

REACH Distance Learning Program Center Handbook

Purpose

The purpose of UTPB REACH Distance Learning Handbook is to define and describe support services and processes that involve instruction through educational technology. The Handbook assures that the planning, development, and implementation of distance learning activities are in accordance with the mission of the University. The main goal is to utilize distance learning to provide effective instruction to traditional and nontraditional students. The University is committed to providing distant students quality instruction, access to library resources, and all other learning support resources regardless of location.

Distance Learning includes fully online and blended courses and is a formal educational method in which the majority of course instruction occurs where students and instructors are not in the same location. Instruction may be synchronous (live) or asynchronous (not simultaneous). Instructor and students interact on frequent basis about course content, discussions, projects, assessments, and feedback. Online courses are no self-paced courses. Various media are used such as email, forums, video, chat, instant messages, and other forms of computer-based activities.

Principles of Good Practice

All distance learning courses and degree programs are conducted in accordance with the University's established policies and procedures as outlined in the current editions of the UTPB Undergraduate or Graduate Catalogs. The REACH Distance Learning Center follows the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges "Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs," the Southern Regional Education's Board's "Standards for Quality Online Courses" and "Standards for Quality Online Teaching", and all standards set forth by the discipline-specific accrediting bodies that accredit our degree programs.

Organizational Structure

The Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs supervises the REACH Distance Learning Center and its personnel. REACH oversees academic compliance with the policies and procedures established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and those of accrediting, certifying, and sanctioning bodies, to ensure that courses and programs are developed and offered in a manner that satisfies the relevant standards.

Review of Policy and Compliance

The responsibility for evaluating and revising distance learning processes and procedures is that of the Office of the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Distance Education Committee is composed of faculty from active online programs at UTPB. The UTPB president assigns committee members annually. The DE Committee regularly reviews UTPB distance education policy and make recommendations for change as needed.

Key Definitions

Accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, interact, and contribute in a course. In a distance learning course, accessibility is determined by the features of the instructional technologies provided by the University and how faculty members use those technologies to create materials and design courses.

Asynchronous activities do not occur at the same time. Tools such as email and discussion boards, allow participants to communicate without having to be online at the same time.

Synchronous activities do occur at the same time. Synchronous tools (e.g. text chat, audio chat, video chat, or Web conferencing) require all participants to be online at the same time.

Class Attendance occurs by the active participation of the students through the completion of class activities. Examples include submitting an assignment, completing an exam, attending an online chat, or posting to a discussion forum. Note: Simply logging into the course within the learning management system is not attendance.

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. UTPB is currently using Canvas by Instructure.

Online students use a computer and the Internet to access course materials, including the use of email, threaded discussions, simulations, multimedia, chat rooms, and more. Required attendance on campus is limited to less than 10% of course participation.

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 students. Methods of course delivery at UTPB include:

Traditional courses are taught primarily *face-to-face*.

LMS-enhanced traditional courses are taught in a face-to-face classroom setting. The syllabus and other materials are posted online and students may be asked to submit some work electronically. There is only a minimal amount of online activities and the course meets primarily in the traditional classroom all semester. Face-to-face instructors should exercise caution to ensure that the LMS enhanced course is not substituting for traditional classroom meetings.

Blended or Hybrid courses combine the best of traditional classroom instruction and online instruction. They may also use a combination of face-to-face instruction and online activities in LMS or a publisher website. Students meet face-to-face for at least 51% of the scheduled course sections and complete the rest of their coursework online. It is not simply an online course that requires in-class exams. These courses allow faculty and students the opportunity to build strong personal relationships through face-to-face interaction and the opportunity to explore new types of learning activities that was not possible in traditional courses. Dates and times for required. Online synchronous activities are published in the instructor's weekly course schedule. Hybrid courses are scheduled as sections 80X (daytime) and 85X (evening).

Online courses are taught 86-100% online using a combination of asynchronous and synchronous activities, which offers greater flexibility in scheduling and convenience of access to students. This method allows the students to accomplish the same learning outcomes and to experience the same level of rigor achieved in traditional courses. Dates and times for required online synchronous activities are published in the instructor's weekly course schedule. At UTPB, online courses include sections in the 700s – example, 701, 720, 740, 760, 783, 793.

