



ADDENDUM #2- TO THE INSTITUTIONAL CATALOG 2021-2022

Revised January 28, 2022



Addendum to the General Catalog 2021-2022

The following is the amendment to the Institution's Catalog aligned to present the new amended Institutional Distance Education Policy.

Page 102- Amends the definition of the student enrolled in an approved program under the Distance Education Modality.

STUDENTS ENROLLED ONLINE

A student will be considered under the online modality, as long as he/she is enrolled in an approved academic program under the distance education modality (hybrid program or online program). A hybrid program is one that offers fully online courses and face-to-face courses such as laboratory courses and internships. The suggested program of study of the student in this modality clearly identifies the courses of the program that will be offered completely online and those that must be taken face-to-face, in order to fulfill the objectives of the program. An online program is one that offers its courses completely online.

Page 118- The Institutional Policy for programs under the non-face-to-face and hybrid study modality is amended and the new Institutional Distance Education Policy is published.

INSTITUTIONAL DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Columbia Central University (CCU) recognizes the value of distance education as a means to further its educational mission and reach a diverse student population with a wide range of needs. The purpose of this policy is to provide institutional standards and definitions for distance education in order to guarantee the academic quality that characterizes CCU is maintained in all distance education programs and courses. This policy will be applicable to all administrative staff, faculty, and students of all CCU campuses, distance education programs, and online courses

as defined in the Terms and Definitions section of this policy; and contractors related to distance education.

APPLICABILITY

This policy shall apply to all administrative staff, faculty, and students of all CCU campuses, distance education programs and courses as defined in this policy, and distance education related contractors.

DEFINITIONS

- **Distance Education:** Educational process in which all or most of the instruction occurs with faculty and student in different locations using one or more types of technology to support regular and substantial interaction synchronously (in real time) or asynchronously between parties in order to develop skills and competencies in students. The types of technology that can be used are internet, satellite communication, and audio and video conferencing.
- **Online Program:** Academic program authorized to be offered through distance education delivery method. In these programs, 100% of the required courses are offered in a distance education format.
- **Hybrid Program:** Academic program authorized to be offer through distance education delivery method in a combination of onsite and online courses. For ACEN-authorized programs, if 25% or more of nursing courses are offered online.
- **Onsite Program:** Academic program authorized to be offered in face-to-face mode in the campuses for which it is authorized. In these programs, up to 49% of the courses could be offered online.
- **Online Course:** Course that offers 100% of the total hours of instruction through the internet using the synchronous and asynchronous communication tools available on the Canvas LMS.
- **Onsite Course:** Course that requires the physical presence of the professor and the student(s) in the classroom and/or university laboratory for 100% of the hours of instruction.
- **Onsite Course with Online Support:** Face-to-face course that integrates the Canvas platform as a support resource for the teaching and learning process. This support can be

for sending assignments, reviewing material, practice exercises, among others. This support does not replace synchronous meetings according to scheduled times. Synchronous meetings could be with faculty and students in the classroom or with faculty in the classroom and students from home or elsewhere connected through MS Teams on Canvas LMS.

- **Faculty:** Any qualified person who performs instructional activities in a course. Is responsible for the quality and content of instruction.
- **Substantial Interaction:** Engage the student in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, and includes at least two of the following: (i) provide direct instruction, (ii) assess or provide feedback on student work in the course, (iii) provide information or answer questions about the content of the course or competition, (iv) facilitate a group discussion about the content of the course or competition, (v) other instructional activities approved by the regulatory entities.

PROVISIONS

To maintain the highest academic quality, consistent with our mission and institutional and accreditation standards, all distance education programs and courses offered by CCU must meet the requirements established in this policy. The requirements are based on the standards for the evaluation of distance education of Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) ; and have been specifically developed based on CCU's mission and context.

Fulfillment of the mission and policy

All distance education efforts must be consistent with the institutional mission and are subject to CCU policies.

Academic Quality

All distance education programs and courses will meet same academic requirements, quality standards, and student learning objective's evaluation of face-to-face programs or courses offered by CCU. The faculty must guarantee same academic standards for distance education students as those that apply to face-to-face students and provide syllabuses that contain rubrics to evaluate the learning expectations of the students.

To ensure academic quality, CCU will evaluate the syllabi, planned learning outcomes, and effectiveness evaluations of distance education courses according to consistent standards that are used with face-to-face courses.

Delivery Methods

All online courses and face-to-face courses with online support will use the Canvas LMS to deliver prescribed and validated academic content. Faculty is required to enrich the course with additional content of their own and may integrate other websites or external tools at their discretion, but they must be accessible or linked through Canvas LMS.

Regardless of the modality used, reasonable efforts must be made to ensure that all course content is accessible to students with disabilities.

All faculty teaching distance education must comply with federal and state law and university copyright policy in the preparation and delivery of course material.

Faculty and administrative staff must take the same care with the educational files and records of distance education students as they do with face-to-face students.

