

DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY



THE MICO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

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1. INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The distance learning education programme at the Mico University College is to diversify the modes of delivering educational instruction to concentrate focus on individual learning for students who are separated from the instructor by time and/or space; and uses technology to unite the instructor and student carrying the course content in a two-way communication between instructor and the student(s). The student will have some control of the learning pace.

The distance learning education programmes offered are typically “blended” having some courses or parts of courses taught through an online mode and with face-to-face interaction.

Distance learning activities at the Mico University College will follow Best Practices, and the standards established by the accrediting agency in Jamaica i.e. the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ). The courses that are offered via on-line education will meet the same quality standards as those that apply campus-based instruction.

1.2 DEFINITIONS

Accessibility Providing the opportunity for students with disabilities to perceive, understand, navigate, interact, and contribute in a course. Accessibility in the distance learning course shall be determined by the features of the instructional technologies provided by the University College and by the way that academic staff members / instructors use those technologies to create materials and design courses.

Asynchronous means "not at the same time." Asynchronous tools, such as e-mail and the discussion board, will allow participants to communicate without having to be online at the same time.

Class Attendance Is taken to mean the active participation of the student in completing class activities, such as the submission of assignments, completion of examinations, attendance in an online chat, or the posting to a discussion forum. Simply logging on to the course in the Learning Management System (LMS) is not considered attendance.

Delivery Mode Is the primary method or technology used to deliver instructional information to the student and used for communication between the instructor and the student(s). At the Mico University College the delivery modes include:

- Online courses are taught 100% online using a combination of asynchronous and synchronous activities providing greater flexibility of schedule and convenience of access to students, while allowing them to meet the same learning outcomes and level of rigor achieved in traditional courses. The delivery of online exams will follow university-approved

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processes, including the authentication of online test takers and the use of online proctoring tools or live local proctors. Dates and times for required online synchronous activities will be published in the official class schedule.

- Blended courses delivers information in mixed modalities and take advantage of the best features of traditional classroom instruction and online tutoring. Students meet face-to-face for 50% or less of prescribed contact time, for course content and complete the rest of their coursework online. A blended course is not simply an online course that requires in-class exams. Blended courses allow instructor and students both the opportunity to build strong personal relationships through their interactions (face-to-face and otherwise) and the opportunity to explore new types of learning activities that were not possible in traditional courses. Dates, times and locations for face-to-face meetings will be published in the official class schedule.
- Traditional courses/hybrid are taught primarily in a face-to-face setting. They have 49% or less delivery with technology and usually will have around 25% of the course delivered through various modes of technology.
- Traditional courses are taught in a face-to-face classroom setting. The syllabus and other materials may be posted online and students may be asked to submit some work electronically.

Distance Learning

includes fully online and blended courses and is 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. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous.

Interaction between the instructor and the student is regular and substantive, and can be initiated by the instructor or the student.

Learning Management System (LMS)

is a web accessible software application that provides for the administration of course content, delivery of assessments, communication and collaboration between students and instructors, and the ability to track grades and other relevant performance data.

Proctored Examination

Is an examination for a distance learning course taken off-campus and is supervised, just as it would be for a course taken on campus. The examination is sent to the proctor to be administered. A proctor supervises a student's exam. The proctor then returns the completed exam to the instructor for grading. The Mico University College will approve the proctor for any examination.

Synchronous

means "occurring at the same time." Synchronous tools, such as text chat, audio chat or video chat, require all participants to be online at the same

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time.

Teleconference Courses are taught face-to-face in specially equipped classrooms that allow live interaction between the instructor and students even though they may be in classrooms in different geographic locations. Dates, times and locations for class meetings will be published in the official class schedule.

1.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

i) The VP Academics Affairs

The VP Academics Affairs shall–

- * Have the overall responsible for evaluating and revising the Distance Learning Policy.
- * Receive reports in connection with Distance Learning from
 - The Deans of the Faculties
 - The Administration of Instructional Technology

ii) The Faculty Board

The Faculty Board shall –

- * Establish mechanisms to review and maintain the programme online.
- * Establish a Review Committee, which shall consist of members within the programme and shall include the Dean of the Faculty and Chaired by the Programme Coordinator.

iii) The Programme Coordinator

The Programme Coordinator shall –

- * Act as Chairperson of the Review Committee
- * Evaluate programme every semester in which a particular course is taught to determine currency of materials.

