



**DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY
FOR SOUTHPOINTE ADULT HIGH
EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2021

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. NEED FOR A DISTANCE EDUCATION REPORTING POLICY

This policy defines distance education for adult education programs at Southpointe Adult High School and provides guidelines by which programs can report adult learners' distance education hours to the state SIS System, UTopia. The goal of this policy is to describe the types of activities and curricula approved for distance education and outline the requirements and procedures for reporting distance education activities to the state.

Policy 1.1

Adult education programs must follow the steps and processes described in this document to report distance education classes and related student attendance into the state approved data management system.

Distance education is a way to increase services to adult learners in Utah and a means to improve the state's adult education outcomes. It is also a method of increasing access to educational resources for the state adult student population as well as building capacity to serve more students with a wider variety of delivery options. Distance education also provides a way for the under-skilled employed and unemployed adults in the state to access education by offering flexible hours and instruction through a variety of media. Distance education's incorporation of technology allows students who are not able or choose not to attend traditional classes to have another avenue to further their education and improve their skills. Students enrolled in distance education have the same opportunity as traditional students to receive quality instruction taught by trained, knowledgeable instructors.

II. DEFINITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

A. DEFINITION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

The federal Office of Vocational and Adult Education defines distance education for adult education programs as follows.

Distance education is a formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are delivered through a variety of media including, but not limited to, print, audio recording, videotape, television broadcasts, computer software, web-based interaction, and other online technologies. Teachers support distance learners through communication via mail, telephone, e-mail, or other web-based technologies or software.*

** Completion of instructional activities in a computer lab for traditional classes does not qualify as distance education.*

B. DEFINITION OF ADULT EDUCATION LEARNERS

With the inclusion of distance education as a reportable educational activity, each adult basic education student will be identified as one of two types of learners:

- *Traditional learners*: Traditional learners are students who receive the majority of their instruction through traditional, face-to-face instruction.
- *Distance learners*: Distance learners are students who receive a majority of their instruction through approved distance education services.

Policy 2.1

Every adult basic education student must be identified as either a traditional learner or a distance learner.

A student is classified as a distance learner if the majority of the student's hours earned in a program year are derived by his or her participation in distance learning activities. However, a student's hours in *both* distance and classroom activities must be reported into the data management system.

PERSONAL COMPETENCIES

Distance education may not be the right solution for every adult education learner. Identifying the type of adult populations (e.g. ABE, ASE, ESOL,) to be served and their required minimum NRS-levels, as well as other required competencies, are essential first steps in creating an effective distance education program. For adults to be successful using distance education, they require the appropriate language, reading, mathematics, and writing skills that will enable them to follow written directions, work independently, and communicate effectively. The selected distance education curricula must also be appropriate for the targeted learner population both in content and level of technical complexity.

While these competencies are not as easily measured as reading, math, and language skills, they may be ascertained while working with the school and receiving guidance and instruction. The following personal competencies should be considered when evaluating the appropriateness of distance education for adult learners.

- Motivation
- Self-direction
- Time management skills
- Organizational skills
- Network of support
- Telephone and Internet access

TECHNOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

The following technological knowledge should be considered when evaluating the appropriateness of distance education activities mediated by technology. .

- Demonstrated facility with basic technology use, such as sending and replying to e-mail; using a Web browser; downloading, opening, and saving electronic files; and filling out Web-based fields and forms
- Regular access to computer technology with Internet access through the use of a personal or publicly available computer
- E-mail account

C. APPROVED DISTANCE EDUCATION HOURS

There are two types of student hours that may be counted for reporting purposes: *contact hours* and *proxy hours*.

CONTACT HOURS

Contact hours are defined as time spent interacting with the learner. Contact hours for distance education students can be a combination of actual face-to-face contact and contact by telephone, video, teleconference, or other online communication where student and program staff are able to interact and through which learner identity is verifiable. Face-to-face and online interaction includes student intake & orientation, assessment, goal setting, counseling, and classroom-based skills training.