Student Identity Verification

CCU has to authenticate the identity of all distance education students (hybrid programs and online programs). During the admission process, the applicant will be required to present copy of a state identity document. For class registration, student must send the same identity document legalized by a notary of the country or state in which he/she reside. This document must be the National Identity Document (DNI), identification issued by the state or country of origin or passport valid by the expiration date. In the event that the applicant can appear in person at the CCU offices, he/she have the option of validating their identification at our offices without notarization.

All students at CCU are provided a unique university-issued username and password for secure access to university systems, including for distance learning, after registration process is completed. It is against university policies for a user to give someone his or her password or to allow others to use his or her account (Acceptable Use of Technology Policy, Online Services Use and Security Policy, and the Institutional Policy on Copyright and Academic Integrity).

Faculty must verify distance learning student identity prior to any in-person or online classroom activity and may require students to present a state or federal government-issued photo ID or turn on their camera at any time to receive the service or participate in the activity. When enrolling in an online course, the student accepts the use of the camera and the microphone in order to verify his/her identity. For more information on the use of cameras, see Guidelines for camera usage in distance education.

Institutional Support

Distance education students shall have access to all the academic support services, instructional equipment and services, campus events, and other non-academic activities, which the teaching instruction provides for other students. Support services may include but are not limited to:

- **Academic Advising:** students can visit the campus for in-person advising. Students who are unable to attend campus may receive academic advising by phone, email, or other electronic means. In such cases, students should contact the academic dean of the campus to obtain contact information for their advisor.
- **Counseling:** students can receive support from the Guidance and Counseling Office in person, by phone, email, or other electronic means.
- **Disability Support Services:** students needing accommodations for disabilities must apply to Counseling Office in person, by phone, email, or other electronic means. The application must include medical certification that specifies the required accommodation and shall be request it in advance.
- **Tutoring Services:** students can request the service through the Counseling Office in person, by phone, email or by other electronic means. They can also be referred by the faculty, retention official, or other academic staff.
- **Library and Learning Resources:** CCU library has a wide range of support systems for distance education, including virtual resources, virtual reference, open access resources, electronic books, among others. This service is integrated into all courses through the Canvas LMS.
- **Canvas Support:** for any assistance related to Canvas LMS, users can submit a service request by email at apoyocanvas@columbiacentral.edu.

- **Technical Support:** for technical support, users can submit a service request by email at apoyotecnico@columbiacentral.edu or call 787-745-7005 (Monday to Friday 8:00am - 5:00pm).

For more details on institutional support services, please refer to the Student Consumer Handbook.

Requirements and Expectations for Distance Education Faculty

As with face-to-face courses, faculty assumes primary responsibility and oversight for online courses, ensuring both the rigor of the courses and the quality of the instruction.

Validate student attendance: every faculty has to contact each student enrolled in online course to ensure that the student accesses it during the first two weeks of class. In addition, he/she must register student attendance at Campus Portal.

Office Hours: each distance education faculty shall schedule a minimum of two (2) synchronous office hours per week to attend students through Canvas LMS tolls. Faculty must report these hours to Academic Dean and post then on the online course home page the first week of class.

Response Time: faculty in online courses are required to maintain a maximum response time of 24 working hours to answer students' emails or Canvas messages and are expected to display high levels of social and cognitive presence, as well as high-quality writing skills.

High-quality social presence is defined as:

- Faculty accesses the course and the discussion forums several times a week.
- Faculty publishes announcements or send course communications several times a week.
- Posts are directed at students. Professor demonstrates professional behavior and evidence of respect for diversity and the viewpoints of others.

High-quality cognitive presence is defined as:

- Professor encourages discussion.
- Posts are clear, original, and relevant.

- Reasoning shows well-developed analytical skills and critical thinking.
- Faculty encourages the students to achieve the objectives.
- Faculty provides appropriate supporting details and examples.

High-quality writing skills are defined as:

- All posts are well written and demonstrate accurate spelling and grammar, good organization, careful editing, conciseness, and clarity.

For detailed information on communication expectations, see the Policy for Faculty-Student Communication in Distance Education.

Interaction: interaction, like communication, is a vital factor in distance education. A student who feels engaged in the course is more likely to complete it and report a positive distance learning experience. It is the professor's responsibility to integrate strategies for substantial interaction with students and between students. This interaction can occur synchronously (videoconference, chats, polls, telephone) or asynchronously (discussion forums, videos, audios, announcements, activities, exercises, links to web pages, surveys). Faculty is responsible for instructing students and managing their online courses with appropriate and innovative teaching techniques to engage students in active learning in order to achieve desired learning outcomes. All instructors must include in the online course a personalized welcome, their contact information and synchronous office hours, academic closing at the end of each module and a course recap message prior to concluding the course. For more details see the Course Planning Guide.

Student Referrals: Faculty of online courses, as in face-to-face courses, are expected to refer students to the various service offices as needed. Referrals must include, but are not limited to retention, orientation and counseling, tutoring, library.