Academic Administration

Academic Calendar

Distance learning courses follow the same academic terms as traditional courses. Full-term distance learning courses will begin during the first official week of the semester and conclude during the final exam period at the end of the semester. Half-term (eight-week) distance learning courses will begin during the first official week of the half-term and conclude during the half-term's final exam period. The academic calendar is accessible on the University's web site.

Course Approval

The UTPB Curriculum Committee, whose members represent each college, reviews all undergraduate courses offered at the University. Graduate Council reviews all graduate courses. The Committee's procedures are described in the Curriculum Review Process. That process ensures that all courses of the same prefix and number will have the same learning outcomes and level of rigor, regardless of delivery mode. Courses taught through the University's distance education program must be delivered via the UTPB approved LMS, approved for online delivery by the departments and colleges, and submitted to the REACH Distance Learning Center for review.

Creating New Courses

New course approval is initiated within the department and requires submission of a syllabus along with signed approval forms to the appropriate traditional course approval bodies (department/college/school curriculum committees, Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, and/or Graduate Council). UTPB courses are approved for entry into the appropriate catalog prior to offering to students for credit.

Modifying Existing Courses for Online Delivery

Traditional courses may be modified for distance learning delivery. To initiate the online course development process, the following items must be submitted for review:

- Online Proposal Form
- Syllabi for online courses
- Course Development Plan
- Assigned online instructor

Online Proposal Form requires the signatures of the department chair and dean to indicate that the course has met the requirements as set forth by the University's traditional course approval procedures (University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee or Graduate Council).

REACH reviews proposals based on compliance with University policies and procedures and training of the course instructor(s).

Hybrid Courses

The University encourages faculty members to use the LMS for course and content delivery. For example, even though a course may not be taught online, the LMS may be used to disseminate assignments and course materials.

LMS Enhanced

Faculty who wish to supplement to the traditional classroom with limited use of the LMS (i.e. upload syllabi, handouts, assignments, etc.) may do so since all courses are available in the LMS.

Offering an Online Course(s)

Online courses must be completed prior to listing on published schedule for student enrollment. The Registrar publishes Course Schedules for fall in early April, for spring and summer in early November. Online courses offered on schedules for enrollment are reviewed by qualified online course reviewers who assure that required online standards are met.

Online Instructors

Faculty members who teach distance learning courses must possess comparable academic credentials as faculty who teach traditional courses at UTPB. Each faculty member must possess at least a master's degree with eighteen (18) hours of specialization in the discipline for teaching at the undergraduate level. Relative to credentials, adjunct faculty members are held to the same standard as full-time faculty.

Faculty Compensation

Full-time faculty members teaching online courses in a traditional program receive no additional compensation for those courses beyond normal guidelines. If teaching an online course results in the faculty member teaching more than the maximum number of required teaching hours for the term, the decision to provide additional compensation for overload or extra services is that of the department chair. Compensation of adjunct faculty members who teach distance learning courses is at the same rate as that given for traditional classes. Online courses are a part of the regular teaching load. The decision regarding the number of online courses taught by a faculty member is that of the department chairperson and college dean.

Faculty Responsibility

The course instructor is responsible for the course content, content delivery, student evaluation, assessing learning outcomes, and timely communication within the online learning course. Faculty work with REACH staff to review online courses prior to each offering to determine relevancy and accuracy of materials.

Faculty Training

REACH will certify faculty to teach online. The approval process requires that instructors successfully complete the following three foundational training courses:

- Online Canvas Training
- Best Practices for Teaching Online

Training is flexible to meet faculty needs. Some faculty receive hands-on training in a lab setting with online materials. The training is available totally online which allows the instructor to practice using the online system and to go through the student experience.

Certification

The REACH Distance Learning Center awards training badges identify the type of training completed and are associated with user accounts in the LMS individual's profile.

Continuing Education in Distance Learning

Faculty teaching online courses will have knowledge and skills of contemporary technologies and pedagogical techniques by participating in individual and group professional development activities.

After successfully completing the foundation trainings, faculty are encouraged to enhance their proficiency in the use of the LMS tools to enhance instruction and content delivery.

