

NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY
DISTANCE EDUCATION
Policy Statement
Revised 10/19/2011

Definition of Distance Education

In accordance with the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS-COC), Nicholls State University defines distance education as “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. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD’s, and CDROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program.”

Supporting Definitions

- **Online Course:** Nicholls State University defines an electronic online course as any course where 100% of the content is delivered online or in an electronic format. Students should be given an option to take exams at a remote proctored site.
- **Hybrid Course:** A hybrid course is a blend of face-to-face instruction with web-based instruction. In a hybrid course 50%-99% of the course learning is online and as a result, the amount of classroom seat-time is reduced. A course that meets face-to-face over 50% of the time, but uses web-based learning as a support for the instruction are identified as web-enhanced courses.
 - Online course: 100% web-based
 - Hybrid/Blended course: 50%-99% web-based
 - Web- Enhanced course 1%-49% web based
- **Learning Management System (LMS):** software application for the administration and delivery of the distance learning courses and programs.
- **Proctor:** A person selected by the student and approved by the faculty member to keep watch over the examination at a remote location.

Policy Statements

- All electronic courses must adhere to the standards set forth by the Southern Region Electronic Campus (SREC), Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System, and Nicholls State University.
- Academic standards for all programs or courses offered electronically are the same as those for other courses or programs delivered at the institution where they originate.
- Nicholls State University ensures that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates

in, completes the course or program, and receives the credit. The identity of each student who participates in class or coursework is verified by the use of a secure login and pass code and/or proctored examinations. Two official forms must be completed by students before taking a remote proctored exam. One form is The Proctor Approval Form completed by the student when selecting an approved proctor (see Appendix A). The Test Administrator Form is completed by the proctor as an agreement between him/her and the course instructor (see Appendix B).

- To ensure that Nicholls State University distance education courses and programs comply with the SACS-COC *Principles of Accreditation* and meet the same high quality standards that exist for traditional classroom education, the policies identified in the subsequent pages will be followed. These policies will guide the development, implementation and evaluation of distance education.

Mission

1. Nicholls ensures appropriate planning and adequate administration to ensure the proper planning and coordination of distance learning and provision of adequate resources, training for faculty, and support for students.

- 1.1. Strategic planning, budgeting, and policy development processes reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance and correspondence education program. (CS 3.3.1, CS 3.8.3, and CS 3.11.3)
- 1.2. Annual planning and budgeting processes reflect consideration of distance education issues and initiatives. Funding is provided for training and other services related to distance education through a dedicated online course fee.
- 1.3. Nicholls attains Board approval for initiatives related to distance education when appropriate.
- 1.4. Administrative responsibility for distance education courses and programs is reflected in the organizational structure of Nicholls through its Distance Learning Committee.

2. Nicholls ensures that faculty members are engaged in the planning and systematic review of distance education and are part of the academic oversight of distance education initiatives.

- 2.1. As reflected in the University Policy and Procedure manual, The Distance Learning Committee is charged with regulating, monitoring, and encouraging activities related to distance learning, ensuring that faculty members play an appropriate role in designing courses/programs offered by distance education, are engaged in the planning and systematic review of distance education and are part of the academic oversight of distance education initiatives.

Curriculum and Instruction

3. Nicholls faculties assume responsibility for and exercise oversight of distance education, ensuring both the rigor of programs/courses and the quality of instruction.

- 3.1. The University's Policy and Procedure Manual section on *Academic Program Development and Changes* states that all course and curricular development and changes are initiated and approved at the departmental level by qualified faculty in each discipline.

Departments then submit the requests to college deans for review and approval. Once approved, requests are submitted to the University's Courses and Curricula Committee or Graduate Council for review and approval, as per the Committee's guidelines. All voting members of the Courses and Curricula Committee and Graduate Council are full-time teaching faculty, as indicated in the University's Policy and Procedure Manual – Courses and Curricula Committee:

Policy and Procedure Manual Section 5.8.9.1. Curriculum Development

Faculty have the primary responsibility for curriculum, including course additions, deletions, or modifications, and program additions or modifications. These additions and modifications may involve Board of Regents approval. Faculty should be aware of the complete process from the department level to the Board of Regents (Section 5.2.2). Knowledge of time limitations is crucial for a successful conclusion to the process.