The Review Committee shall –

- * Review all courses to be offered on-line in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for the creation of a new course or the revision of an existing course
- * Monitor the delivery of the Course

iv) The Dean

The Dean shall –

- * Ensure the ongoing monitoring of all distance learning courses within the Faculty.
- * Supervise staff within the Faculty
- * Review any reports made by any member of the Faculty concerning the distance education programme and execute remedial action.
- * Request specific additional training for academic and administrative staff on an “as-need” basis.
- * Appoint a substitute instructor to assist students if the primary instructor is unavailable.
- * Determine the protocols for setting office hours related to distance learning courses.
- * Assign courses to instructors (both traditional and online)

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v) **The Administrator for Instructional Technology**

The Administrator for Instructional Technology shall –

- * Provide assistance with technical or pedagogical issues to the academic staff teaching distance education courses.
- * Work with the ICT Director to set priorities and guidelines for the maintenance of the systems.
- * Keep the official records of assessment outcomes and the use of assessment results for continuous improvement.

vi) **The Course Designer**

The Course designer shall –

- * Design quality courses to ensure rigorous learning goals and outcomes that are appropriately assessed and meet institutional and national standards.

vii) **The Instructor/Lecturer**

The Instructor/Lecturer shall –

- * Ensure that the rigor of programmes and quality of instruction are maintained within their courses.
- * Be responsible for
 - the course content,
 - delivery of instruction,
 - evaluating student progress,
 - assessing learning outcomes, and
 - timely communication in the distance learning course.

viii) **The ICT Department**

The Information and Communication Technology Department shall –

- * Provide the technical expertise necessary for maintaining on-campus equipment and networks, the University College's student information system, e-mail systems, and other local systems.
- * Ensure the security of the electronic systems so that the institution may be confident that the student is who they say they are, and therefore shall provide secure logins and pass codes, and shall keep abreast of new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.
- * Provide a tool box of instructional technologies available to the instructor.

1.4 RULES GOVERNING THE HOLDING OF CLASSES

1.4.1 Weather

Online courses will not be cancelled for inclement weather when the University College's campus is closed. Students and faculty are expected to access their courses just as they would if the campuses were open. Each faculty member and student is expected to have a contingency plan – their back-up plan for attending their online courses in case their primary computer is unavailable or out of service.

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The online component of a blended course is not affected when University campuses are closed for inclement weather. If the blended course had a face-to-face meeting scheduled on the closed campus, the meeting will be rescheduled for another day. Announcements will be posted by the course instructor to notify students of the makeup day and time.

Only in extreme situations, such as the widespread power outages caused by extreme weather conditions, may exceptions to this policy be made by the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. In such severe cases, an official statement concerning online activities will be issued via normal emergency channels.

1.4.2 Holidays:

If the official Mico University College academic calendar shows that the University College is scheduled to be closed, or that there are “No Classes”, distance learning classes will not meet on that day. While students are not required to submit coursework on that day, they are free to work on courses on their own. Academic staff members / Instructors may not be available to respond to student communications until classes resume.

1.4.3 Academic Calendar:

Distance learning courses follow the same academic terms as traditional courses. Full-term distance learning courses will commence during the first official week of the semester and conclude during the final exam period at the end of the semester. Half-term distance learning courses will as prescribed in the academic calendar. For distance learning courses that require a final exam, the semester class schedule entry for the course must identify the date and time by which the final exam will be due. Final exams should be due during the regularly scheduled final exam period for a course of that length.

1.4.4 Alterations to Online Classes:

Academic staff members/ Instructors teaching multiple sections of a course are not allowed to alter these sections and therefore there shall be no mergers into a single course in the LMS or splitting into more sections in the LMS. Pedagogically, combining individual classes or splitting class will affect class size, course delivery and the quality of instruction.

However “Cross-listed” sections of a course will be merged into a single course shell in the LMS. This exception is allowed because “cross-listed” sections have a combined maximum class size and are treated as one course for determining teaching load.

Exceptions to this policy may be made by the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs for special types of courses.

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2. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION:

2.1 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY OF DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES:

Distance learning courses are comparable to traditional, campus-based courses in terms of course descriptions, expectations and learning outcomes.

2.2 ORGANIZATION OF COURSES

2.2.1 Oversight of Courses

Like all academic activities, distance learning at The Mico University College operates under the purview of the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

A Review Committee, within the Faculty and which has as a member the Dean of the Faculty, shall review all the on-line courses to be offered at The Mico University College before start up. The University College adheres to the policy that all courses whether offered online or face-to-face will have the same learning outcomes and level of rigor, regardless of delivery mode.

However, when courses are already in existence, whether traditional, campus-based or distance learning, they shall be reviewed at the Faculty Board, to ensure that all criteria are met as set forth in this policy. Results of the review shall be discussed at the Faculty Board, to ensure that appropriate changes are made to improve the curriculum. The Faculty Board shall submit its report to the Academic Board. Ongoing monitoring of all distance learning courses is the responsibility of the College Deans and Heads of Department.