Additional courses are offered for experienced users for advanced learning management system functions, web 2.0 tools, web conferencing, audio and video. Courses are announced via email, REACH web site, Faculty Training and Tutorials pages in the LMS.

Staff Support

The REACH Distance Learning Center employs full-time staff who advise and assist UTPB faculty on all phases of online instruction, including course development, instructional design, and content delivery. Support is provided individually or during group training.

Accreditation Requirements

UTPB complies with the regional standards and requirements of its institutional accreditor - the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges - and the national accreditation requirements or standards of the colleges, schools, and departments.

Copyright Compliance

Faculty members are expected to understand and adhere to the copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code), as updated by the Technology, Education, and Copyright Harmonization Act (TEACH Act). Copyright law 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's LMS or to other online sites. Under the TEACH Act, it is permissible to make copyrighted materials available to students, providing such materials

- do not exceed an amount or duration comparable to that typically displayed in a live classroom setting;
- are directly related to the course content;
- are an integral part of the teaching content;
- are intended solely for and are available only to students enrolled in the course; and
- are retained only for the class session.

The students must be notified that the materials may be subject to copyright protection. More information on copyright available at <http://libguides.utpb.edu/copyright>. For publishing to UTPB web site and public servers, see [UTPB Internet Use and Publishing Guidelines](#).

Ownership of Educational Materials and Copyright Laws

Materials developed using University funds shall belong to the University. Course development paid for by the University shall also belong to the University's Unit. Faculty will ensure compliance with all copyright laws concerning the use and reproduction of printed materials and transmission of films, recording, videotapes or other protected works. The University of Texas System provides a Copyright Crash Course for quick reference at [Copyright Tutorial](#).

Other Course Providers

Distance learning courses are available from other colleges, universities, corporations or non-profit organizations. In the event faculty of UTPB wish to freely adopt, purchase or lease modules or entire courses from a Third Party, such courses or modules must be evaluated by the Curriculum Committee, department chairperson and/or dean to ensure that the materials meet all quality criteria set forth by the University, before any legal agreements are signed between the parties.

The University of Texas System Online Consortium (UTOC) provides a web presence to identify online courses open for registration by students enrolled at any UT institution; promote collaborative online degree programs offered by University of Texas institutions, as well as support students in the

registration process for these courses and degree programs.

The UT Online Consortium (UTOC) manages and supports the Texas Information System (TIS) application which allows UTPB students to take Internet-delivered courses from other University of Texas component schools for UTPB credit. To enroll in an online course offered through this consortium, the student must complete an online Registration Request using the Texas Information System (TIS). More information about registration and the TIS can be found on the UTOC website Registration and Enrollment Page at [The University of Texas System Online Consortium](#)

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. It is the responsibility of the faculty to ensure that the rigor and quality of courses and programs are consistent across delivery platforms and that rigor and quality are maintained.

Requirements such as a grading system, examinations, research projects, course evaluation, faculty evaluation, attendance policy, and clock hours required are considered part of academic integrity.

Testing/Assessment

Instructors are expected to design the standards to measure student success in their courses. A variety of measures should be used, such as case studies, essays, research projects, labs, papers, exams, applications, and real world experiences.

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

Proctors - Web-based and Non-Web Proctored Exams

REACH Distance Learning Center provides Web-based proctoring service in collaboration with a third-party providers, Examity and Smarter Proctoring, for distant students taking University-designated exams. Access to these services is through LMS.

Detailed procedures and the cost of the proctoring service are published searchable through *SmarterProctoring* according to a student's location. The use of this web-based professional proctoring service requires the student to pay a fee directly to the proctoring service provider. Faculty needing non-proctored exams may use the same service which allows faculty to pre-approve proctors.

University Honesty Policy

University policy states that it is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with the Student 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 honor code and University judicial procedures will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

Accessibility (Americans with Disabilities Act)

The University makes every effort to select instructional technologies that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. As with traditional, campus-based courses, students taking online 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 should be encouraged to contact the UTPB PASS Office for assistance and the staff persons in that office will notify the instructor. UTPB follows the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973 as amended in 1990.

