

# **Distance Education at Jacksonville State University**

A Report Prepared by the Admissions and Scholarship Committee,

Faculty Senate

Jacksonville State University

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Since its inception in 1997, JSU's Distance Education Program has experienced startling growth. In its first year, ninety-seven students registered in DE courses ("49.6 Increase"); in fall, 2004, 2,093 were enrolled ("Office of Distance Education"). Such progress is crucial to the University's development: given the intensive marketing efforts among colleges and universities and the proliferation of higher education online, JSU has to offer programs over the web to remain competitive. The University's Office of Distance Education and its Director, Dr. Frank King, have done an impressive job of nurturing the program through its formative years; thanks to their efforts, a broad range of General Education courses now are offered over the web, as well as seven degree programs, including three at the Master's level ("Online Programs").

In entering this new academic environment, Distance Education's administrators have had to devote themselves primarily to the hammer-and tongs work of getting things in place and underway. But they have also laid the foundations for establishing and maintaining the program's quality. In *Jacksonville State University Distance Education Plans, Policies and Procedures (PPP)*, a document which has existed in various drafts for some time, intellectual and pedagogical standards for JSU's Distance Learning courses are outlined, as well as mechanisms for their application. Though the *PPP* has yet to be ratified by University administration, a good deal of what the document calls for has been implemented. The Distance Learning Advisory Committee, "a representative body of the faculty in matters related to distance education" (*PPP* 20), has been established; and instruments for assessing student and faculty satisfaction with Distance Education (*PPP* 34) have been developed and applied.

Understandably, much remains to be done. In an endeavor as large and complex as the establishment of a university program for Distance Learning, policies and operating procedures can be refined only after things are up and running. Now, after nine years of experience and

data-gathering, the University should address these issues. The broad guidelines articulated in the most recent *PPP* draft should be defined in specific terms, and the PPP ratified as a component of University policy.

Because these changes pertain more to pedagogical issues of curriculum, teaching and learning than to Distance Education technology, they fall outside the purviews of the Director of Distance Education, a level III administrative position, and of the Office of Distance Education, which functions primarily as a service unit providing technological support. These decisions must be made by University administration, by a committee so charged by the University, or by the respective colleges. To facilitate these decisions, the Faculty Senate offers the following recommendations:

**1. Refine and strengthen the process for approval of DE courses and programs.** At present, only proposed DE courses and programs not in the JSU *Catalogue* undergo academic review; proposed DE offerings of classroom courses already in the *Catalogue* do not. This practice ignores one of the fundamental principles established consistently in the research on Distance Education pedagogy and learning: that teaching, learning, and testing in DE classes are profoundly different processes than in traditional classroom offerings. The differences are, in fact, “fundamental,” and “systemic” (Miller and King 287).

Devising a successful DE course involves far more than merely putting the materials from a successful classroom course online. As Gary Berg notes in *Why Distance Learning?*, effective Distance Education “requires a total revolution of pedagogical understanding” (156). In other words, when DE classes succeed--that is, when they provide their students the same opportunities for effective learning as successful classroom courses--materials, teaching, and testing methods, must be rethought, and strategically adapted to Distance Education formats.

Thus, a Distance Learning class in Survey of American Literature is, in its pedagogic nature, a distinct course from the corresponding classroom version, and must be evaluated as such.

Institutions such as Auburn University acknowledge this fact by requiring that proposed online offerings of current courses undergo full academic review at the college and the university levels. As stated in Auburn's *Comprehensive Policies and Procedures: Distance Education Programs and Courses*,

[w]hen a course is reconfigured for delivery via distance education methods, it shall be reviewed by the appropriate curriculum review procedures outlined by the specific department and college/school, and by Academic Affairs (Curriculum Committee, Graduate Council). (3)

This same policy should be enacted at JSU. The University acknowledges the essential difference between DE courses and classroom offerings by providing stipends to faculty who develop Distance Learning courses (no stipends are given when faculty develop new classroom courses): it must also acknowledge the fact by submitting all proposed DE courses to review. This would strengthen conformity to SACS requirements as well: these stipulate that a college or university must "[a]ssure that electronically offered programs and courses meet institution-wide standards, both to provide consistent quality and to provide a coherent framework for students" (4).