2.2.2 Class Size – Maximum and Minimum:

Under normal circumstances, a distance learning course that requires intensive communication and collaboration should have a maximum class size of 25 students and a minimum class size of 10 students. The Dean of the Faculty shall review any exceptions to the norm.

2.2.3 Quality Standards for Courses and Learning Outcomes:

The design and delivery of Courses shall be driven by the high quality learning intentions and shall fully engage students. In fully online courses, the academic staff member / Instructor will have quality course syllabi that follow the guidelines in the appendix and would normally integrate 10 or more technology tools. Blended courses will use face-to-face activities to engage students and will supplement that engagement in quality learning with appropriate technology tools.

To ensure ongoing quality course design and delivery for its distance learning programs, The Mico University College academic staff will normally follow the following four phase process:

- i) Course design
- ii) Course delivery
- iii) Course evaluation
- iv) Course revision

Each of these four phases are described in the appendix and represent a sense of Best Practices.

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2.2.4 Accessibility (ADA):

The Mico University College shall make every effort to select instructional technologies that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. As with traditional, campus-based courses, students taking distance learning courses may request accommodations to meet the individual needs of the learner. In distance learning courses, special arrangements may be made to deliver the course in an alternative format as needed. Students seeking accommodations shall indicate at the time of application.

2.2.5 Testing/Assessment:

Academic staff members / Instructors are responsible for designing the standards to measure student success in their courses which would include a variety of assessment measures, such as case studies, essays, research projects, labs, papers, exams, applications, and real world experiences.

Academic staff members / Instructors are responsible to ensure that academic integrity and high standards are adhered to in the courses. The Mico University College shall endeavour to ensure that the student who registers in a distance learning programme or course is the same student who participates in and completes the programme or course and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (1) a secure login and pass code, (2) proctored examinations, and (3) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification. The Mico University College shall use a variety of technology tools to ensure the integrity of all online testing. (See Appendix B for a list of tools)

In the event that a student taking a distance learning course is unable to take an examination online, or is required to take a proctored examination, the instructor is normally expected to serve as the proctor for the student. The instructor may proctor exams in a face-to-face setting or using remote proctoring technologies. If the student is unable to be proctored by the instructor, an alternative proctor may be used.

1. Proctored Examinations:

Examinations will be given as scheduled. The instructor is not obligated to repeat or remind students of examination due dates. It is the student's responsibility to acquire necessary materials from the course in the LMS. No make-up examinations will be given unless approved by the instructor.

Detailed procedures for the delivery of proctored examinations will be developed, maintained and distributed by the Examinations Department after approval by the Office of the VP Academic Affairs.

2. Proctor Selection Guidelines:

In cases in which it is not possible for the instructor to serve as the proctor for the student, the following alternatives are listed in order of recommended practice:

- The Examination Department at The Mico University College or the Examinations Department at another institution of higher education can proctor the exam.
- An individual approved by The Mico University College can proctor the exam, as discussed below.
 - a) Proctors shall not be degree-seeking students at The Mico University College or the educational institution administering the exam.
 - b) Proctors may not authorize others to serve as temporary substitute proctors unless those individuals acting as substitutes are authorized by the institution to be proctors.

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- c) Proctors shall not be a social acquaintance or relative of a student taking the exam.
- d) Proctors shall not be a co-worker of the person taking the exam.
- e) Proctors shall not be a subordinate who operates within the line of authority of the person taking the exam.
- f) Proctors shall be cognizant of the proper role of a test administrator; such training shall include familiarity with Athens State University policies affecting the administration of exams in a proctored setting.

3. Proctored Testing for Overseas/Military Students:

Where the test proctor is to be chosen by the student and approved by The Mico University College. The proctor should be someone in the institution/company/military who is in a supervisory or human resource position and cannot be a peer or an immediate supervisor.

2.2.6 Course Accessibility Dates:

The availability of a course in the LMS shall be governed by the following rules:

- i) Students shall access courses shortly after 8:00 a.m. five days before the first official day of the semester as published in the academic calendar
- ii) Last semester's courses are removed from the LMS 42 calendar days (6 weeks) after the last day of the semester as published in the academic calendar, except courses in which students received an "Incomplete Grade".
- iii) Empty course shells for the next semester will appear to faculty members seven (7) calendar days before registration opens for the next semester.
- iv) Student access to a course ends at 8:00 a.m. five days after the last day of the semester as published in the academic calendar.
- v) If one or more students in a course receive an "Incomplete Grade":
 - The course will not be removed from the LMS as normal.
 - The student(s) that received the "Incomplete Grade" will remain in the same course in the learning management system for one additional semester to complete remaining work.
 - The student(s) will not have access to the course in the LMS during the break between semesters.