Qualifications: All faculty must obtain certification in distance education and use of the Canvas LMS prior to offering an online course. This requirement may be obtained through the university's Faculty Training in Distance Education Fundamentals and Canvas LMS course, through an organization or entity previously approved by the vice presidency of academic affairs, or when it is determined that previous teaching experience is sufficient to guarantee the quality of instruction. If faculty obtains the certification from an external organization or entity, he/she must submit a copy of the certificate awarded that

demonstrates it. It will be the associate vice-presidency of curricular innovation and distance education in collaboration with the vice-presidency of academic affairs who will determine if the previous experience of the professor is sufficient to exempt him/she from certification. In addition, online teaching evaluations to faculty will be considered for future course assignments. All professors who take the Teacher Training course offered by CCU must teach one online course prior to receiving the corresponding certificate. For more details see the Faculty Recruitment Manual and Lecturer Manual.

Faculty evaluations: It is the responsibility of the academic deans to coordinate the faculty evaluation process, according to the procedures described in the Faculty Evaluation Manual. In addition, students have the opportunity to evaluate the performance of the faculty in each online course. All faculty assigned to an online course will be evaluated in their administrative and teaching management, regardless of their type of contract.

Academic load: Distance education courses are part of the teaching load of the faculty, with the same compensation as face-to-face courses. Online courses can also be taught as an overload, with the same compensation rate as face-to-face courses. Any exception will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and the Vice President for Academic Affairs will make the final determination. For more details see the Faculty Manual.

Ownership of Materials: Faculty must be aware of copyright, trademark, and licensing provisions when offering distance education courses, and therefore must be familiar with CCU's Copyright and Academic Integrity Policy. Examples include the use of photographs, graphics, text selections, audio, or video clips. It is the faculty responsibility to acquire and document the usual permissions prior use of protected material. Ownership rights to materials developed by the faculty are governed by the relevant agreement between the faculty member and CCU and will be determined, in part, by whether or not the faculty member was paid additional compensation (stipend) for developing these materials. "Course Materials" shall include additional course notes, lectures, syllabi, reading lists, assignments, tests, guides, content in any media (written, visual, audio), among others.

Course Development Agreement with Stipend: CCU will own and copyright materials in distance education courses for which the faculty member will receive additional compensation based on the parties' course development agreement.

Non-Stipend Course Development Agreement: All faculty members must enrich the prescribed content of distance education courses as part of their duties without receiving any additional compensation. In this case, faculty has the rights to the materials for their exclusive use. This content will not be part of the course template on future occasions. CCU may, with the written permission of the professor, receive a non-exclusive right to use the materials for educational purposes, including derivative use rights, regardless of whether the professor is assigned to teach the course or remains employed by the university.

Development and approval of online courses

All online courses at CCU are considered comparable to face-to-face courses and adhere to the same standards, prerequisites, and course requirements as face-to-face sections of equal courses. To encourage high-quality course offerings, online courses must not only meet the same quality standards as face-to-face courses, but additional review is also necessary to ensure the suitability and feasibility of CCU's chosen instructional format for teach the course. Online courses must be approved by CCU before being taught.

The Associate Vice President for Curriculum Innovation and Distance Education is responsible for the development and implementation of online courses and supports the Subject Matter Expert (SME) in aspects of course design and development. This support is offered through a combination of online activities, face-to-face workshops and individual consultations that prepare SMEs to develop courses in line with CCU's course quality review, either by internal CCU staff or external staff hired to said purposes.

All courses will be designed based on 8 modules equivalent to: 1 week for each module in graduate courses and 1 week in module one and two weeks in modules 2 to 8 in undergraduate courses.

Review of Course Design Quality

Based on the standards of best practices, as well as the principles of research and instructional design, CCU carries out several processes to guarantee the quality of online courses and support continuous improvements in them. During the course development process, the quality of the course is addressed in the following:

- Originality, innovation, timeliness, and depth of the content
- Alignment of content with objectives, instructional activities, and assessments
- Interaction and feedback
- Grammar and orthography
- Technology and course tools

Distance Learner Requirements and Expectations

Distance learning students will be held to the same academic standards as face-to-face students and are subject to the Institutional Policy on Copyright and Academic Integrity and other student conduct policies. Distance learning students should also be aware of other relevant academic policies and regulations, including those related to admission, registration, tuition, refund, credit transfer, and attendance. It is the student's responsibility to check the university's website for more details on institutional policies.

CCU may limit the extent to which students enrolled in face-to-face programs may take online courses in their program of study to comply with applicable state and federal regulations.

Every student of an online course has the responsibility to:

- Complete the affidavit when registering to verify his/her identity. If he/she can present documents onsite, will be exempt from this responsibility.
- Accept the use of the camera and microphone in order to verify his/her identity.
- Participate in the training on the use and management of the Canvas platform that the university offers each semester or review the tutorials on www.comousacanvas.com.
- Access Canvas LMS at least once a week to carry out the activities and actively participate in the enrolled online course.
- Study the contents offered, investigate the indicated topics, and meet the requirements according to the course syllabus.

- Send some communication to faculty with a frequency not greater than 14 calendar days. This communication may be course content related.
- Send any communication to another classmate related to any group activity of the course with a frequency not greater than 14 calendar days.
- Respect the correct use of information sources and the copyright of all content susceptible to intellectual property.

For more details, see the Institutional Attendance Policy.