In most cases, a curriculum proposal is developed intra-departmentally. The college curriculum committee reviews the proposal and either approves it by sending it on to the Dean or sending it back to the Head with suggested modifications. The Dean may return the proposal to the committee for further modification or send it on to the Courses and Curriculum Committee or the Graduate Council as required.

After review by the Graduate Council or appropriate committee, the proposal may be returned to the appropriate Dean for modification. The committees may also schedule hearings with specific Department Heads, or faculty proposing changes, in order to obtain further information. Upon approval by the committee, a recommendation is forwarded to the Faculty Senate.

The Senate votes on the proposal and forwards its recommendation to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs makes final disposition of the proposal and notifies the Senate of the recommendation. More detailed information of the responsibilities in the routing process for curriculum changes is found in the Courses and Curriculum Procedures document.

- 3.2. Any course or degree program approved through the above process may also be offered via distance education. The University Distance Learning Committee ensures the rigor of courses, programs and quality of instruction through its approval process which adheres to Quality Matters Standards (Appendix C).
- 3.3. Nicholls approval process for delivering an online course
 - Instructor completes Quality Matters training, "Improving Your Online Course"
 - Instructor fills out form that is signed by Department Head, Dean, Coordinator of Distance Learning and VP Academic Affairs (this course is then put on the list of courses to be evaluated).
 - Course is offered in initial semester
 - Course is reviewed using the Quality Matters Rubric by Nicholls Peer Reviewers at beginning of semester. Team works with the instructor to evaluate the course
 - Upon approval of course by Peer Reviewers, the course will be validated as an approved course for Nicholls State University.

4. Nicholls provides technology adequate to offer its distance education courses/programs.

- 4.1. Technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the programs and courses. As stated in Section 5.8.9.1 of the University's *Policy and Procedure Manual*, all course and curriculum development and changes are initiated and approved at the departmental level by qualified faculty in the discipline [1]. Likewise, academic departments ensure the appropriateness of technology used in its programs and courses.
- 4.2. The following *Quality Matters* criteria related to rigor of programs and quality of instruction are used to assess each distance learning course submitted for approval by the Distance Learning Committee.

QM Standard 6: Course Technology - Course navigation and the technology employed in the course foster student engagement and ensure access to instructional materials and resources.
6.1 The tools and media support the learning objectives, and are appropriately chosen to deliver the content of the course.
6.2 The tools and media support student engagement and guide the student to become an active learner.
6.3 Navigation throughout the online components of the course is logical, consistent, and efficient.
6.4 Students have ready access to the technologies required in the course.
6.5 The course components are compatible with current standards for delivery modes.
6.6 Instructions on how to access resources at a distance are sufficient and easy to understand.
6.7 The course design takes full advantage of available tools and media.

5. Nicholls ensures that potential distance education students know what technological expertise they will need and what technology they must possess to successfully complete distance education courses.

- 5.1. Expectations concerning the use of technology are listed on the Office of Distance Learning Web Page (<http://www.nicholls.edu/distance>) along with a tutorial on the Learning Management System (LMS) to familiarize students with skills required.
- 5.2. Expectations concerning the use of technology are also communicated to students via the syllabus.
- 5.3. The following *Quality Matters* criteria related to learner support are used to assess availability of information needed by a student to assess his/her ability to succeed in a distance learning course:

QM Standard 7: Learner Support - The course facilitates student access to institutional services essential to student success
7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered.
7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's academic support system can assist the student in effectively using the resources provided.
7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student support services can help students reach their educational goals
7.4 Course instructions answer basic questions related to research, writing, technology, etc., or link to tutorials or other resources that provide the

6. Nicholls provides academic support services needed by distance education students and trained staff to provide these services.

- 6.1. Students have adequate access to the range of academic services appropriate to support their needs, including tutoring and academic advising
 - 6.1.1. The Academic Advising Center maintains an e-mail address for off-campus students (advising@nicholls.edu) which is monitored daily by a certified master advisor.
 - 6.1.2. All students in the University Prep course are enrolled in a special LMS section according to their assigned certified master advisor. The University selected LMS is available via internet and provides a communication tool for both the advisor and the advisee
 - 6.1.3. Nicholls counseling center provides professional service to students and can be contacted via their website: <http://www.nicholls.edu/counseling>
 - 6.1.4. Career services offers online placement assistance for students and alumni through their website: <http://www.nicholls.edu/career>
 - 6.1.5. Phone numbers and email addresses for all support services are located in many areas throughout the University web page for easy access. In addition this contact information is made available through online syllabi or on the online course.
 - 6.1.6. In addition to advising matters, students are able to request to be resigned from the University if they are unable to physically come on campus to do so.

7. Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs, including those offered through distance education and correspondence education.

- 7.1. As with traditional programs, programs available through distance education are scrutinized both internally and externally. Internal review processes for new curricula and for changes in existing curricula ensure that the length of each program is appropriate to the discipline, meets any national accreditation standards that are applicable, and is commensurate with other programs offered at the University.
- 7.2. All newly proposed programs are subject to external review by the Louisiana Board of Regents. The proposal review process requires that institutions provide comparisons between the content of their proposed program with that of similar degrees offered at other institutions. In addition, program proposals are evaluated by external reviewers chosen by the Board, and program content and length are evaluated factors.
- 7.3. At Nicholls, the University's Academic Council reviews all curricula on a five-year cycle through its Academic Program Review Process. This review asks for a comparison of the reviewed Program's curriculum with similar curricula at other institutions. For programs with external accreditations, additional checks on program length and content are provided through accreditation renewal reviews.

8. All degree programs offered through distance education embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with the institution mission and based upon fields of study appropriate to higher learning.

- 8.1. Faculty members who wish to develop a new program to be offered via distance education must follow existing procedures for program development which includes approval by the University Courses and Curriculum Committee. Once approved by Courses and Curriculum, faculty must submit a "Request for Approval of Distance Learning Delivery of a New Program" form (Appendix D) to the Distance Learning Committee for consideration.

Once approved by the Distance Learning Committee the program must be approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

9. Credit awarded for courses offered through distance education will be equivalent to credit awarded for courses offered through traditional education.

- 9.1. If the distance education course proposed is an existing course on campus, the instructor must complete a "Request for Approval of the Distance Learning Course (Appendix E)" and submit it to the Distance Learning Committee for review and approval. Once final approval is granted by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the course may be scheduled for delivery.
- 9.2. Faculty members who wish to develop a new course to be offered via distance education must follow existing procedures for course development which includes approval by the University Courses and Curriculum Committee. Once approved by Courses and Curriculum, faculty must submit a Request for Approval of the Distance Learning Course form to the Distance Learning Committee for consideration. Once approved by the Distance Learning Committee the course must be approved by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Refer to 3.3
- 9.3. The following *Quality Matters* criteria related to the equivalency of distance learning courses to traditional courses are used to assess each distance learning course submitted for approval by the Distance Learning Committee.

QM Standard 2: Competencies - Learning objectives are clearly stated and explained. They assist students in focusing their effort in the course.
2.1 The course learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable.
2.2 The module/unit learning objectives describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.
2.3 All learning objectives are stated clearly and written from the students' perspective.
2.4 Instructions to students on how to meet the learning objectives are adequate and stated clearly.
2.5 The learning objectives are appropriately designed for the level of the course.

10. There is currency of materials, programs, and courses related to distance education at Nicholls.

- 10.1. Innovations in technology and corresponding teaching methods are changing rapidly. Academic departments are responsible for ensuring that materials, programs and courses reflect these changes. Programs and events offered by the Center for Advancing Faculty Engagement (CAFÉ) will offer opportunities for training and development in innovative technologies. The CAFÉ also offers a web page with resources for staying abreast of new technologies.
- 10.2. The university will continuously monitor hardware and software used to support distance learning and make updates and changes when appropriate.
- 10.3. The following *Quality Matters* criteria related to Resources and Material are used to assess each distance learning course submitted for approval by the Distance Learning Committee.

QM Standard 4: Resources and Material - Instructional materials are sufficiently comprehensive to achieve stated course objectives and learning outcomes and are prepared by qualified persons competent in their fields.

4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objectives.

4.2 The relationship between the instructional materials and the learning activities is clearly explained to the student.