(An "Incomplete Grade" will awarded under the same terms and conditions as awarded in the traditional courses)

2.3 THIRD PARTY PROVIDERS:

Distance learning courses are available from other colleges or universities. In the event that the Mico University College wishes to freely adopt, purchase or lease modules or entire courses from a Third Party, such courses or modules must be evaluated by the Curriculum Unit and the Dean of the Faculty to ensure that the materials meet all quality criteria set forth by the institution, before any legal agreements are signed between parties.

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2.4 COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE:

The Course Designer / Instructors are expected to understand and adhere to the copyright laws in Jamaica. Copyright laws must be followed when performances, displays, copies or other reproductions of copyrighted material are made available to students. This includes the posting of copyrighted material to the University College's LMS or to other online sites.

3. COURSE DESIGNERS / INSTRUCTORS

3.1 QUALIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC STAFF / INSTRUCTORS:

3.1.1 Qualifications of Academic Staff / Instructors

Academic staff members who teach distance learning courses must meet the same qualifications as academic staff who teach traditional courses at The Mico University College. All academic staff members must possess, at the minimum, a master's degree with specialization in the teaching field. Adjunct faculty are held to the same standards as fulltime faculty.

3.1.2 Faculty Professional Development for Distance Learning:

Faculty teaching distance learning courses are expected to develop and maintain currency with the latest technologies and pedagogical techniques by participating in group professional development activities, through one-on-one support sessions or through self-assessment. Training shall be provided as in the Professional Development Policy and shall include professional development workshops, one-on-one sessions and online self-assessment materials. Topics include the use of specific systems/technologies in distance learning and traditional courses, as well as instructional design training that focuses on course design, pedagogical issues and best practices applicable to all delivery modes. The Deans may request specific additional training for faculty and staff on an as-needed basis.

3.1.3 Office Hours and Student Expectations for Response:

The instructor will be required to advise the student of his/her office hours to facilitate student knowing the specific time, when they may have access to the instructor. The ease of access to the instructor assists students, responds to needs, especially learning needs and provides guidance. The environment of fully online and technology rich learning environment builds on fast changing technology and speed. Understanding the development of immediacy in this environment, the instructor will clearly indicate in the course material the expectation for response to student requests, including the frequency of instructor interaction with discussion boards. Instructors teaching fully online distance learning courses are normally expected to respond to student e-mails and questions within 24 hours but not later than 48 hours. Most critically there should be clarity to students about response time.

It is a requirement of the academic staff of the Mico University College, to post and hold office hours in a format suitable to support students in their courses. For distance learning courses, office hours may require the use of the telephone, e-mail, text chat, video chat, or other technologies, as needed to provide adequate support for students unable to come to campus. The Dean of the Faculty will determine the number of required office hours to be conducted and the specific requirements for office hours related to distance learning courses.

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3.1.4 Faculty Evaluation:

Distance learning instructors shall be evaluated in the same manner as those who teach traditional courses. Student evaluations are completed online in all courses, whether traditional or distance learning. The results are used to guide course revision and are given to the instructor, relevant Deans, and the Vice President Academic Affairs.

3.1.5 Faculty Teaching Load:

Teaching for the academic staff is taken to mean not only contact hours but, preparation time, assessment, interaction and course delivery. The academic staff will therefore be expected to either teach in the traditional setting or on-line, working such hours and such days as are required to fulfil the responsibilities of their contract. Hence from time to time members of staff may be required to work above their paid weekly hours to fulfil their duties. There shall be no distinction between the hours teaching in the traditional setting or online. The assignments shall be made by the Dean of the Faculty.

Academic staff members teaching distance learning courses receive the same credit toward their teaching load as do faculty who teach traditional courses. The decision as to how many distance learning courses a faculty member may teach is left to the discretion of the Dean of the Faculty.

3.1.6 Faculty Users Group:

In addition to training and professional development for the instructor teaching in distance learning formats, some members of the academic staff may meet periodically to share information and discuss ideas to enhance effectiveness of courses and quality of courses being taught.

3.2 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY:

The Mico University College will follow the Intellectual Property, Copyright, Patent, Trademark and Royalties Policy.

3.3 FACULTY SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION:

Full-time and part-time distance learning academic staff members are supervised as a regular activity of the Dean of the Faculty. Distance learning courses and programs are integrated into an appropriate management framework within the University College. Academics teaching distance learning courses shall contact the Office of the Vice President, Academic Affairs, in particular the Administrator of Instructional technology for assistance with technical or pedagogical issues.

