DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

DEFINITION

Distance education is defined as a formal educational process in which the majority of synchronous or asynchronous instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place. Distance education may employ correspondence study, or audio, video, or computer technologies.

PRINCIPLES

Surgical technology or surgical assisting programs that are applying for initial accreditation and that are already designed to function in a distance education capacity must follow all procedures associated with application for initial accreditation, in addition to these specific policy criteria. In addition to the primary application and Self-Study, a separate application and Self-Study must be designed and submitted according to these criteria.

Surgical technology or surgical assisting programs that are already initially accredited or hold continuing accreditation status, and that intend to completely convert to a distance education status or offer certain aspects of the curriculum as distance education, must be in good standing with the ARC/STSA and must submit a Self-Study and application that addresses each of these criteria. If a program offers both a distance education and a traditional campus-based component, the quality of the education offered through distance education should be equivalent to that of the traditional campus-based education in all three aspects of the curriculum: didactic, laboratory, and clinical.

Surgical technology or surgical assisting programs are expected to address the following in their initial application to the ARC/STSA for approval:

Criterion I
Curriculum and Instruction

A. Faculty must exercise oversight over distance education, assuming responsibility for the rigor of the program and the quality of instruction.

B. Interaction between students and faculty must be timely and appropriate.

C. The institution must ensure that the technology used for distance education is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the programs.

D. Currency of programs, materials, and courses must be ensured.

E. Distance education policies must be clear regarding the following:

- faculty compensation
- ownership of materials
- copyright issues
- utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses, or other media products.

F. Appropriate faculty support services specific to distance education must be provided.

G. Appropriate training for faculty who teach in distance education programs must be provided.

Criterion II
Evaluation and Assessment

A. The institution must assess the student's capability to succeed in distance education programs. This assessment must apply to admission and recruitment policies and decisions.

B. The institution must evaluate the educational effectiveness of its distance education programs through outcomes measurements (including student retention, graduate and employer satisfaction, job placement, and program assessment scores) to ensure comparability to traditional campus-based programs.

C. The institution must ensure the integrity of student work and the credibility of the degrees and credits it awards.

Criterion III
Library and Learning Resources

A. The institution must ensure that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources.

B. The institution must monitor students' use of learning resources.

C. The institution must provide laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses and programs.

Criterion IV
Student Services

A. Adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the program (including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling) must be provided.

B. Adequate means for resolving student complaints must be provided.

C. Advertising, recruiting, and admissions information that accurately describe requirements and services available must be provided to applicants and students.

D. The institution must ensure that students admitted possess the knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed in the program. Aid must be provided to students who are experiencing difficulty accessing or using the required technology.

Criterion V
Facilities and Finances

A. The institution must possess the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education.

B. Long range planning and budgeting must reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment, and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education program.

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