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Distance Learning at Georgia Regents University

Policy Owner: Director of Distance Education	Effective Date:	Fall 2013
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Point of Contact: Director of Distance Education	Version #:	1
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Affected Organizations (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> all that apply): <input type="checkbox"/> Enterprise <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> Health System	Affected Stakeholders (<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> all that apply): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> All Employees <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Students <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="text"/>
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Policy Statement

Include a clear, concise statement of the policy addressing the following: What is expected, when the policy applies, and any major conditions or restrictions that apply.

The intent of this policy is to provide a framework for the development and maintenance of distance education programs at Georgia Regents University.

Reason for Policy

Include a clear, concise statement of the reason this policy is needed addressing the following: the overarching basis for the policy, what those involved need to do (but not procedures), the problem or conflict the policy is designed to resolve, and any legal or regulatory reasons for policy.

Georgia Regents University offers a variety of distance learning programs and courses designed to help meet the evolving learning needs of students who prefer the online format or require more flexibility in their coursework.

Distance learning should provide opportunities for a demographic that needs accessible education beyond the physical campus. Distance programs and courses are designed for students who may be from another state where a similar program/course is not offered, may not be able to attend a class at a specific time, day or place due to balancing their career, family responsibilities, travel, and/or physical challenges.

Currently, GRU offers degree programs and courses through non-traditional delivery methods via the Internet utilizing synchronous and asynchronous technologies. Courses utilize the Desire2Learn learning management system and other online educational tools such as Echo360 lecture viewing, Cisco WebEx synchronous audio and video chatting, online testing systems, and related technologies. These courses are usually asynchronous and electronically interactive, but may use a combination of live chat rooms, threaded discussions, electronic bulletin boards, email and/or interactive Web pages. Some courses are delivered via synchronous video conferencing with a professor at one site delivering live two-way video instruction to students at another site. The content and delivery of distance programs and courses is the responsibility of the faculty.

Academic Regulations and Curriculum

Unless otherwise noted, all Georgia Regents University policies, standards, academic regulations and guidelines apply to distance education programs and courses.

The academic units provide oversight of programs that are offered via distance education. They keep the

curriculum current, supply all necessary resources, and ensure there are appropriate learning outcomes for the degree or certificate awarded. The academic unit will also perform on-going evaluation and assessment for each distance program and course.

Security Measures for Identification

Georgia Regents University has put security measures in place to ensure identify verification. GRU authenticates that the student who registers for a distance learning course is the same student who participates in, completes, and receives the credit for the course by using the following methods:

1. Requiring unique usernames and secure passwords on which students' access to all secure online and network campus resources are based. These online campus resources include, but are not limited to, access to the student information system (Banner), and the campus learning management system (Desire2Learn) through which students access their online coursework, electronic mail, and related systems. Passwords must be changed every 180 days and must adhere to certain complexity requirements. These procedures are outlined in the Acceptable Use Policies.
2. Requiring identification in the registration process including social security number during the application process and a photocopy of the student driver's license or some other form of identification at the time of application. A photocopied/faxed copy will be acceptable if the student is a distance-learning student and cannot travel to campus.
3. Some online courses require students to travel to an approved testing site for proctored exams. At each testing site, the proctor is required to check the identity of the student against an official form of ID (state-issued driver's license, passport, or student ID).
4. Some online courses utilize high stakes electronic exam software to administer examinations. These systems require students to log on to the Learning Management System with their unique ID and password and lock down the students computer during the testing process.

Student Services

Distance education students will have reasonable and adequate access to student services necessary to support successful completion of courses and programs. The services will be comparable to those offered to on campus students.

Online Tuition

All tuition and fees associated with distance courses will be collected by the Georgia Regents University Business Office. Students are informed in advance of any additional charges associated with distance learning degree programs/courses at the time of registration. Charges are visible in the student information system (Pounce) upon billing. In addition, all tuition and fee schedules are publicly available on the Georgia Regents University website, including the costs associated with online courses so that students are notified in advance of registration of any additional expenses. All departments must provide all tuition and fee information to the University tuition and fee committee each semester.

Online Student Privacy Protection

All faculty, staff and students should comply by FERPA. Georgia Regents University abides by the Family

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Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in protecting the confidentiality of student records. Written information about this act, and GRU's process for complying with its provisions, are published on the institutional website which is publicly available to all students. Students are notified of their FERPA rights during orientation and reminded annually thereafter through the student handbook, the Course Catalog, the Office of the Registrar web site, and an annual notification to each student via his or her official GRU e-mail address.

If a student believes that GRU has failed to comply with the requirements of FERPA, the student has the right to file a complaint of the alleged violation with the U.S. Department of Education. To ensure that faculty and staff understand and carry out the commitments to confidentiality, integrity, and security of student academic records, GRU requires annual FERPA training as part of its standard employee-compliance training.

GRU utilizes Banner as the university-wide student information management system to store and manage electronic student information. In addition, GRU has multiple processes and procedures in place to ensure protection of security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records.

Definitions [If Necessary]: These definitions apply to terms as they are used in this policy:

Include any terms used in the document (try to keep definitions the same as in other policies), unfamiliar or technical terms, or terms that have specialized meaning in this policy. Please list terms alphabetically.

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools distance education definition:
“For the purposes of the commissions’ accreditation review, distance education is defined as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may employ correspondence study, or audio, video, or computer technologies. “

Process/Procedures

Insert the departmental website address where the procedures used to support this policy are located so that those affected by the policy clearly understand what they must do to comply and what your departmental processes are.

<http://gru.edu/registrar/>
<http://www.usg.edu/>

Forms/Related Documents

Identify the form(s) which must be used to comply with the policy; explain the purpose of each form; provide a hypertext link to each form; please list the forms alphabetically.

University System of Georgia Handbooks, Forms, Manuals, Guides and Regulations

http://www.usg.edu/academic_programs/external

Georgia Regents University State Authorization for Distance Education Website

<http://gru.edu/registrar/distanceeducation.php>

Appendices

Optional (include only if needed). Use this section to cite the location of lengthy or complex references that applies to a few people.

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Approving Officer's Name(s)	Ricardo Azziz, MD, MPH, MBA
Signature(s)	
Title(s)	President, Georgia Regents University and CEO, Georgia Regents Health System
Date of Approval	

To be used by the Office of Compliance

Assigned Policy Number:	3.8.1
Policy Website Address:	
Revision History:	
Next Review Date: (3 years from approval)	