The review process should attend particularly to the ways in which teaching, learning, and examinations have been modified by and for DE formats. Required usage of a form which specifically addresses these issues, such as The Office of Distance Education's "Faculty Checklist for Proposed Degree and Certificate Programs," would enable those submitting and

those evaluating to conceptualize in more detail the translation of a course from classroom to DE formats.

## **2. Broaden and Strengthen the Charge of the Distance Learning Advisory**

**Committee.** Given the complexities of teaching, learning, and testing in DE courses, ensuring quality can be especially problematic (Miller and King 292-293). The Office of Distance Education makes every effort to train faculty in utilizing Distance Learning formats in their courses, and to address whatever technical problems arise. However, maintaining the effectiveness of the actual teaching, learning, and testing in Distance Learning remains the purview of JSU faculty. As the *PPP*, following SACS' "Distance Education: Policy Statement" *verbatim*, asserts, "faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight regarding distance education, ensuring both the rigor of the programs and the quality of instruction" (21). Yet in the current draft of the *PPP*, the means whereby faculty may exercise this responsibility remain loosely defined, and relatively little opportunity for faculty oversight or influence is provided.

In the current Distance Education infrastructure, the sole body devoted specifically to DE oversight is the Distance Learning Advisory Committee. According to the *PPP*, "the committee serves as a representative body of the faculty in matters related to distance education" (20). As such, it constitutes the central means whereby faculty exercise responsibility for and oversight of the pedagogical facets of Distance Education. At present, however, faculty constitute less than a third of the body, comprising just five of its sixteen members. Of the remaining eleven, six are administrators (a dean and five department heads), three are staff, and two are students. Dr. King and Dr. Louise Clark, the Committee Chair, both have recommended that an additional faculty member, representing the Senate, be added, and the Senate very much appreciates their

recommendation. Even then, however, faculty's representation would only equal administration's.

The Committee's charge and purview are confined as well. While its purpose is to "assist the Director in ensuring a quality program" (*PPP* 9), the concept is currently articulated in distinctly limited terms. As defined in the *PPP*, the Committee's sole function is to offer advice to the Director of Distance Learning regarding whatever faculty and student concerns about the DE program come before the Committee. This is the entire range of the body's influence; beyond this, it has no responsibilities, nor does it have power to initiate oversight activities of its own. Thus, the scope of its activity is quite narrow, and reactive rather than proactive in nature.

The limited and marginal role of the Committee in DE operations is reflected in the sketchy accounts of its status and activities in University documents. Though apparently one of the University's standing committees, it is not identified as such in the University's *Faculty Handbook* (see Section 1.5.7). Statements concerning its meeting schedule are confusing. According to the *PPP*, page nine, "[t]he Committee will meet frequently[...]"; page 133 of the University *Self-Study* states that, "[t]he Distance Education Advisory Committee meets monthly [...]," while page 210 indicates that the body "meets at least once per semester [...]"; in the Office of Distance Education's report of activities in the Distance Learning program for 2003-2004, no reference to the Committee appears ("Office of Distance Education"). If the Distance Learning Advisory Committee is to be an integral component of DE operations, perhaps its status and activities should be treated with more consistency.

For the Committee to fulfill faculty responsibilities for DE oversight, at least four measures need to be undertaken:

(1.) Faculty representation on the Committee should be increased. Since this body serves as the primary means whereby JSU's teachers ensure the quality of teaching, learning, and testing in the DE program, faculty should constitute a majority of its members. The particulars of the Committee's apportionment should be made policy, and entered in the *PPP* as such.

(2.) To provide for effective faculty oversight of the DE program as stipulated by SACS, the Committee's purview should be broadened, and made proactive. It should be empowered by the University to conduct periodic review of DE courses and programs. This would enable the Committee to exercise more effectively the responsibility of faculty to "ensur[e...] both rigor of the programs and the quality of instruction" in DE courses (SACS Distance Education, June 2003).

The process could be implemented in various ways. It might involve annual evaluation of and response to assessment data gathered in DE courses, as is the current practice at the University of West Georgia. Each year, UWG's Distance and Distributed Education Steering Committee, the equivalent of JSU's Distance Learning Advisory Committee, reexamines the institution's DE goals and expected outcomes in conjunction with DE assessment results, and makes recommendations ("Effectiveness Evaluation 2003-2004" 1). Comparison of course materials such as syllabi, assignments, and examinations from DE classes and corresponding classroom offerings is another possibility. To apprise the University of its findings, the Committee should report annually to The Council of Deans, or to the Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. Such revisions in the Committee's purview would enhance our compliance with SACS guidelines, and strengthen our position with the various accreditation bodies.