Course Offerings

Courses currently offered by the University via LMS are listed on UTPB Course Schedule web site under the [UTPB Academics > Course Schedules](#). The following sections are designated for online or hybrid courses:

- Online Sections 70X (regular term),
- 72X (whole summer),
- 74X (Summer I), 76X (Summer II),
- 8X (First 8-week), 79X (Second 8-week);
- Hybrid Sections 80X (daytime), 85X (evening)

Course Review

All courses, traditional and online, will be reviewed by observation or examination by the department chair and/or college dean, to ensure that all criteria are met as set forth in this policy. Periodic reviews of online courses will be conducted electronically by REACH staff. Results of the reviews are presented to faculty to ensure that appropriate changes are made to improve the curriculum and/or instructional methods and content delivery. Ongoing monitoring of all distance learning courses is the responsibility of the department chairs and deans. Shadowing of faculty allows supervisors to review faculty-student interactions during live courses. Mentors are recommended for first time online instructors. Requests for shadowing should be sent to REACH system administrator at reach@utpb.edu.

Faculty Evaluation

Online instructors are evaluated in the same manner as those who teach traditional courses. Student evaluations are completed online in all courses, whether traditional or distance learning. Traditional instructors may choose from three methods for students to complete evaluations. Delivery of online evaluation is set by default unless the instructor identifies the choice of paper evaluation. The third option is to have students in a computer lab and the evaluation opened and closed manually for students to complete. Paper evaluations are printed by the instructor or administrative assistant and classroom times for distribution arrangements are done by the administrative assistants. Completed evaluations are collected and returned to REACH for scanning and digital distribution of reports to faculty, program chairs, department heads, deans, and the Provost/VP of Academic Affairs. REACH may review the evaluations of online courses to identify faculty who may require additional training in course design, instructional methods, and content delivery.

Library Resources

Traditional and online students may access the UTPB J. Conrad Dunagan Library via the LMS and through a proxy server. All J. Conrad Dunagan Library services are available to online students via Skype, Facebook, and YouTube. Individual sessions for reference and research assistance is available.

J. Conrad Dunagan Library offers remote access to wide variety of web-based information, many full text and eBooks. Dunagan Library participates in TexShare which is a cooperative agreement with other Texas universities, community colleges, and public libraries. This program allows UTPB students, faculty, associates of the faculty, and staff to use other libraries in the State of Texas.

Faculty and students may attend scheduled instruction on library resources or arrange for an appointment, virtual or in person. To arrange instructional sessions, contact Instruction Coordinator.

Any currently enrolled student, and currently employed faculty or staff member may submit a reference requests via phone at 432-552-2396, chat through FalconChat, or email. For more information visit [Reference and Research Assistance](#)

University Bookstore

The University Bookstore (<http://www.bkstr.com/texas-permianbasinstore/home>) provides information on textbooks associated with each course. All students may make bookstore purchases using the online service or they may elect to acquire books and resources for courses from alternate sources. Students receiving financial aid may use book vouchers distributed through Financial Aid Services.

Class Size

Minimum course capacity in online courses is dictated by University policy. Department administration, faculty resources, and student demand may require maximum online class size to be flexible to student demand. Online academic assistants are available for classes over specified enrollments set by deans. Request form for academic assistants are completed by the faculty with specific academic requirements. Instructional Connections provides resume for faculty to select assistants. This process is to be completed no later than 2 weeks prior to the start of date for online classes. REACH manages academic assistants with access to LMS courses.

Student E-Mail

Each registered student at UTPB has a university-provided e-mail account. The UTPB e-mail address provided will be automatically carried into the UTPB student information system (my.utpb.edu) and will be used for all future correspondence. The e-mail address will be automatically associated with the student enrollments in the LMS for faculty to easily communicate with students.

The Outlook 365 e-mail address will be populated with the student standard UTPB e-mail address. Students who prefer to receive e-mail at an alternate e-mail address will be required to establish an e-mail forwarding record in Outlook 365 (<https://outlook.office.com>). Students will be responsible for appropriate maintenance of their e-mail forwarding orders.

LMS Student Orientation Training

Students will be introduced to the LMS components, learn how to submit assignments, take quizzes and exams, view grades, use the discussion board, send emails, and learn other elements that may assist them in completing their online course successfully. Students self-register for the LMS Student Online Orientation once they have received their UTPB student ID and enrolled in any course at UTPB.