3.4 FACULTY COMPENSATION:

Full-time academic staff members/ Instructors teaching distance learning courses receive no additional compensation for those courses beyond normal guidelines. Adjunct faculty members are compensated for distance learning courses at the same rate as traditional classes.

3.5 CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT INFORMATION:

The Mico University College shall ensure the privacy of student records, and the rights of students with respect to their education records. Therefore academic staff shall not post any personally identifiable information about a student to public websites (i.e. websites where the information may be visible to

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people outside of a course), or require a student to post personally identifiable information to any such websites, without first obtaining written consent from the student.

3.6 OFFICIAL E-MAIL:

The Mico University College shall provide each academic staff member with an official e-mail account. All official correspondence must be sent using the University-provided email account, including all course-related e-mails. E-mails sent from within the learning management system will appear to come from the faculty member's official e-mail account.

Academic staff members / Instructors shall remind students that they are required to use and maintain their Mico student e-mail account and that a personal e-mail account (i.e. not a student's official account) shall not be used when contacting University College employees or for submitting assignments.

3.7 USE OF EXTERNAL WEBSITES AND/OR THIRD-PARTY SYSTEMS:

The Mico University College's LMS shall be used to host all academic courses. Instructors desiring to expand the functionality of the LMS must coordinate with the ICT Department and must be supported by the Dean of the Faculty to ensure that the necessary interfacing will work and is appropriate.

3.8 TRACKING STUDENT ATTENDANCE:

The Mico University College requires that students complete academic activities before they may be counted in attendance at any time during the semester. The institution will not accept the simple act of logging into the University's LMS as proof of attendance at any time during the semester. For this reason, academic staff members /Instructors are required to include an academic activity for students to complete early in the semester. Completion of this activity will be used to verify students' attendance and participation in the course. Students will be required to be in attendance for **at least 80%** of the Course.

3.9 INSTRUCTOR ILLNESS/ABSENCE:

If an instructor must be out of contact for more than 24 hours due to an unexpected reason, such as a short illness or a family emergency, students will be notified by the faculty member through the Announcements area of the distance learning course or via e-mail. The notice will include when the students can expect regular effective contact to resume. The instructor will immediately notify the Dean of the Faculty if the illness/emergency is expected to result in a lengthy absence (more than 72 hours). The Dean of the Faculty may appoint a substitute instructor to assist students while the instructor is unavailable.

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4. STUDENT SERVICES AND RESOURCES:

4.1 STUDENT AFFAIRS:

Distance-learning students apply for admission, register for classes, and check course availability online, as do traditional students. Information is available online at the University College's website for distance learning orientation sessions, financial aid, placement services, remedial services, counselling and academic advising. Students should consult an advisor before registering for distance learning, as well as traditional courses. Advising services are available from the Office of the Dean. A non-campus visit may be scheduled to fulfil special requests. The Mico University College offers foundation courses in math and makes available a writing centre. Students may access a transcript and unofficial transcripts may be printed online. The University College regularly assesses the effectiveness of student services for all students.

4.2 RESOURCES:

4.2.1 Library Resources:

The University College ensures that students participating in distance learning courses have access to adequate and appropriate learning resources. Students have access to the University College Library and its resources. Library services for distance students include access to the book and periodical holdings through the Library web site, encompassing a sizable repository of electronic books, online databases, and full-text online journals. The Library also provides interlibrary loan services and a variety of means for online research assistance. In addition, students may e-mail or phone the library. Distance learning students may access the online library resources by using authentication procedures that are provided by the Library. The University College regularly assesses the effectiveness of library resources and services in all formats and modes of delivery.

4.2.2 University Bookstore:

The University Bookstore can provide information on textbooks and readings. At this time only direct purchasing of texts are available.

4.3 STUDENT COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:

Any student who has cause and wishes to make a formal complaint to the University College shall refer to the "Grievance Procedure" in the Student Handbook of the Mico University College and on the University College's website.

5. DISTANCE LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE:

5.1 DISTANCE LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE:

The Mico University College shall provide the necessary software and facilities to effectively deliver asynchronous, synchronous and blended courses. Video conferencing rooms shall be available to fully deliver site-to-site courses. The University College provides a LMS for the Internet-based delivery of programs. All courses must be placed on the University College's LMS, whether online, blended or

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traditional. Computers with Internet access are available on campus for students who may need to use campus facilities for distance learning purposes.

5.2 INSTITUTIONAL TECHNOLOGY RESPONSIBILITY:

The University College's Information and Communication Technology Department shall provide the technical expertise necessary for maintaining on-campus equipment and networks, the University College's student information system, e-mail systems, and other local systems.