4.3 The instructional materials have sufficient breadth, depth, and currency for the student to learn the subject.

4.4 All resources and materials used in the course are appropriately cited.

11. Nicholls ensures the quality of distance learning courses offered through consortia arrangement or contractual agreement or partnership.

- 11.1. Nicholls is an active participant in ensuring the effectiveness and quality of the courses or programs offered by all participants.
- 11.2. Contracts or agreements related to distance education contain provision for administrative or faculty involvement in development of objectives and regular evaluation of achievement of those objectives.
- 11.3. Nicholls regularly reviews its objectives for arrangements for distance education.

Faculty

12. Nicholls employs sufficient full time faculty to support its distance education goals.

- 12.1. As stated in the *University Policy and Procedure Manual*, “the primary responsibility for the development of new courses, deletion or changes in existing courses, the initiation of new programs, the discontinuance of existing programs, or other program modifications lies with the faculty”. Hence, faculties are responsible for developing online courses to meet the needs of students in their respective disciplines. Assistance is provided to faculty via the CAFÉ and Office of Distance Learning.
- 12.2. In order to achieve effective teaching and learning, it is recommended that each discipline determine the appropriate class size. As for traditional classroom courses, the appropriate size will vary depending on the nature of the course and the experience of the instructor.
- 12.3. The distance learning course may be part of a faculty member’s normal workload or be taught as an overload, as approved by the appropriate department head and academic dean. If taught as an overload, the online instructor would receive an overload stipend per student up to a maximum as specified by administration.
- 12.4. Determination of course load, method of course delivery, and class size must result in the most effective and efficient use of university resources.
- 12.5. Academic departments are responsible for ensuring faculty have the skills necessary for the successful development and delivery of distance education.

13. Nicholls has clear criteria and regularly evaluates the effectiveness of faculty members who teach distance education courses.

13.1. As stated in the University Policy and Procedure Manual, faculty are evaluated each year as part of an annual formative review process. Faculty who are teaching distance education courses are evaluated using the same process and criteria. However, student evaluations are conducted through a web-based process (SIR-II).

14. Faculty who teach in distance education programs and courses receive appropriate training and are provided opportunities for faculty development in distance education.

14.1. In order to develop high quality distance education courses and programs, faculty must complete an online training program through *Quality Matters*. All faculty involved with distance education courses should be familiar with the following topics related to distance education:

14.1.1. Nicholls Distance Education Policies and Procedures.

14.1.2. *Quality Matters* Rubric.

14.1.3. Learning Management System operation and features.

14.1.4. Resources available to students enrolled in distance education courses and programs.

14.1.5. Strategies for managing distance education courses and programs.

14.1.6. Forums and other communication techniques.

14.2. To assist faculty in improving performance in teaching, scholarly activity, and service related to distance education, Nicholls State University provides a range of faculty development programs that include the following: sessions offered at the bi-annual Faculty Development Institute, events hosted by the Center for Advancement of Faculty Engagement (C.A.F.E.) provisions for travel; teaching improvement activities; alternate work from teaching; assistance in proposing and conducting unpaid research and support for publication, consulting, or grant activities through the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs; computer services; and other such institutional support as may be expected to enhance faculty development in distance education.

14.3. One on one technology assistance is provided by the director of the C.A.F.E. and Coordinator of the Office of Distance Learning as needed. These offices also maintain a web site offering faculty resources and tutorials related to distance education.

15. Nicholls distance education programs and courses provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty and among students.

15.1. The core academic policies that directly affect students are contained in the University's Bulletin and in the Code of Student Conduct. Degrees awarded, degree requirements, general education requirements, grading policies, attendance policies, and probation and suspension policies are covered in detail in the Catalog. Transfer policies, methods of obtaining credit, and the honors program are also described in the Catalog. The Code of Student Conduct provides policies and procedures for academic grievances and student complaints. It also contains policies regarding academic dishonesty. The Office of Distance Learning (<http://www.nicholls.edu/distance>) maintains a web site which provides a list of online and hybrid courses to be taught in upcoming semesters. It also offers links to Frequently Asked Questions page, an LMS tutorial, instruction on how to enroll in distance learning classes, and other student resources. The university Schedule of Classes indicates the means by which a course is taught (example WWW = online course). Faculty may also obtain policies and procedures and form for requesting approval of distance learning classes via the internal M-drive.