(3.) In selecting and implementing strategies for quality assurance, the Committee should work closely with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Their expertise in the gathering, configuration, and interpretation of data will be valuable to the Committee in providing effective oversight of pedagogy in the DE program.

(4.) Revisions in the charge to the Distance Advisory Committee should be made by University administration, and entered in the *PPP*. The status of the Distance Learning Advisory Committee as a University standing committee should be defined as well, and established as such in *PPP* and the *Faculty Handbook*.

**3. Require Training for All DE Faculty and All Heads of Departments Offering DE Courses.** Given the substantial differences between teaching in Distance Education and teaching in the classroom, the quality of training in DE pedagogy given to new DE faculty is crucial. “In changing from traditional classrooms to distance education, the revamping of pedagogical methods is more critical that [sic] any technical or software issues that may arise” (Miller and King 290-291). To address this need, various colleges and universities have developed certification programs devoted specifically to training classroom teachers to teach online; seventeen such programs, including one at the University of Maryland, are currently listed by the Distance Education Clearinghouse at <<http://www.uwex.edu/disted/certificates.html>> (Carnevale, “Learning Online”).

JSU’s Office of Distance Education provides a variety of instruction and support materials for DE faculty. The DE website includes links to other sites devoted to Distance Learning issues, such as a Blackboard demo course, training information, online courses offered with Southern Regional Electronic Campus (SREC), and questions DE instructors frequently ask. The Office provides online tutorials for those faculty about to enter training in Blackboard

as well, and each year offers three levels of instruction in Blackboard training, followed by individual training in instructional design. In these individual sessions, Ms. Sherri Restauri works with the faculty member to adapt materials, pedagogy, and assignments of the particular course to DE formats. With the rapid growth of the Distance Learning program, an additional position in instructional design is badly needed, so that faculty have more access to training and advice in conducting their Distance Education courses. A recommendation also has come to the Admissions and Scholarship Committee that DE training for faculty teaching online should be conducted in large part online, so that these new teachers experience learning as online students themselves.

Not all first-time DE faculty take advantage of the instructional resources which the Office of Distance Education provides: only sixty to seventy-five percent attend workshops or individual training. To ensure that our Distance Learning students receive the most effective instruction possible, the University should require participation of all first-time DE faculty in the workshops and in individual training. Instruction in Distance Learning pedagogy should also be mandatory for chairs of all departments which offer DE courses. Because department chairs bear substantial responsibility for ensuring the quality of their respective curricula, they must have an informed awareness of the opportunities and pitfalls inherent in Distance Learning, and of the most effective means of addressing these. Such understanding will strengthen their capacities for ensuring quality.

**4. Define a General Format for All DE Syllabi.** A thoughtfully prepared syllabus contributes substantially in any course, but in DE classes, syllabi take on heightened importance. If student and teacher never meet, the student-teacher relationship is particularly tenuous: “[o]ne of the concerns consistently voiced about distance education is the lack of human contact, and

feelings of isolation” (Miller and King 290). Thus, Distance Learning students need, from the outset, strong, consistent indication of their instructors’ expectations, and, perhaps more importantly, of their instructors’ commitment to their education (Carr). Under these circumstances, a syllabus which establishes the particulars--course objectives, policies, requirements, texts, reading assignments, deadlines, types and methods of examinations, grading, guidelines for student-teacher contact--is crucial. This not only provides the student precise indications of teacher expectations and course standards; it affirms the teacher’s active involvement in her/his students’ intellectual development.

Different Distance Education programs acknowledge the particular importance of DE syllabi in different ways. At the University of Georgia, faculty are required to submit a “Course Guide” for each of their DE classes; this provides a biographical statement about the teacher, course overview defining the objectives, policies, texts, etc., and the assignment of a variable number of “lessons, manageable units of study, presenting the course content and assignments” (idl [sic] 3). The Distance Learning Office of Auburn University requires “a complete, detailed syllabus” of any course before it will be considered; this must provide not only the above information, but explanation of “all pedagogical methods expected to be used” (*Comprehensive Policies and Procedures* 13).

