



Principles of Good Practice for Electronically Offered Academic Degree and Certificate Programs

Preamble: These Principles are the product of a WCET (Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications) project, "Balancing Quality and Access: Reducing State Policy Barriers to Electronically Delivered Higher Education Programs." The project, supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, fostered an interstate environment that encourages the electronic provision of quality higher education programs across state lines. The Principles were developed by a group representing the Western states' higher education regulating agencies, higher education institutions, and the regional accrediting community. The principles were first published in 1995.

Recognizing that the context for learning in our society is undergoing profound changes, those charged with developing the Principles have tried not to tie them to or compare them to traditional campus structures. The Principles are also designed to be sufficiently flexible that institutions offering a range of programs--from graduate degrees to certificates--will find them useful.

Several assumptions form the basis for these Principles:

- The electronically offered program is provided by or through an institution that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body.
- The institution's programs holding specialized accreditation meet the same requirements when offered electronically.
- The "institution" may be a traditional higher education institution, a consortium of such institutions, or another type of organization or entity.
- These Principles address programs rather than individual courses.
- It is the institution's responsibility to review educational programs it provides via technology in terms of its own internally applied definitions of these Principles.

THE PRINCIPLES

▲ Curriculum and Instruction

- Each program of study results in learning outcomes appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded.
- An electronically offered degree or certificate program is coherent and complete.
- The program provides for appropriate real-time or delayed interaction between faculty and students and among students.
- Qualified faculty provide appropriate oversight of the program electronically offered.



▲ Institutional Context and Commitment

Role and Mission

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

Faculty Support

- The program provides faculty support services specifically related to teaching via an electronic system.
- The program provides training for faculty who teach via the use of technology.

Resources for Learning

- The program ensures that appropriate learning resources are available to students.

Students and Student Services

- The program provides students with clear, complete, and timely information on the curriculum, course and degree requirements, nature of faculty/student interaction, assumptions about technological competence and skills, technical equipment requirements, availability of academic support services and financial aid resources, and costs and payment policies.
- Enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support their learning.
- Accepted students have the background, knowledge, and technical skills needed to undertake the program.
- Advertising, recruiting, and admissions materials clearly and accurately represent the program and the services available.

Commitment to Support

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



▲ Evaluation and Assessment

- The institution evaluates the program's educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction. Students have access to such program evaluation data.
- The institution provides for assessment and documentation of student achievement in each course and at completion of the program.

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