Students will need to have registered in at least one UTPB course in my.utpb.edu. Using the same credentials as UTPB email, students may login under the Course Login on every UTPB web page and select Student Online Orientation and select Join.

Student Authentication

Faculty members must verify that students participating in online courses are indeed the same as student who officially enrolled in the course. This may be accomplished by requiring students to be physically present when course assessments are done or via electronic means that monitor through web-cams and recording of activity during testing. Faculty members may also require students to go to a pre-approved site for course assessments where they are proctored by an official site representative. In this instance, the student will be required to produce a student ID or state issued picture ID.

In accordance with SACS Distance and Correspondence Education Policy Statement, ..." the institution must demonstrate that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identify 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."

Verification of Enrollment

The U. S. Department of Education requires students to complete academic activities before they may be counted in attendance at any time during the semester. The USDE will not accept the simple act of logging into the University's learning management system (LMS) as proof of attendance at any time during the semester. Students must complete an academic activity to be counted as attending.

For this reason, faculty members are required to include an academic activity for students to complete early in the semester. Completion of this activity will be used to verify student attendance and participation in the course. Faculty members will report student attendance to the Office of the Registrar by the published deadline date in each term, generally the 12th day (i.e. two business weeks) of a regular term and 6th day of a short term.

At the end of each semester, faculty must report a last date of attendance for any student receiving a "W", "F" or "I" grade. The last day on which the student completed an academic activity within the course should be used to determine the last day of attendance.

Class Attendance

Students are expected to attend class regularly to achieve maximum benefit from educational activities. Class attendance is defined as active participation within the online 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.

Office Hours and Student Expectations for Response

Faculty teaching online courses are subject to policies and procedures of the Faculty Handbook policy related to office/conference hours, vacations, and the like.

The goal of faculty office hours is to facilitate student access to the professor at specified times, to assist students, and to respond to needs, especially learning needs. Faculty must clearly indicate in the course material the expectation for response to student requests, including the frequency of faculty interaction with discussion boards and other communication tools. Faculty members teaching online courses are expected to respond to student emails and questions within 24 hours but not later than 72 hours.

As stated in the Faculty Handbook, faculty members should post and hold office hours in a format suitable to support students in their courses. For online courses, virtual office hours may require the use of the telephone, email, text chat, video chat, or other technologies, as needed to provide adequate support for students unable to come to campus.

Drops and Withdrawals

Online courses are subject to the same regulations as stated in official University publications (e.g. catalogs, website). Deadlines for dropping and withdrawing from a course are on the Academic Calendar and University catalogs.

Course Cancellation

Online courses are subject to the same regulations as stated in the University catalog. Courses will be cancelled in emergency situations and with ample notice if possible.

Acceptable Use of Computer Technology

UTPB prohibits the use of University computer technology to engage in activities for illegal activities or to promote personal gain and/or profit or use of University technology for organizations other than UTPB. The communication tools provided within an online course are to be used for course-related purposes only.

Student should 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.

UTPB Student Help Support and LMS Help Desk

UTPB provides online students an electronic message form by which they can report concerns and ask questions about online operations and course-related concerns. If applicable, the staff will contact REACH or the online instructor to follow up with the student submitted messages.

Students may submit tickets for LMS support inside of Canvas under Help on the side menu, call 866-437-0867.

For assistance with my.utpb.edu, UTPB email, or other technical connections with UTPB, students may email help@utpb.edu.

Complaints

Students residing outside the State of Texas who desire to resolve a grievance are encouraged to follow the University's Student Grievance Process. The Division of Student Services serves as mediators between the faculty, administration, and the student body and assists with all student activities.

The bottom of every UTPB web page has a link to Complaint Resolution to file a grievance. More information about the grievance process can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog and Graduate Catalog.

If an issue cannot be resolved with the University, a complaint may be filed with the Commission of Colleges [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools](#) (SACS), or the appropriate state agency for handling complaints in a student's state.

State Authorization Requirement for Distance Education

The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) requires institutions offering distance or correspondence education to acquire authorization from all states from which students are enrolled. This authorization is required to maintain students' eligibility to receive federal financial aid. Presently, UTPB is authorized to accept enrollments for distance/correspondence education from the states state on the UTPB web site under [UT Permian Basin Approved States for Online Learning](#).