No such JSU requirements for course syllabi have been established in the current *PPP* draft. While a “Best Practices Checklist” is distributed in workshops for new DE faculty, the University does not require that syllabi for Distance Learning courses follow a given format, nor that they be submitted for review, either before or while the courses are offered. According to information brought to the Admissions and Scholarship Committee, the absence of such a requirement has resulted in substantial inconsistencies in DE syllabi. Whereas some are

carefully developed, providing all the necessary specifics, including explanation of interaction with the instructor, others are brief and extremely general. To ensure that all syllabi in Distance Learning courses are as complete and as helpful to students as possible, the University should implement requirements similar to those of the University of Georgia and of Auburn University. The Distance Learning Advisory Committee, as part of its broadened role, should be asked to develop a required format or template for DE syllabi. These specifications would be generic, identifying the types, not the nature, of information to be provided; as such, they would represent no infringement on an individual teacher's decisions regarding course content or pedagogy.

Syllabi in the specified format should be submitted to the Distance Learning Advisory Committee at the beginning of each term. At least one question on the student survey conducted in DE courses should address student satisfaction with course syllabi.

**5. Define Specific Policies Governing Attendance, Academic Honesty, and Proctoring in DE Classes.** Distance Learning courses usually require greater discipline and more careful time management than classroom courses. Like many colleges and universities, JSU strives to make students aware of this: our Office of Distance Education provides an online questionnaire "Is Distance Learning Right for You?" so that potential DE students can assess their capacities to perform effectively. Nevertheless, many students still do poorly in Distance Learning classes or drop them, because they do not acknowledge these facts.

To reduce the effects of this problem, the University or its colleges should establish an attendance policy for online courses. This would prescribe particular amounts of student participation within specified periods; for example, students might be required to sign on and perform given activities three or four days in each week. A stipulation of this sort would

promote consistent student involvement in online classes, reduce attrition, and eliminate submission of multiple assignments at the ends of terms.

A stronger stance on academic honesty in Distance Learning courses is needed as well. Because problems of plagiarism and student collusion are harder to control in virtual classrooms than in traditional ones, the University should establish a rigorous policy which defines the different sorts of plagiarism and collusion, provides examples, and requires that students acknowledge their understanding of the policy. This would be included in the *Student Handbook* under “University Policies II. Academic Honesty,” and posted on the University’s Distance Education website. As an example of such a policy, one JSU administrator recommends the policy employed by the University of Liverpool’s Distance Learning program (See Appendices A and B).

Concerns have also been raised with the Admissions and Scholarship Committee regarding the proctoring of examinations. While the Office of Distance Education has published proctoring guidelines to assist students and faculty in identifying and securing viable proctors <<http://distance.jsu.edu/DLProctoring.htm>>, these guidelines have apparently been interpreted in conflicting ways. To eliminate confusion or misinterpretation and to assure integrity of testing, the University should strengthen and clarify the language in the DE proctoring policy, and include the revised policy in the *PPP* to be ratified by the University.

**6. Establish Limits on DE Class Sizes.** Perhaps the most basic and consistent finding to emerge in the research on DE pedagogy involves the added time required to teach effectively online. “Increased time demands, as an impediment to distance education, is a continuous theme throughout distance education literature. Instructors spend significantly more time teaching an online course than that spent on a traditional course“ (Miller and King 289). The reasons for this

are inherent in every Distance Education course. Given the distinctive nature of the student/teacher exchange in courses conducted online, teaching and grading, when approached conscientiously, simply are far more time-consuming than in corresponding classroom offerings. DE teachers must adapt to the fact that their students pose questions or comments or submit assignments 24 hours a day, seven days a week; “online teaching tends to be more spread out and constant, often interrupting other activities” (Carnevale, “Whether Online”). Teacher responses also take more time to articulate and to convey in online classes than in classroom offerings—particularly when they purposefully address issues of critical thinking/ higher order reasoning, especially those in the humanities and the liberal arts, involving ethics, aesthetics, or metaphysics (Durden). Finally, research indicates time and again that DE students learn most effectively when they feel that they are in close and consistent contact with their teacher: “[i]ndeed, frequent entry and postings [are] reported to be a critical requirement of the instructor for successful online courses” (Miller and King 287). “[S]uccessful distance-education professors e-mail their students frequently and respond to e-mail messages promptly, hold regular office hours—whether online or in person—and develop personal touches to make contact with their students [...]” (Carr).

