet-based process in which more than 50% of instruction occurs between the instructor and learner.

C. Blended/Hybrid Course: integrates a combination of traditional classroom and online activities and replaces more than 25% but less than 50% of classroom time with online activities.

2. Instructional Methods and Academic Responsibility

Faculty members have final responsibility for determining the pedagogies and instructional methods most appropriate for the instructional modules, courses, and/or academic programs which the College offers. Among the factors to be considered in determining the suitability of offering a course through the use of technology:

- (a) Is the use of technology appropriate to the course?
- (b) Does the use of technology improve the quality of the course?
- (c) Does sufficient student demand exist?
- (d) Are the necessary instructional and student support resources available to facilitate the use of technology (for example, access to advising and information sources)?

3. Quality

The quality of instructional modules, courses, and academic programs delivered through distance education must be at least equivalent to the quality of curricular offerings currently approved at Blue Mountain College. The purposes of distance education are to enhance student engagement in learning and to increase the access of students to faculty, to educational resources, and to each other. If distance education results in increased class sizes or student-faculty ratios beyond

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traditional classroom and curricular standards, additional resources or workload adjustments necessary to maintain the quality of instruction will be provided.

Criteria for assessing distance education shall be developed by appropriate committees and the academic units from which the instruction originates. Distance education courses shall be held to the same standards as classroom-based instruction when reviewed by department and College committees.

### 4. Resources in Support of Distance Education

Needs for enhancement in areas such as access to library resources, information technology, instructional design and technical support, faculty development in the use of technology, computer and network support, and student services should be identified at the department and college levels so that the College can plan for the appropriate infrastructure to support distance education. Cross-unit and cross-institutional sharing of learning and resources, to the extent possible, is expected.

### 5. Compensation for Online Course Development

Faculty developing or updating online courses will be compensated at the College rate or will receive a reduced teaching load.

### 6. Impact on Faculty Load

Faculty teaching distance education courses will maintain the normal teaching load and the distance education course will be included in the total load. Class size for distance education courses will be limited to 25 students.

### 7. Ownership of Online Course Content

Online course content created by faculty members will be solely owned by Blue Mountain College where:

- the faculty member is given release time to create the materials; or
- the faculty member is employed to create specific online course content.

### 8. Time Requirements for Semester Hour Credit

Online and blended/hybrid courses must meet the same credit hour requirement as face-to-face courses. Faculty teaching online and blended/hybrid courses must account for 12.5 hours of instructional time and 25 hours of student work for each credit hour. A three credit course requires 112.5 hours of instructional time and student work. Logging on constitutes neither active faculty teaching nor active student learning. Faculty must demonstrate active faculty engagement in online teaching/instructing students. Methods such as discussion boards, chats, etc. can serve as instructional time.

### 9. Student Information and Support

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- A. The online 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.
  - B. Online courses and programs will provide an opportunity for interaction between students and the faculty member responsible for the course, so that students can receive prompt responses to their questions. Faculty should respond to student requests in most cases within 24 hours.
  - C. The Class Schedule will clearly identify online courses through the use of the course section designated with an “O” or in other appropriate ways so that students have access to this information before enrolling in a course or program.
  - D. The College will use admissions criteria to assess whether the student has the background, knowledge and technical skills required for undertaking the online course or program.
  - E. Advertising, recruiting and admissions materials will clearly and accurately represent the online program and the services available.
  - F. Criteria for student success and expected outcomes in distance education courses and programs will be as rigorous and comprehensive as those used in classroom-based courses and will be communicated to students in all distance education materials.
  - G. Students enrolled in distance education courses are subject to the same College policies and procedures applicable to students attending courses on campus. Academic standards regarding cheating, plagiarism, and appropriate behavior will be clearly communicated to students in distance learning courses and programs. [Cross reference with Policy 2.19: Academic Honesty and Integrity] Distance Education courses may require use of a secure lockdown browser such as “Respondus” to ensure academic honesty and integrity. In addition, all online courses are required to have the final examination video proctored online.
  - H. Each student enrolled in a distance education course or program will be informed of available instructional support, student services, library resources, and disabled student support services. There will be coordination between faculty and library staff and student services staff to ensure adequate access and training for distance education students.
  - I. Technical support consistent with that available to on-campus students will be made available to students enrolled in distance education courses.
9. Faculty Responsibilities and Support
- A. Distance Education courses will meet all course objectives normally covered in the classroom-based course and expectations for student outcomes will be the same.

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- B. While the procedures may vary from classroom-based courses, evaluation of distance education courses will be conducted. Performance appraisal of faculty teaching distance education courses will also be conducted.
- C. The College will make available appropriate training and support services to faculty to prepare and support them in developing and teaching distance education courses. No faculty will be allowed to teach courses in the distance education format unless they have availed themselves of these services and training.
- D. The course syllabus will indicate if the course is blended/hybrid or online. In addition to information required in the syllabi, the following information will be included in course outlines for distance education courses:
  - 1) How participation in distance education activities will be assessed and graded (e.g., participation in chat sessions, frequency of web access, postings, etc.);
  - 2) Whether and how the instructor will track student activities, for example, by maintaining a copy/log of discussions and chat session, etc.;
  - 3) Weekly deadlines for posting and due dates need to be stated (dates and times);
  - 4) Office/contact hours (including items such as how quickly the instructor will respond to e-mail questions and assignments, how often the instructor will be online, and alternate communication options);
  - 5) Safeguards as to how student work will be authenticated;
  - 6) Acceptable student behavior in the use of technology (as identified in Policy 2.22: Acceptable Use of Technology);
  - 7) Alternative procedures for submitting work, in the event of technical problems.