Training will be provided from time to time for the academic and administrative staff via professional development workshops, one-on-one sessions and online self-study materials. Topics include the use of specific systems/technologies in both online and traditional courses, as well as instructional design training that focuses on pedagogical issues and best practices. The Dean of the Faculty may request additional and specific training for faculty and staff on an as needed basis.

6. PLANNING AND EVALUATION:

6.1 INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING:

The viability of distance learning programs shall be included in the University College's planning process. Distance learning is planned to meet the University College's mission, strategic initiatives, goals and objectives, and is consistent with the University long-range plans. Distance learning is designed and evaluated according to the same guidelines used for traditional programs. The effectiveness of distance learning is assessed as discussed in this document. Finally, the results of the assessment shall be used to make appropriate changes to the long range plan and to the program.

6.2 EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:

Standards and expected learning outcomes for all academic programmes for distance learning shall be comparable with traditional instruction. Assessment data for distance learning shall be captured through the institutional outcomes assessment process. All educational programmes systematically formulate and measure expected outcomes based on the mission and goals of the University College and the programme purpose as determined by the faculty. Data comparisons between distance learning and traditional students shall be conducted at least once per year. Assessment methodology includes both direct and indirect methods as follows:

Learning Outcomes Assessment

Student Readiness for Distance Learning: The University College shall assess student capability to succeed in distance learning programmes through a voluntary web-based self-assessment instrument. The information may be used by students to evaluate whether they are ready to take a distance learning course.

Course and Degree Programme Level Learning Objectives: Direct methods of assessment shall be used to capture student achievement in the knowledge, skills and abilities formulated by the faculty in each academic program. Indirect methods include data comparisons of students' self-assessment of entering and exiting competencies.

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Modality Assessment-Student Academic Profile: Comparisons of student grades, retention, and graduation rates between online and traditional courses shall be conducted.

Programme Operational Outcomes Assessment

Course Content and Teaching Effectiveness: Deans and/or Heads of Departments shall evaluate course content and the use of the University College's LMS by instructor and course format as one of several components of overall instructor's evaluation.

Service Delivery Outcomes Assessment

Student and Faculty Technology Support: Survey instruments shall be administered to capture data to indicate the availability, access, and quality of resources supporting distance learning for students and faculty.

The Office of Institutional Technology shall keep the official records of assessment outcomes and the use of assessment results for continuous improvement.

7. STUDENTS:

7.1 CONDUCT

7.1.1 Code of Conduct :

The University College's policy states that it is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with the Code of Conduct and policies concerning academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aiding and abetting dishonesty, collusion, and unauthorized possession or distribution of academic materials. The procedures outlined in the Examinations Regulations shall be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

7.1.2 Class Attendance:

In order to achieve maximum benefit from educational activities, The Mico University College expects regular class attendance from all students. Class attendance is determined by active participation within a distance learning course. Participation includes activities such as submission of assignments, completion of exams, attending online chats, and posting of discussions. Simply logging in to the course is not considered participation. The standards of performance to be met by each student, including specific attendance regulations for each course, will be set by the instructor for the course. **Class attendance policies and other course requirements will be published in the course syllabus.**

7.2 COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY AND E-MAIL USAGE

7.2.1 Official e-mail

The Mico University College provides each student with an official e-mail account (firstname.lastname@themico.edu.jm). All official correspondence shall be sent to the University College's provided student email account, including course-related e-mails and campus announcements. All students are required to use and maintain their Mico University College's e-mail account. Personal e-mail accounts (i.e. not a student's official account) shall not be used when contacting The Mico University College academic or administrative staff, or when submitting coursework.

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7.2.2 Acceptable Use of Computer Technology:

The Mico University College prohibits the use of University College's computer technology to engage in activities for the purpose of illegal activities or to promote personal gain and/or profit or use of University College technology for organizations other than The Mico University College. The communication tools provided within a distance learning course shall be used for course related purposes only. Students shall not transmit messages of a romantic or sexual nature to any person or persons. It is also unacceptable to create, display, transmit or make accessible threatening, racist, sexist, offensive, or harassing language and/or material. For a complete list of acceptable and unacceptable activities, review the Computer Technology Acceptable Use Policy.

7.2.3 Privacy Protection:

Students shall be aware that any information posted using course tools within a distance learning course, such as discussions, blogs, wikis, or videos, will become available to the instructor and may be also seen by fellow students. Caution should be exercised when considering posting any personal or confidential information.

7.3 OWNERSHIP OF COURSE MATERIALS:

The materials (documents, files, videos, etc.) provided within a course in the University College's LMS shall not be re-posted online outside of the course by students or shared with individuals outside of the course. This includes works posted by other students within a course.