If Distance Learning faculty are to have the time to address these circumstances effectively, and to provide “collegiate level learning [...] appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the degree or certificate awarded by the institution,” (SACS 4), then class sizes must be rigorously controlled. According to a report on a yearlong study issued by faculty at the University of Illinois, “good teaching is possible online, but only by lowering student- to-instructor ratios [...] to counteract the disadvantages of teaching at a distance. [...] Successful online courses feature low student-to faculty ratios” (qtd in Young). Research on this issue

repeatedly confirms that, to be viable learning experiences, classes in Distance Education formats must comprise no more than twenty- five students. Whenever they are larger, varying degrees of breakdown ensue. Teachers communicate less with their students, in less effective ways; they require less work of their students, of less quality, and provide less response, of less quality. Ultimately, students learn less.

At present, JSU's Distance Education program offers a considerable number of courses with enrollments far beyond twenty five. A cursory review of fall, '04, DE classes, conducted *via* the JSU mainframe 7 December, 2004, indicated thirteen distance learning courses with enrollments of thirty-five or more. Four of these were at the advanced undergraduate level; five were graduate courses. One 500-level course had 48 students enrolled; another had 86. In spring, '05, the situation was essentially identical. In a review conducted *via* the JSU mainframe 9 January, 2005, one course, in the 400-G range, had a student capacity of 70 undergraduates and 20 graduates; another, at the 500 level, offered 90 seats. During preregistration for fall, '05, circumstances remained unchanged. A brief review conducted *via* the JSU mainframe 21 June, 2005, indicated multiple online graduate courses with capacities of 50. In one instance, a single professor was scheduled to teach four different graduate courses online, one of which is in research methods, with 50 seats each.

When numbers reach these heights, the obstacles to effective teaching, learning, and testing become substantial, particularly at the graduate level. While surveys conducted in JSU's DE courses indicate that they are as rigorous as those offered online, comments from JSU faculty and administrators to the Senate's Admissions and Scholarship Committee, concerning large sizes of particular Distance Learning classes and the ensuing problems, indicate this is not always the case. According to one administrator, students in certain DE courses at the graduate

level perceived the material as simpler and tests as easier than in classroom offerings. The students also believed that they emerged from these courses with inferior training.

If the University is committed to fulfilling its claims that “[a]cademic standards for all programs or courses offered electronically are the same as those for other courses [...]” and that “[s]tudent learning in programs delivered electronically should be comparable to student learning in programs offered at the campus [...]” (*PPP* 24), it must conscientiously control class sizes in courses offered in DE formats. In particular, courses offered entirely online must be kept to a maximum enrollment of twenty-five.

**7. Strengthen Advisement Concerning DE Courses.** To succeed in Distance Learning classes, students must be particularly mature. As various authorities note, successful DE students are “self-regulated and self-directed”; they must be “more active participants in their learning than their traditional education counterparts, and must take on the responsibility for their own learning in order to be successful” (Miller and King 289). Students who lack these capabilities find Distance Learning especially difficult; without the structured classroom routine, they lack the impetus to perform adequately. “[...L]ess successful students have reported neglecting their studies because the courses were ‘out of sight, out of mind’ (qtd. in Miller and King 289). High attrition rates often associated with Distance Learning (Miller and King 286) are another result.

In light of these facts, strong academic advisement becomes crucial. The institution must make every effort to inform potential Distance Learning students of the self-motivation and discipline they will need to perform effectively in Distance Education courses. In particular, traditional college students who live locally should be made aware that Distance Learning requires more of them in terms of these capabilities than corresponding classroom offerings. To

enable students to assess their capacities for success in DE classes, advisors also should direct students to the Office of Distance Education's questionnaire, "Is Distance Learning Right for You?" available at JSU's Distance Learning website.

A proactive approach to DE advisement will require some revisions to various University publications and training. Advisement materials, such as "Academic Advisement: Quick Reference," should emphasize the particular abilities students must bring to Distance Learning classes. Training sessions for academic advisors, including those preparing faculty mentors who work with incoming students during orientation, should include segments on Distance Education as well.