A distance learner may be reported in the NRS data system after 12 contact hours have been completed.

PROXY HOURS

Proxy hours are defined as the time distance education students spend engaged in *approved* distance education activities, such as using distance education curricula. The hours for each approved activity are calculated using one of three models:

- I. *Clock-time*: This model assigns contact hours based on the elapsed time that a learner is connected to or engaged in an online or stand-alone software program that tracks time.
- II. *Teacher Verification*: This model assigns a fixed number of hours of credit for each assignment based on the teacher's determination of the extent to which a learner engaged in, or completed, the assignment.
- III. *Learner Mastery*: This model assigns a fixed number of hours of credit based on the learner's demonstrated mastery of the content of a lesson. This model requires previous engagement by the student on curriculum and materials related to the test. A high percentage of correct responses on the mastery test earns the credit hours attached to the material.

D. APPROVED DISTANCE EDUCATION CURRICULA

Policy 2.2

Only hours spent engaged with USBE-approved distance education curricula can be reported in the state Student Information System.

See the Appendix to this document for a list of currently approved distance education curricula and their respective, approved proxy-hour models.

As new distance education materials become available, USBE reserves the right to review and consider the impact of approving them for state use and reporting during the program review process. A review of approved distance education materials will be conducted as needed. If programs wish to use curricula and/or materials not identified in the Appendix to this document, they must submit the new curricula or materials to USBE to be reviewed during a Program review episode.

III. ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING

A. ACCOMMODATING LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES OR OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS

Policy 3.1

Learners with professionally certified documentation, issued within five years prior to program registration, who self-disclose a given physical, mental, or emotional disability must be provided appropriate accommodations for participating in a distance education program.

If a learner self-identifies a disability, it is the responsibility of the distance education program to provide reasonable accommodations. Programs may not deny or prevent access to services based on a learner's disability. Under certain conditions, the program may be required to absorb the costs related to the accommodation(s). By not providing appropriate accommodations for individuals with documented disabilities, programs could find themselves in violation of federal law.

B. ASSESSMENT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION LEARNERS

Policy 3.2

All potential distance education students must be given an approved assessment and meet all of the policy guidelines as traditional students.

All assessments must be administered in a proctored, face-to-face or online setting. Pre-tests must be administered according to USBE policy guidelines. Post-tests must be administered according to the USBE testing policy specifications.

C. REPORTING DISTANCE EDUCATION LEARNERS

Policy 3.3

Programs must report all required data on distance education students in the state Student Information System.

A student is classified as a distance learner if the majority of contact hours earned in a program year are derived from proxy hours. Non-proxy and proxy contact hours will be recorded in separate fields in the state SIS. The decision about the student's status as a classroom or distance learner will be made at the end of the year when a student's proxy and non-proxy hours are compared. If a learner has more than 50% of instructional hours reported as proxy, he or she will be identified as a distance learner. The student's hours in both distance and classroom programs will be included in the NRS reports.

D. Mentoring DISTANCE EDUCATION LEARNERS

Policy 3.4

Each student enrolling in the distance education program will be assigned a mentor and meet with them to develop their own individual SEOP with all of the needed requirements to earn their high school completion.

Once a student registers and takes the CASAS exam, they will be assigned a mentor and meet individually with them to discuss the needed requirements to earn their high school completion. Each student is then provided their individual SEOP with those needed requirements to determine how they choose to complete those needed credits. Distance learners also meet with a mentor either in person or via an Online platform to discuss needed requirements. The student then directs the school as to their preferred delivery method of needed curriculum. The student is then responsible for their learning, the method of delivery and keeping track of completed courses. The mentor provides periodic updates as to the students progress. In addition, the office staff reaches out to the students regularly to continue to encourage the student to stay active in their programs.

IV. APPENDIX

List of Approved Curriculum

Distance education curriculum is reviewed and approved by the governing board of the school district. The list of approved distance education curriculum is below.

- Gradpoint
- Canvas
- Aztec