Patrick & Henry Community College
Distance Education Policy

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I. *Distance Education Purpose*

Distance Education at Patrick & Henry Community College (P&HCC) is designed to provide students with opportunities to accomplish their educational goals by taking courses in formats other than the traditional on-campus course offerings. A basic assumption for this program is that a significant portion of the adult population could be served by alternative instructional methods of course delivery. In response to this apparent need, the college offers this program as a means of providing quality, postsecondary education to persons usually not served by traditional, on-campus courses. Courses offered through distance education are designed to augment, not replace, on-campus sections. The course content and requirements are equal to the traditional on-campus sections but, because of the format, these courses require strong student commitment.

II. *Course Development and Selection*

Course Development

Deans and faculty members will collaborate to determine the need for new online course offerings to meet programmatic needs. The Dean will ensure the instructor incorporates the appropriate VCCS course outcomes. Once the course is complete and is approved through the existing peer review process, the instructor will receive a stipend of $500/credit.

Criteria for Course Selection

P&HCC offers distance learning opportunities to students in several delivery formats. Although the growth of course development is in the area of online (web-based) instruction, the college may offer courses delivered synchronously using a web-conferencing platform (currently via *Zoom*), and hybrid (blended) courses.

The following generally defines our instructional delivery formats and is provided in more detail to students (on the college website) to help them in choosing distance education courses appropriate for them.

Online (web) courses are designed and developed such that all instruction is delivered via the web. Students may be required to have tests proctored, attend laboratories (science) that require physical presence, or participate in synchronous web-conferencing sessions with the instructor.

Live Online courses are synchronous offerings delivered to students using their own computer resources at home or at a designated computer lab. Instruction is live, two-way audio (video option available for students with cameras) and emphasis is placed on the instructor incorporating opportunities for interactivity with students during class sessions. Students log in to the sessions through their enrollment in the Canvas course site.

Hybrid courses combine face-to-face (in-class) instruction with online instruction into a single course. A hybrid course meets part of the scheduled time in a traditional classroom environment or real-time using Zoom. The remainder of the course requirements will take place online using Canvas resources for completion of online activities, assignments, and assessments.

III. *Course Administration and Delivery*

Online (Web) Courses

P&HCC, as part of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), uses a centralized Learning Management System (LMS) of online courses, *Canvas*.
A Canvas course site is created for every course offered in the semester class schedule. All content for online (web) courses is developed (and delivered to the student) in the Canvas site, although faculty may use other publisher content with directions for access provided to students in Canvas. All faculty (regardless of the delivery mode) are required to use the Canvas course site(s) to post syllabi and other course materials, communicate new/updated information to students, and post grades.

Student requirements:

- Students must have reliable access to the web component of the course.

Faculty requirements:

- Instructors should use Canvas or provide equal online services.

Instructors should have online contact information and be responsive and accessible to students outside of face-to-face meetings.

P&HCC provides online learning resources as a part of every Canvas shell.

Hybrid Distance Learning Courses

Hybrid Distance Learning courses require students to meet in a combination of face-to-face and online modalities.

Student requirements:

- Students must have reliable access to the web component of the course.
- Students are required to meet during the scheduled face-to-face times.

Faculty requirements:

- Instructors should use Canvas or provide equal online services.
- Instructors should have online contact information and be responsive and accessible to students outside of face-to-face meetings.
- Courses that meet less than 100% face-to-face may not be offered without the specific approval of the division dean.

IV. *General Administrative Policies and Procedures*

The Distance Education Program follows the same policies, procedures, and guidelines used for on-campus traditional course offerings. This includes policies related to admissions, placement testing, course prerequisites, registration, established calendar dates for refunds, assignment of "W" grades, and beginning/ending course dates.

Student-related Policies and Procedures

Students who enroll in courses through the Distance Education Program have access to all campus services. Procedures for registration, tuition payment, course credit, academic load, and other associated issues are the same as for traditional on-campus classes.

P&HCC complies with all the requirements of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA). The college is committed to protecting the privacy of a student's educational record regardless of instructional delivery method. The Dean of Student Services is the point of contact for all FERPA related issues and all employees are informed and trained of their responsibilities related to unauthorized release of confidential records or information. Because an online environment creates a record of student activity, it is subject to FERPA privacy rights, unlike verbal exchanges in a physical classroom.