8. SUPPORT PERSONNEL:

8.1 POLICY SUPPORT PERSONNEL:

Questions about this policy shall be directed to the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

8.2 FACULTY SUPPORT PERSONNEL:

Academic Staff Members

- Academic staff members encountering technical problems with any of the University College's distance learning systems shall contact the ICT Department.
- Academic staff members seeking assistance with pedagogical issues (i.e. course design) shall contact the Dean or the Administrator for Instructional Technology

Students

- Students encountering technical problems with any of the University College's distance learning systems shall call the University College's ICT Department **(a number is needed here)**.
- Questions about the content within a course, course policies, grades or grading feedback, resetting test attempts, and other academic issues should be directed to the course's instructor.
- For other questions/issues, please call the University College's switchboard to be directed to the appropriate department.

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9. REFERENCES

- The Copyright Act
- New Course Creation or Existing Course Revision Policy and Procedures
- Examinations Regulations
- Professional Development Policy
- Overtime Policy
- Computer Technology Acceptable Use Policy
- Intellectual Property, Copyright, Patent, Trademark and Royalties Policy.
- "Grievance Procedure" in the Student Handbook

To do

- Develop a web-based self-assessment instrument.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I – Instructional Technologies

The Mico University College shall provide academic staff members / instructors with a “toolbox” of instructional technologies and allows them to pick the tools which are most appropriate for their teaching style and course content. Currently The Mico University College uses Blackboard Learn. The following list identifies the tools native to Blackboard Learn and the additional tools available from other vendors, most of which seamlessly integrate with Blackboard Learn.

Native Tools within Blackboard Learn 9.1

- Announcements
- Calendar
- Contacts
- Content Areas
 - Assessment:
 - Assignments
 - SafeAssign (Safe Assignment)
 - Self and Peer Assessments
 - Surveys
 - Tests
 - Content:
 - Audio
 - Blank Page
 - Content Folder
 - Files
 - Flickr Mashup
 - Image
 - Items
 - Learning Modules
 - Lesson Plans
 - Module Page
 - SCORM Module
 - SlideShare Mashup
 - Syllabus
 - URL
 - Video
 - YouTube Mashup
 - Interactive Tool:
 - Blogs
 - Chat
 - Discussions
 - Groups
 - Journals
 - Virtual Classroom
 - Wikis
 - Textbook

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- Email
- Glossary
- Grade Centre
- Portfolios – Part of Blackboard Content System
- Rubrics
- Tasks

Third-Party Tools/Features/Sites

- Blackboard Collaborate (formerly Wimba) Tools
 - Web Conferencing (Wimba Classroom)
 - Instant Messaging (Wimba Pronto)
 - Voice Tools (Wimba Voice...)
 - Voice Recording
 - Voice Board
 - Voice Email
 - Voice Podcaster
 - Voice Presentation
- Content Tools
 - NBC Learn
 - SoftChalk
 - Tegrity Campus
- eBook Tools
 - Barnes & Noble NOOK Study
 - Follett CafeScribe
 - McGraw-Hill Create
- Homework/Testing Tools
 - Acxiom Identity Tool
 - McGraw-Hill Connect
 - RespondusLockDown Browser
 - WebAssign
- Other Tools
 - SmarterMeasure – DL readiness quiz
 - Smarthinking – online tutoring

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Appendix II – Course Development and Execution

Course Design Phase

Distance learning courses will be designed to meet the same learning outcomes and level of rigor as traditional courses. To achieve this goal, course designers must consider the differences that exist between the traditional and online delivery formats. It is important to note that a distance learning course is not to be designed as a self-study or self-paced course.

When designing distance learning courses, faculty members are normally expected to follow these guidelines after deciding on blended or fully online course delivery:

- Follow the University, College’s and Department’s course design (see below) to ensure that course content will be well organized in a logical system that makes it easy for students to locate and review.
- Write course syllabus clearly, following the University College and Department guidelines to be easily located by students. Examples of information that will usually be included in the syllabus are:
 - Course details from the University College catalogue, such as the course title, course code, objectives, total number of credit hours and distribution (lecture, lab, etc.), course description, and prerequisites.
 - Information on the textbook(s) and other required course materials to be purchased by the student for use in the course, including potential references.
 - Instructor information, including contact information and preferred method of contact. At a minimum an instructor’s name, telephone number, The Mico University College e-mail address, and office hours should be given.
 - Clearly stated course objectives and course requirements that are consistent, appropriate for the level of the course, and reasonably comprehensive.
 - Communication guidelines, including response time, will be clearly stated. Under normal circumstances, instructors teaching a distance learning course are expected to clearly state the response time to student e-mails and requests.
 - Specific requirements for planned interaction and timely feedback between students and instructor. Communication is essential to the success of students in all courses, but this is especially true in distance learning courses because students can easily feel isolated and lose motivation. Methods of interaction may include e-mail, phone, fax, text chat, voice chat, video chat, discussion board, and other emerging technologies. Dates for required synchronous activities in online courses must be listed in the entry for the course in the official semester class schedule.