15.2. As a best practice, faculty members are encouraged to provide feedback to students on assignments within 7-14 days after the due date for that assignment.

- 15.3. Faculty should check their e-mail and online course at least every 48-hours within the work week in order to provide prompt feedback and alleviate any problems that students may be having.
- 15.4. Online instructors must provide students with optional means of communication in the event of technological difficulties or outages due to weather. These may include (a) phone numbers (b) email addresses (c) contact Nicholls technological support. This information should be addressed in the syllabus.
- 15.5. The following *Quality Matters* criteria related to timely and appropriate interaction are used to assess each distance learning course submitted for approval by the Distance Learning Committee.

QM Standard 5: Learner Engagement - Meaningful interaction between the instructor and students, among students, and between students and course materials is employed to motivate students and foster intellectual commitment and personal development.
5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the stated learning objectives. (Note: in some institutions learning objectives may be called learning outcomes.)
5.2 Learning activities foster instructor-student, content-student, and if appropriate to the course, student-student interaction.
5.3 Clear standards are set for instructor responsiveness and availability (turn-around time for email, grade posting, etc.)
5.4 The requirements for student interaction are clearly articulated.

- 15.6. All faculty members are required to post the 7th week grades for all of their students onto the Learning Management System.

16. Faculty support services specifically related to distance education are provided.

- 16.1. Academic Computing supports faculty with technology in classrooms and labs. Open labs are maintained and managed by the Academic Computing department. Additionally, Academic Computing works with the Office of Sponsored Programs to assist program investigators with cash and matching funds to leverage existing programs provided by the technology fee and to seed new programs through cash matches.
- 16.2. The Academic Computing department provides technical support for five video conferencing suites on campus. The Academic Computing department also provides the Learning Management System, email, Web, file, and print services to the entire student population. All instructors are welcome to create online courses to supplement face-to-face courses, as hybrid courses, or as exclusively online courses. All courses are linked to the student email system that is offered to all students at Nicholls. Additionally, all students have access to Web space to create personalized Web pages for portfolios or demonstrate other work while attending the University.
- 16.3. Academic Computing maintains video streaming classrooms on campus. The technology available in these rooms allows faculty to record classroom lectures that students can access through the web (<http://video.nicholls.edu>) at anytime and anyplace.

17. Distance education policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products.

- 17.1. Ownership and copyright of course materials is determined in accordance with policies set forth by the University of Louisiana System and Louisiana Board of Regents.
<http://www.ulsystem.net/assets/docs/searchable/boards/intellctpropppm.pdf>
- 17.2. Electronic delivery of course materials must comply with all applicable copyright laws as specified by the University of Louisiana System and Louisiana board of Regents and Nicholls State University Policy and Procedure Manual (Sections "Scholarly Activity" and "Use of Copyrighted Works")

Institutional Effectiveness

18. Comparability of distance education programs to campus-based programs and courses is ensured by the evaluation of educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction.

- 18.1. Student learning competencies are identified by faculty and assessed during the course approval process. Learning competencies of online courses must be comparable to those of identical courses taught via traditional pedagogy. These competencies are also listed in the course syllabi.
- 18.2. The Office of Assessment and Institutional Research is responsible for conducting student evaluation of electronic courses and for disseminating the results to faculty and administration. The evaluation instrument mirrors the instrument used for traditional evaluations and meets the same privacy standards. Results of the student evaluation of distance learning and all traditional instruction are distributed to instructors and department heads and used as one element of faculty evaluations.
- 18.3. The Distance Learning Committee, with the assistance of the Office of Assessment and Institutional Research, will conduct periodic evaluations to compare the effectiveness of distance education courses to campus-based courses in regard to student learning, student retention and student satisfaction.

19. Nicholls regularly assesses the effectiveness of its provision of library/learning resources and student support services for distance education students.

- 19.1. Ellender Memorial Library is committed to the distance education students by meeting or exceeding the Distance Education support criteria as defined by The Association of College and Research Libraries.
- 19.2. The Library provides a variety of opportunities for feedback, which helps improve resource quality.
 - Online distance learning student evaluation instrument contains the following, "The library provides adequate online resources and services to meet my research needs."
 - Direct contact with reference librarian through e-mail or telephone. Comment form on website.
- 19.3. Many departments/colleges are accredited by regional and national professional agencies; both the library and distance education classes in these disciplines must meet accreditation standards.
- 19.4. Students can recommend material for purchase by the library, including electronic books, online through the library website.