The Identity Verification process for accessing distance education courses via Canvas (the VCCS online learning management system) protects students' privacy through the use of a secure portal with a secure login and student-selected password. Upon application to the college, students are assigned a unique username and a temporary password which must be changed upon initial log in. There are no charges to the students at P&HCC for the verification of student identity.

Faculty/Course-related Policies and Procedures

Determination of course offerings for any academic term and associated faculty teaching loads are responsibilities of the division dean. Class cancellation decisions are made by the division dean in consultation with the Vice President for Academic and Student Success Services.

Faculty and staff understand and carry out a commitment to confidentiality, integrity, and security to protect the privacy of students who participate in distance learning activities. Students' records are kept private by the instructor, except in cases where academic staff or administration accesses the course with legitimate educational interest under FERPA guidelines.

Ownership and Intellectual Property Rights

In matters of ownership and copyright, materials developed or created while employed by the VCCS are subject to Section 12, *Intellectual Property* of the VCCS Policy Manual (Appendix E).

V. *Distance Education Evaluation*

As with any course or program, periodic evaluation and review of distance education courses is beneficial to students, faculty, and program administrators.

Each semester for each course offered by the college (regardless of delivery mode), a student course assessment is conducted. The course evaluations are embedded in each Canvas course site. The results are available to the instructors at the conclusion of the semester. In accordance with VCCS policy 5.3.0.2(c), P&HCC will conduct a faculty peer review to confirm that content, competency coverage, and student outcomes are appropriate for the course credits awarded.

Appendix A

Online Course Review Process

Establish review teams consisting of two or three full-time faculty members with one faculty member in a similar discipline, if possible.

1. Establish courses to be reviewed
   a. Instructors new to an online course will be evaluated within the first year.
   b. New online courses will be evaluated at development.
   c. Random sampling of online courses will be evaluated each year.
2. Review
   a. Reviewers independently examine the course to determine if it meets the requirements of the rubric.
   b. Reviewers compare notes and discuss discrepancies and reach agreement on what items are adequate and which do not seem to meet the requirements of the rubric.
   c. Reviewers will make suggestions to improve the course and note items where the rubric requirements are not met.
   d. If the course meets all the requirements of the rubric, no follow up is required.
   e. If one or more issues are reported, support will be available to the instructor for corrective measures. These measures must be in place before the course is offered again.

Peer Course Review Rubric

Online courses will be reviewed using the following rubric.

Distance Learning Course Evaluation

Instructions: The Distance Learning Course Evaluation is intended for continuous improvement to ensure high quality practices. It is not punitive. Use this checklist to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the distance learning course. For each criterion, click on one of the three ratings to indicate the extent to which the criterion has been met. Use the Comments column to make recommendations for criteria that "Partially Meet" or "Do Not Meet" standards.

CRITERIA	"BP" = Best Practice	Meets Criteria	Partially Meets Criteria	Does not Meet Criteria	Comments
1. The course is published.	VCCS #4 and P&HCC BP #4				
2. An introductory welcome with the instructor's bio appears.	VCCS #1 and P&HCC BP #1				
3. P&HCC Syllabus Template is being used and includes: a) a link to download the syllabus; b) instructor's office hours; c) grading scale; d) course schedule, either in the syllabus or under Syllabus link; e) statement that assignments will be graded and grades made available to students within two weeks of the due date.	VCCS #3 and P&HCC BP #3				
4. A logical, consistent, and uncluttered layout is established. The course is easy to navigate and is displayed in a linear format.	P&HCC BP #5				
5. The Canvas Gradebook is being used.	VCCS #2 and P&HCC BP #2				
6. Clear instructions are provided to students about how to access course components and get started in the course.	P&HCC BP #1				

7. **Student View contains ONLY the following links:** a) **Home** b) **Announcements** c) **Modules** d) **Grades** e) **Syllabus**	**P&HCC BP #7**				
8. **An assignment, validating initial course participation, is established prior to the census date.**					
9. **Course instructions regarding specific assignments, tests, etc. are provided and well written.**					
10. **Course is free of grammatical and spelling errors.**					
11. **Course includes structural components for regular and substantive interaction.**					

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