

Distance Education Management Policy and Procedure Manual

Scenario

The Caribbean Consortium of Universities (CCU) consists of several Caribbean islands including: Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica, Antigua, Guyana, Dominica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, Puerto Rico, and the Bahamas in partnership with the University of Lubbock in Texas. CCU was incorporated in Texas in 2006, and is committed to creating partnerships in the pursuit of the advancement of higher education in the caribbean. Its mission is to partner with Caribbean islands to bring distance education to individuals in a higher education setting.

CCU's main campus is located in Lubbock, Texas, with satellite offices in each of the islands listed previously. The consortium has 10,000 students currently enrolled in the distance education program with both undergraduate, graduate, and certificate degree programs being offered in various disciplines. CCU offers both fully online and ITV courses.

I am the Vice Provost for Distance Learning at CCU. As Vice Provost for Distance Learning, my role is to provide leadership for distance learning for the Consortium, overseeing the Online Learning Services Office (OLS). My main responsibility is to implement CCU's strategic plan for online learning, including increasing enrollment and revenue in online degree programs, and transforming online courses and programs throughout the university to further its mission and serve students across the caribbean more effectively. Among other things, my core responsibilities include: leading institutional change, recommending strategic direction, overseeing student orientation for online courses and degree programs, overseeing faculty development in online learning and development of online courses, overseeing recruitment, retention, graduation and career success of online program students, and monitoring online quality assurance.

Caribbean Consortium of Universities Policies and Procedures

This policy and procedure manual will address the following subsystems: Regulatory, Course, Student, Logistical and Accessibility.

Regulatory Subsystem

1. The Consortium will seek out partnerships with local governments, businesses, and other stakeholders in caribbean islands to assist in the creation of policies and procedures that will help to govern the delivery of distance education and maintain sustainability.
2. All instructors/faculty teaching online courses will take a minimum of 9 credit hours per year of continuing education training in technology, instructional design and course development to keep abreast with changes in distance education.
3. The Consortium will ensure that all distance education instructors/faculty meet the standards set forth by the Commission on Higher Education to teach online courses.

Course Subsystem

1. The Consortium will ensure the highest academic standards for all programs, courses and certificates offered electronically. Programs, courses and certificates will be reviewed by the Executive Board Committee on a two year cycle.
2. The Consortium will provide the resources and support necessary for the development and maintenance of online courses and programs.
3. The Consortium will ensure that courses are developed and delivered using the same Course Management System (CMS) so that there is consistency across all online campus locations.

Student Subsystem

1. The Consortium will ensure that enrolled students have reasonable and adequate access to student services and student rights appropriate to support their learning (Simonson et al., 2011; THECB, 2012).
2. The Consortium will ensure that all students enrolling in a distance education program for the first time are given a clear statement of course requirements in advance which will include: technical requirements, computer skills required and all other course requirements (THECB, 2012).
3. The Consortium will focus on a learner-centered approach to online learning where courses and programs will provide relevance to students' authentic learning needs.

Logistical Subsystem

1. The Consortium will ensure that appropriate levels of technical support (both by phone and online) are available 24/7 for students.
2. The Consortium will foster a working relationship with the Information Technology branch of the University to ensure that there is a plan in place for backup and recovery if the online system goes down on the main campus or any of the satellite locations (Simonson et al., 2011).
3. The Consortium will ensure that the technological infrastructure is robust and reliable enough to accommodate online users on the main campus and satellite locations. This includes providing sufficient hardware, software, servers, and network bandwidth to all locations (Simonson et al., 2011).

Accessibility Subsystem

1. The Consortium will ensure that all its distance education websites, Learning Management System (LMS), resources and materials are accessible for students with disabilities. The Consortium is committed to ensuring that course materials and resources are accessible to students with and without disabilities (DEAGTF, 2011).
2. Whenever possible, the Consortium will ensure that video files are appropriately captioned and text transcripts of audio files are available to provide an equivalent learning experience for students with disabilities (DEAGTF, 2011).

3. The Consortium will include as part of its strategic plan provisions to create programs and outreach that would enable underserved populations in the caribbean to gain access to quality distance education resources. (Refer to #1 under Regulatory Subsystem)

References

- Distance Education Accessibility Guidelines Task Force [DEAGTF], (2011). *Distance education accessibility guidelines: For students with disabilities*. Retrieved November 9, 2013 from
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- Simonson, M., Smaldino, S., Albright, M., & Zvacek, S. (2011). *Teaching and Learning at a Distance: Foundations of Distance Education* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
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