## 10. Approval of Online Courses and Programs

### A. New Online Programs

Online degree programs (including majors, minor, emphases, and concentrations) will be reviewed in accordance with Policy 2.31: Curriculum and Program Approval and Program Closure and the provisions of this document. Any department or program offering online programs (those in which more than half of the units are offered through online instruction) will be required to meet the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

### B. New Online Courses

Consistent with Policy 2.31: Curriculum and Program Approval and Program Closure, the Academic Dean's Council and/or the Graduate Council will review any online course that is proposed for degree credit.

### C. Converting Existing Courses or Sections to an Online Format

When a course has been approved in accordance with Policy 2.31: Curriculum and Program Approval and Program Closure, and one or more sections of the course are redesigned using an online format, the department proposing the change will provide evidence to the Academic Dean's Council, including a revised course syllabus, that the objectives and content of the course are comparable to the classroom-based course and adhere to this policy. The faculty will review the documentation and forward a

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recommendation to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Existing courses that were approved as classroom-based courses will not be offered as online courses without appropriate curriculum review and approval.

## 11. General Information for Online Courses

### A. Technical Requirements

Students should satisfy the technical proficiencies required for the online course.

If the online course has a required real-time interactive component, students must have access to a computer and the internet at the time(s) required and must participate in real-time interactions at the time(s) indicated in the syllabus.

Students must have access to personal computers other than those owned by the College. These personal computers must have a web cam which is necessary for video proctoring.

Registered students are given a BMC email account which stays active as long as a student is enrolled at the institution. Online students and professors are required to use their BMC email accounts throughout coursework, not personal accounts. All correspondence regarding online courses will be emailed to the student's BMC email account.

### B. Registration and Enrollment of New Students

Students not previously enrolled at the College should consult the online course schedule for application registration deadlines.

All students must be registered at the College in order to participate in a class and receive credit.

### C. Registration and Enrollment of Traditional, On-ground Students

Policies concerning course registration, withdrawal, satisfactory progress, grading and other academic matters apply to online courses.

Traditional, on-ground students must obtain approval from their academic advisor before registering for an online course. Traditional, on-ground students may take no more than one three credit hour online course per semester unless approved by the Department Chair and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and then only under extenuating circumstances.

Registration for an online course by currently enrolled students is the same as for classroom based courses.

### D. Registration and Enrollment of Students in an Online Program

Policies concerning course registration, withdrawal, satisfactory progress, grading and other academic matters apply to online programs.

Students enrolled in online programs must obtain approval from their academic advisor and the director of the online program before registering for an online course.

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## E. Student Agreement Required

Students enrolled in online courses and programs must agree to abide by the Procedures to Policy 2.22: Acceptable Use of Technology.

## F. Financial Aid

Financial assistance is available for degree-seeking, eligible students enrolled in online courses. Students must meet federal eligibility requirements and be enrolled for a minimum of six credit hours. For more information, students should contact the Office of Financial Aid.

## G. Tuition and Fees for Online Courses

### 1. Tuition and Fees for Students Enrolled in Online-only Courses

Online-only students including those enrolled in online programs will be assessed a combined charge of tuition and registration fee per semester hour. In addition, all students in online courses will be charged a \$12 course fee for video proctoring of the final examination.

### 2. Tuition and Fees for Students Enrolled in both Classroom-based and Online Courses

Tuition and fees for students enrolled in both classroom-based and online courses will be the same. Tuition rates and registration fees are posted on the Prospective Student Section on the BMC Web site at [www/bmc.edu](http://www/bmc.edu).

## H. Dropping Online Courses by Traditional, On-ground Students

A student may receive a refund for course tuition, if the course is dropped prior to the fifth day after the student receives access to course content. After the student receives access to course content and after four days of access, the course tuition is non-refundable. Students who officially drop an online course after the refund deadline and during the first week of the online term will receive a "W" grade in the class. Students who drop an online course after the first week will receive a "WP" or "WF." Students may not drop an online course after the fourth week of the online term.

## I. Withdrawal from Online Programs

A student enrolled in an online program and who officially withdraws will be refunded tuition based on the formula outlined in the College Catalog.

Students who officially withdraw from online courses will receive a "W" grade through the first week of the online term. Students who withdraw after the first week will receive a "WP" or "WF." Students may not withdraw from the online course after the fourth week of the online term.

## J. Online Class Attendance

Blue Mountain College requires class attendance for online courses. According to Policy

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2.10, students who miss 25% of the time will receive an automatic “F” in the course. Each online professor will include an attendance requirement in the syllabus. Since each of the online courses meets eight weeks, two weeks of non-attendance, which is 25% of the time in the course, will result in an automatic “F.” Seventy-five percent of the assignments for the week must be completed within the week to receive full attendance.

## K. Verification of The Identity of Students Enrolled in Distance Education

Blue Mountain College verifies the identity of the student enrolled in distance education courses or programs by one or more of the following means:

- Secure login and pass code
- Video Proctored examinations

## 12. Coordination of this Policy with Other College Policies

Other matters related to distance education (assessment of curriculum quality, determination of the fair use of copyrighted material, and long-range academic planning and capital budgeting) are governed by other College policies.

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