With revisions such as these to the advisement process, students will enter Distance Education courses with a stronger understanding of what will be required.

**8. Diversify the Assessment of Distance Learning.** One of the fundamental principles of academic assessment is that, to be accurate and meaningful, assessment must employ various methods (Miller and King 294). In the classroom setting, possibilities range from portfolios to surveys to exit examinations, to capstone courses, to development and measurement of rubrics. However, colleges have found it difficult to adapt the range of possibilities to Distance Learning environments (Carnevale, "Assessment").

Such is the case at JSU: at present, our DE program relies primarily on a single assessment method – surveys of students and of teachers. Though the information derived from this source is valuable, it is limited to the perceptions of students and faculty. There is no measurement of learning outcomes *per se*. This is not to say that individual DE students and the DE program are not evaluated. Knowledge acquired by individual students in each Distance Learning course is measured in a variety of ways--examinations, essays, notebooks, class

participation, and/or research. DE technological support and DE faculty are evaluated *via* surveys. Currently, however, no systematic, program-wide assessment of learning outcomes in Distance Education is in place. This runs counter to basic assessment principles and methodology, to SACS policy, and to the University's assessment program, articulated in the *PPP*. Among its "Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs," SACS recommends "documented assessment of student achievement [...] conducted in each course and at the completion of the program, by comparing student performance to the intended learning outcomes" (12). The *PPP* reiterates this: "[e]lements covered in the evaluations/assessments should include educational effectiveness [and] student learning outcomes[...]" (34). Fortunately, SACS, in the recommendations from its last reaccreditation visit, did not pursue the problem. It may be that the visitation team appreciated the intricacies currently involved in assessing Distance Learning. However, given SACS policy—as well as the University's—on this issue, our institution must move towards implementing a process for measuring DE learning outcomes. The logistics of such a process may be complicated, but they are by no means impossible (Carnevale, "Assessment"). With close cooperation between The Office of Distance Education and The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the means for tracking and evaluating performance of Distance Learning Education students, and for comparing performance of DE students with that of corresponding classroom students can be developed. And if the University is committed to the quality of the learning it provides, such assessment strategies must be implemented.

**9. Maintain/Upgrade DE Technology.** Because DE pedagogy is, in large part, a function of DE technology, "the infrastructure required for any form of distance education [...] is key to the success of any course offered at a distance" (Miller and King 292). To be effective, a

school's Distance Learning technology "must be able to support the course requirements, be user-friendly, and as robust as possible" (288).

From the inception of the Distance Education program, JSU has made consistent efforts to maintain and improve its Distance Education infrastructure. Recent innovations include upgrades in the Blackboard Learning System ("Technological Advances"), an Instructional Technology and Design Lab to assist faculty in creation of DE teaching materials ("Instructional Technology & Design Laboratory"), DVD/CD-ROM duplicator, Integration and ASP (King). Since Distance Learning is a new and rapidly evolving pedagogy employing a variety of technologies which are rapidly evolving as well, the tasks of maintaining and upgrading represent a constant, multifaceted process. As Miller and King note, "[e]fforts targeting more effective uses of technology to improve pedagogy" must be ongoing (294). The University must ensure that such efforts remain integral components of its Distance Education endeavor.

### **Conclusion**

While most of the recommendations offered in this report have not been mandated in specific terms by accreditation bodies, each of these recommendations represents the application of sound educational principles espoused by these agencies. Thus, their implementation can only strengthen our University's position whenever the institution or its programs undergo review. By enacting these recommendations, Jacksonville State University reaffirms its commitment to ensuring quality education, in both the virtual and the traditional classrooms.

None of the recommended measures repeats (re)accreditation processes, nor do they infringe on the purviews of accreditation bodies. While, in theory, these agencies have the right to review each and every course for themselves, the broad scopes of their respective missions as

regional or national accreditation bodies make this impossible. At present, SACS accredits 787 institutions in eleven Southern states and Latin America (“Accredited and Candidate List”); NCATE accredits 602 colleges, and currently is considering applications from 100 others (NCATE). Visits by their teams and by those of other accrediting bodies occur only at extended intervals and within brief periods.

Under such circumstances, representatives cannot possibly review every relevant course an institution has approved or offered since their last visit. The accrediting agencies they represent establish and maintain broad parameters; individual institutions establish and maintain particular policies. By the policies it enacts, the institution proclaims its standards and its character. Jacksonville State University and its Office of Distance Education have put in place an ambitious Distance Learning system; the institution’s administrators must make every effort to ensure that it consistently offers quality education to JSU students.