Library and Learning Resources

20. Students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources. (CS 3.8.2 and CR 2.9)

- 20.1. Nicholls ensures that all distance education students have access to library/learning resources adequate to support the courses they are taking.
 - 20.1.1. The Library Home Page provides a link to a specific webpage dedicated to distance education students. This webpage contains tutorials on accessing the library from home, finding and using electronic books, using the electronic research databases, emailing a reference librarian, and other useful information.
- 20.2. Ellender Memorial Library provides access to LaLinc cards, meaning students enrolled at Nicholls State University may have reciprocal borrowing privileges at other academic libraries in the state.
- 20.3. Ellender Memorial Library InterLibrary Loan (ILL) provides online access for both requesting and receiving material from other libraries.

21. Access is provided to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs. (CS 3.8.1 and CS 3.8.2)

- 21.1. Academic Computing maintains user accounts for all students on campus. Each student's user ID is needed to access any open lab, LMS, Email, and to print in the open labs.
- 21.2. All courses taught at Nicholls State University have a course defined for it in the LMS. Each student's account is placed into the appropriate LMS course(s) for each semester.
- 21.3. All students have a Google Gmail account which is managed by Academic Computing. All students have a lifetime email with a nicholls.edu domain post office.
- 21.4. Directory information about current student email accounts is located at <http://acs.nicholls.edu/email>
- 21.5. Reports are available on Lab Usage, LMS Usage, Email Usage, and Printing from Labs.
- 21.6. The Instructional Technology Fee allocates about \$250,000 annually towards purchasing and maintaining technology that the students will need to meet their overall technology needs for the campus. Minutes from meetings document the technology needs that those monies are spent on. Some of the money is spent on Distance Education directly and some indirectly, such as for the Learning Management System.

Student Support Services

22. Students have access to the range of services appropriate to support their needs, including admissions, financial aid, records and registration, and placement and counseling.

- 22.1. Placement: In addition to professional coaching in resume writing, interviewing, and dressing for success, Career Services offers placement assistance for students and alumni for temporary and permanent part-time and full-time employment and internships. The director is available during regular university hours to assist individuals in person. Of particular usefulness to distance learners is the College Central Network (CCN) which is accessible twenty four/seven through the Nicholls web site. On CCN, information is maintained about on-campus interviews, job fairs, local job openings and job-related topics. Additionally, students are able to post resumes for participating employers to browse. Participating employers post job openings and search resumes of Nicholls students and alumni through this site.
- 22.2. Counseling: University Counseling Center provides professional assistance for students dealing with a range of mental health, wellness, and adjustment issues through

individual, couple, and group counseling; consultation; and various forms of outreach. Distance learners have access to all services offered by the UCC. Direct clinical counseling is conducted in an in-person format. However, distance learners have access to a) telephone consultation to help determine appropriate recommendations for further professional assistance; b) UCC website which hosts printed information about mental health issues, audio relaxation in MP3 format; links to other helpful mental health sites; c) referral contact information for students who are unable or otherwise choose not to use UCC for direct clinical services.

22.3. Disability Services: Disability Services acts as a liaison between students and faculty to facilitate the provision of accommodations as per Americans with Disabilities Act. Distance learners have access to this without having to appear in person. Registration, documentation review, and faculty letters are processed electronically and through postal mail for full time distance learners.

22.4. Demonstration of services described above:

22.4.1. <http://www.nicholls.edu/counseling/>

22.4.2. <http://www.nicholls.edu/career/>

22.4.3. <http://www.collegecentral.com/nicholls/>

22.4.4. <http://www.nicholls.edu/disability/>

23. Students enrolled in distance learning courses or programs have an adequate procedure for resolving their complaints.

23.1. Nicholls State University has adequate procedures for addressing written complaints from students and demonstrates that it follows those procedures when resolving such complaints. These procedures are outlined in both the University *Bulletin* and the *Code of Student Conduct*.