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- Evaluation criteria that clearly identify the assessment activities to be completed by students and the value of each. Short descriptions of each assessment activity shall be provided in the syllabus and/or a separate hand-out within the course.
 - Course policies, such as the handling of late submissions, makeup work, and expected grading turnaround time, will be clearly stated. Under normal circumstances, academic staff members/instructors are expected to grade and **return student submissions within one week.**
 - The University College's policies and statements, such as information on Disability Accommodation and Academic Misconduct.
 - Suggested resources/contacts for support materials (e.g. Library), support services (e.g. online tutoring), technical support, and other helpful supplementary information (e.g. readings).
 - Course calendar or schedule of activities. This may be included with the syllabus or provided as a separate hand-out within the course.
- Provide clear guidance to students on how to successfully complete each course requirement. Some examples include writing detailed instructions, providing grading rubrics, and posting example solutions to similar assessments.
- Facilitate learning by using a variety of instructional tools and types of content – typically ten or more. A below provides a list of tools and types of content currently available through the University College's LMS and third-party tools/systems. For example, a distance learning course will typically include:
- Announcements tool
 - Contacts tool – instructor information from the syllabus
 - Content tools – Examples include:
 - Items/Files – syllabus, hand-outs, PowerPoint files, readings, images, etc.
 - Tegrity Recordings – course intro, lectures, reviews, etc.
 - Audio/Video – YouTube mashups, NBC Learn videos, Voice Recordings, or other media files
 - External Links – web site URLs
 - Communication tools – Examples include:
 - Email tool
 - Discussion Boards and/or Voice Boards
 - Web conferencing, instant messaging or other synchronous tool
 - Assessment – Examples include:
 - Assignments
 - Discussions
 - Safe Assignments
 - Self & Peer Assessments

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- Tests
 - Blogs/Journals
 - Wikis
- Evaluation/Feedback – Examples include:
 - Discussions
 - Surveys
 - Journals
- Use both student-centred and instructor-centred learning activities.
 - Provide plentiful opportunities for synchronous and/or asynchronous communication. Examples include e-mail exchanges, online chats, discussion forums, or blogs.
 - Use collaboration activities to encourage student-to-student interaction. Examples include group assignments, wikis, or self and peer assessments.
 - Make available opportunities for self-assessment to test students' knowledge and help them prepare for required assessments. Examples include sample tests, draft paper submissions, or review activities like flash cards or other memory games.
 - Design assessments that match the objectives and requirements of the course and require higher order thinking.
 - Provide an orientation to course materials and course navigation. An example would be a video recording that reviews the syllabus and the structure and content within the course in the learning management system.
 - Follow accessibility guidelines.
 - Give students the opportunity to provide feedback on the course to the instructor throughout the semester, in addition to the end-of-semester Faculty Course Evaluation. Examples include an open feedback discussion forum, online private journal or periodic feedback surveys.

Course Delivery Phase

During the semester, faculty members teaching distance learning courses will:

- Stay in regular communication with students and encourage students to actively communicate with one another and the instructor. Examples include regularly posting announcements, actively using discussion forums and offering online synchronous lectures or review/study sessions.
- Identify students that are falling behind in the course, or that are having difficulty with the course material, and work with the student to identify strategies to help them improve their performance in the course. Examples include offering one-on-one online meetings, suggesting the student seek online tutoring or helping the student establish an online study group within the course.

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- Respond to student e-mails and discussion posts within the response time frame stated in the course syllabus.
- Grade and return student submissions within the grading turnaround time stated in the course syllabus.
- Actively review student feedback on the course and work to answer and address any concerns that are raised.

Course Evaluation Phase

At the end of each semester, the instructor will:

- Download and retain a copy of the students' grades for the course, and are encouraged to also download and retain an archive of the complete course.
- Carefully review all feedback provided by students throughout the semester and student performance on all assessments to determine if the course met expectations.
- Determine if the course needs no revision, minor revision or significant revision.

Course Revision Phase

Routine minor revisions, such as changes to the due dates, visibility dates, or the Learning Management System settings, are the responsibility of the faculty member and are expected as part of normal faculty duties.

If a distance learning course is determined by the faculty member to need significant revision, such as a major change to the course's learning outcomes, the matter shall be referred to the Dean of the Faculty, to determine if the revision will require the Curriculum Committee to review and approve the new design.