## APPENDIX A

### POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND UNAUTHORIZED COLLUSION:

#### UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

##### **Plagiarism and unauthorised collusion**

In the Virtual Classroom, it is inevitable that students will be aware of, and benefit from, the work done by their colleagues. Indeed, collaboration in the Virtual Classroom is key to our teaching and learning approach. However, it is clear that there must be limits on this collaboration to maintain the integrity of the qualifications you are seeking. Two kinds of unacceptable behaviour need highlighting: plagiarism and collusion. Laureate Online Education and The University of Liverpool employ various plagiarism and collusion detection tools on an ongoing basis.

##### **Plagiarism includes:**

The representation of the work, written or otherwise, of any other person (including another student) or any institution as the candidate's own. Examples of plagiarism may be in any of the following forms:

- (i) The verbatim copying of another's work without acknowledgement
- (ii) The close paraphrasing of another's work by changing a few words or altering the order of presentation without acknowledgement
- (iii) Unacknowledged quotation of phrases from another's work
- (iv) The deliberate and detailed presentation of another's concept as one's own

[On the bottom of this page, you will find illustrative examples of the concept of plagiarism.](#)

**Collusion includes:**

(i) The conscious collaboration, without official approval, between two or more students in the preparation and production of work which is ultimately submitted by each in an identical, or substantially similar, form and is represented by each to be the product of his or her individual efforts

ii) Collusion also occurs where there is unauthorised co-operation between a student and another person in the preparation and production of work, which is presented as the student's own

In most cases, co-operation between students in the Virtual Classroom will take the form of open discussion, which is available to the whole student group, Instructor, and other relevant staff. This kind of discussion is almost always legitimate and valuable, and if it is not, the Instructor will intervene to say so. However, any other kind of collaboration or use of another person's work, especially that which is not visible in the Virtual Classroom, runs the risk of being regarded as unacceptable collusion or plagiarism.

**To avoid this, you must:**

(i) Seek advice from the module Instructor before embarking on any collaboration that takes place outside the Virtual Classroom, or in any other case when you are in doubt

(ii) Include in any work you hand in that involved any such collaboration a statement explaining the nature and extent of the help you received. For example, "Student X and I worked together on this topic" or "Y helped me with part (b)". In some cases, the Instructor may think it is appropriate to take account of the help you have received in determining the grade to be awarded for the work.

## **Re-submission of materials**

We are sometimes questioned about the status of materials that are resubmitted in a class due to a student's repeating a class, or similar assignments reappearing in different classes. If you are resubmitting material that has already been submitted by you in a previous class, you must inform the Instructor of the current class of this fact, and detail where this material was used in the past and what modifications you made.

## **Supervision**

The Virtual Classroom is monitored - procedures are used for random checks on possible plagiarism and the automatic detection of duplicated work. All work submitted for assessment is reviewed by the Instructor, other staff at Laureate Online Education and the University of Liverpool, and an independent external examiner. Any observed collaboration, which is not open or declared, will be treated as a case of unauthorised collusion. Any suspected case of plagiarism or collusion will be reported to the Board of Examiners. If the Board of Examiners decides that plagiarism or collusion has taken place, the Board shall have the discretion to award the marks (if any), which it thinks appropriate in light of the gravity and extent of the offence. In the course of handling such a matter, the student will be afforded the opportunity to provide an explanation of the circumstances to the Chairman of the Board of Examiners or to his or her nominated representative.

It is also open to the University to take further disciplinary action in these cases. For example: If, in the opinion of the Board of Examiners, the gravity of proven plagiarism or collusion calls

into question the propriety of (i) deeming the candidate to have been successful in the completion of a module or the dissertation, or (ii) recommending an award in accordance with the total accumulated marks, the Chairman of the Board of Examiners in consultation with the Dean of the appropriate faculty shall submit a report and recommendation for the consideration of the Senate Committee for the Award of Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates. Following consideration of such report and recommendation, the Senate Committee for the Award of Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates shall have the power to determine that in accordance with the circumstances, either (i) the type of award be modified, (ii) the candidate be failed and no award be made, or (iii) the matter be referred for further review by the Board of Examiners.