23.2. Online students can access the Code of Student Conduct and the Student Academic Grievance Form from the Student Judicial Affairs website: <http://www.nicholls.edu/sja/>

23.3. Initial grievances can be handled via e-mail or telephone, with hearings being handled via video conference.

24. Advertising, recruiting, and admissions information adequately and accurately represent the programs, requirements, and services available to students.

24.1. Nicholls State University's admission and readmission policies for its undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as certification and non-degree programs, are published in the University's *Catalog*, which is available in electronic format on the University's Web site. Admissions policies are consistent with the University's mission to offer excellent comprehensive education that meets the needs of the communities it serves. The *Catalog* is published annually, with addendums being added as needed. All material published is reviewed for accuracy each year.

24.2. The University's admissions policies are those established by the Louisiana Board of Regents. The admissions policies are aligned with the University's mission and strategic plan.

24.3. Online course sections will be open for registration to all students and will follow the same procedures as the traditional university courses. Instructors who wish to control access to their online course would need to make a request with their department head to stop open-enrollment. Departments have the discretion of exercising controls on access to online courses based on course criteria, history, and level.

24.4. Recruitment is a campus-wide priority. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators are included in the student recruitment process. Recruitment materials and presentations provided for prospective students accurately represent the University's practices and policies. Information distributed to prospective students and their families generally comes through one or more of the following venues: the University's Web site [1], the

University's View Book [2], campus tours, the University Bulletin [3], the admissions' information packet [4], the Search Brochure [5], and the Outcome Brochure [6].

- 24.5. Content of recruitment materials, print and electronic, is reviewed for accuracy by admissions and institutional advancement staff prior to publication and distribution. The Office of Academic Affairs coordinates publication of the Bulletin. All administrative units participate in the annual content review of this publication. Recruitment information presented on the University's Web site's link to Future Students [7] is current and accurate.

25. Documented procedures assure that security of personal information is protected in the conduct of assessments and evaluations and in the dissemination of results.

- 25.1. Integrity of student work in distance education courses and programs is ensured by the use of multiple assessment methods and student-faculty interaction, including but not limited to: discussion boards, on-line group projects, chat rooms, peer assessment.
- 25.2. Instructors may offer an opportunity for students to take exams face-to-face; however, the instructor must make arrangements with remote students to be tested at an approved testing site at the nearest regionally accredited college or university, an Education office, a military base (military personnel), an American University, an American Embassy (international students), or other approved site. The Exam Administrator Information Form must be attached to all syllabi sent to such students.
- 25.3. As with traditional programs and courses, academic departments insure that credit is awarded based on the quality of student work and that the course content is appropriate to the degree program.

26. Students enrolled in distance education courses are able to use the technology employed, have the equipment necessary to succeed, and are provided assistance in using the technology employed.

- 26.1. Nicholls provides orientation for distance education students concerning available resources and how to access and use them. A number of onsite trainings are offered to students. The Instructional Technology Fee is used to purchase technology-related equipment that students may need. Academic Computing staffs three open labs with students who have been appropriately trained to help any student who has technology needs. In addition to the three open labs, five computer classrooms are available for Instructors to provide computerized training.
- 26.2. Ellender Memorial Library librarians and staff offer training and continuing education through Faculty Institute and individualized classroom lessons.
- 26.3. Students are provided with Learning Management System training in the required University Prep classes.
- 26.4. An orientation is available to transfer student and LMS training is provided during this orientation.
- 26.5. Staff with expertise in assisting distance education students is available to assist students in accessing and using available learning resources
- 26.6. Nicholls maintains an Office of Distance Learning with a full time coordinator. The Coordinator maintains a web site which includes a listing of distance education courses and resources related to distance education.

Facilities and Finances

27. Nicholls provides technology and technological resources adequate to offer and support its distance education courses/programs.

- 27.1. Equipment and technical expertise required for distance education are available.
- 27.2. Consistent with the distance education courses offered, the technological resources, means of delivery, and other physical resources are available, maintained, staffed, and upgraded on a regular basis.

28. Nicholls provides adequate funding for faculty, staff, services and technological infrastructure to support its distance education program.

- 28.1. Funds for maintaining distance education courses/programs are reviewed as part of the planning and budgeting process.
- 28.2. Nicholls charges an additional fee for all online courses, which helps provide funding for faculty training and software and hardware for the courses.