**UNC Charlotte Academic Policy: Evaluation of Distance Education & Online Offerings**

**I. Introduction**

Online learning is an integral part of the instructional pedagogy that faculty may use to deliver academic course offerings and programs. As such, continuous processes for the evaluation of online offerings are in place to ensure that the institution meets best practice standards in online learning. UNC Charlotte is a member institution of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). This agreement is overseen by a national council and administered by its four regional education compacts.

**II. Policy Statement**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of distance education and online offering evaluation policy at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte shall be to ensure that the institution and faculty support the delivery of high quality online education according to the standards set forth by the Council of Regional Accrediting Commission.

**GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION**

1.   Online learning is integrated into the institution’s mission, vision, and planning processes. Each academic college will articulate processes surrounding online learning and its development, implementation, and evaluation in academic planning for their respective departments. The institution will provide sufficient resources to support both the financial and technological needs of its programs. In addition, the institution will ensure the integrity of its online offerings. Policies related to secure student registration and enrollment are in place, as specified in the Distance Education and Correspondence Education Policy statement and academic integrity as stated in University Policy 407.

2.   The development of online learning policies and respective online course offerings will follow the standard processes for curriculum approval according to each academic college and the University.

3.   Curricula for online offerings will be comparable in rigor to traditional instructional formats. Each academic college will develop and maintain a plan that ensures the use of best practices for online learning as related to the specific discipline. The college plan will include benchmarking to traditional courses if offered, and its policies on course enrollments, expectations of student work, course design, course objectives, and the provision for a supportive learning environment for student-to-student and student-to-faculty interaction. For any wholly online degree program, the college plan will include a pathway to timely graduation.

4. Each academic college will develop and maintain a process for the evaluation of its online offerings and the support services provided and demonstrate its use of the results of the evaluation for improvement. Inclusion of the following is required: assessment of student learning and improvement plan, online course and/or program evaluation including examples of student work and student & faculty interaction, student evaluations, support services, use of appropriate technology, and retention efforts. Student services for online offerings will be supported by the University and specific distance education programs will be supported by the Extended Academic Programs and its processes are clearly defined.

5.    Each academic college will identify the selection and training processes for faculty responsible for delivering online offerings to ensure faculty are educationally and/or experientially qualified to deliver online offerings to ensure academic rigor. Faculty may use multiple pathways, including internal or external reputable sources, to demonstrate their competency in online course design and teaching and learning. The Center of Teaching Learning is one resource provided by the University to assist in the training and support of faculty regarding best practices, online course design, and the learning management system.

**III. Definitions**

Distance education occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Distance

education may be mediated through use of the Internet (online) or other means.

Off-campus program delivery occurs when students and instructors are together at an instructional site that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution (UNC System, UNC Regulation 400.1).

Extended academic programs at UNC Charlotte supports those programs approved as a distance education programs approved through UNC-GA.

Online offerings are defined as any course or program in which course objectives are achieved through online delivery of course content.

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is an agreement among member states, districts, and territories in the United States, which establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs.

**IV. Policy/Procedure Contact(s): Academic Affairs**

**V. History**

* **Approved**:

**VI. Related Policies, Procedures and Resources**

* Code of Student Academic Integrity: University Policy 407
* Distance and Correspondence Education Policy Statement