### **An illustrative explanation of Plagiarism**

A number of forms of plagiarism are listed above, the first of which is: "The verbatim copying of another's work without acknowledgement." For example, suppose I was asked to explain the difference between E-commerce and E-business. I might give as my answer: The term e-commerce is increasingly being used to describe online retailing, for example the use of the Web to sell books. The term e-business is increasingly being used to describe all business activities using the Internet, not just online retailing.

This would be a case of plagiarism because I have copied this definition directly from a textbook. To avoid the charge, my answer could have been: The distinction has been defined in the following way: "The term e-commerce is increasingly being used to describe online retailing, for example the use of the Web to sell books. The term e-business is increasingly being used to describe all business activities using the Internet,

not just online retailing" (Darrel Ince, "Developing Distributed and E-commerce Applications", Addison-Wesley 2002).

The key elements are: First, the use of **quotation marks** to show that I am using someone else's words verbatim, and second, the **citation** of the source of the information. Here I have cited the source in a complete and formal way. In a classroom discussion, for example, you might be less formal. It could be sufficient to say something like: "definition taken from Ince's book". However, even in this case it is essential to make it clear that you are using someone else's words.

Alternatively, my answer might have been: E-commerce is the term used to describe online retailing, for example selling books over the Web, whereas e-business is the term that describes all business activities using the Internet, not just online retailing.

This would still be plagiarism because all I have done is reword Ince's definition - this falls within the second example given in the Code of Conduct: "The close paraphrasing of another's work by simply changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement"

To avoid plagiarism, I would have to say something like: E-commerce is the term used to describe online retailing, for example selling books over the Web, whereas e-business is the term that describes all business activities using the Internet, not just online retailing (Ince, 2002).

Notice here that I have not used quotation marks (because I am not quoting verbatim), but I have given the citation (in a shorter form) to show the source of my information. You should do this in any case where the information you give comes directly from a written (or Web) source, even if you have changed the words completely because "the deliberate and detailed presentation of another's concept as one's own" (Code of Conduct) is also plagiarism.

So, to summarise: the two key rules are:

1. Whenever you use information taken from any written or Web source, or even given to you personally by some other person, you must always give a citation to acknowledge that it is not entirely your own idea.
2. Whenever you use anyone else's words, you must put them in quotation marks.

If you follow these rules, you cannot be accused of plagiarism. Of course, an answer entirely in this form may not get a very good grade from your Instructor. However, I could have said something like: Ince defines E-commerce as "online retailing, for example the use of the web to sell books", and uses the term E-business to describe all business activities on the Internet. The latter could include many other kinds of activity other than retailing, for example "Business-to-Business" (BtoB) exchanges. Many businesses are now using the Internet to implement an overall management of their supply chain; this kind of application would be described as E-business rather than E-commerce. So, an application which only involves customer ordering and payment would be e-commerce, but if this process was integrated into

an overall system which also performed stock control and ordering from suppliers, it would be more properly regarded as E-business.

I have used information (including a direct quotation) from a cited authority (Ince), but I have also enlarged upon this by adding my own thoughts on the subject. It is this "added value" (only a little, in this case!), which is usually expected when you complete an assignment or answer a discussion question. It is to be expected, of course, that most of the information you give will be taken from others; what is required is that you reflect upon it and add your own interpretation. An answer that shows this will demonstrate that you have a proper understanding of what you have read and, by presenting the information in a new way, perhaps help others to understand it better as well.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PLAGIARISM TESTIMONIAL:**

#### **UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL**

Student name:

Date:

By sending this message I certify that I have read and that I understand the regulations of The University of Liverpool and Laureate Online Education regarding plagiarism and unauthorized collusion.

I understand that all of the assignments submitted by me in the course of this module should be work written by me, and that they should clearly cite each and every source that was used in their development.

I understand that submitting materials, or parts of materials, that were not created by me, without clear citation of the source, constitutes academic plagiarism and is a punishable act of academic fraud.

I understand that unauthorized collusion with another student or anyone else is also a punishable act of academic fraud.

I understand that I might be asked to explain close similarities between work submitted by me and work created by others, or to explain considerable changes in my usual writing style. I understand that inability to provide a convincing explanation to these will be taken as evidence that the said work was not created by me.

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