

Texas A&M University School of Law
Distance Education Policy
J.D. Program

Purpose

This policy is designed to guide Texas A&M University School of Law in the development, delivery, and granting of credit for distance education courses in accordance with American Bar Association Standards.

Definitions

- a) Distance Education Course. “A distance education course is one in which students are separated from the faculty member or each other for more than one-third of the instruction and the instruction involves the use of technology to support regular and substantive interaction among students and between the students and the faculty member.”¹ A course may be delivered asynchronously, synchronously, or as a hybrid or blended class as defined below.
- b) Asynchronous. An asynchronous course is one in which the instruction is delivered at one time and the work can be done at a different time. In asynchronous classes, students and teachers use email, discussion boards, blogs, wikis, and other technologies, which allow them to communicate without having to be in the same virtual or physical space at the same time.
- c) Synchronous. Synchronous online classes require students and instructors to be online at the same time. Lectures, discussions, chats, etc. occur at a specific time. All students must be online at that specific hour in order to participate. There is no time delay, allowing participants to respond in real time.
- d) Hybrid. Hybrid courses (also known as blended courses) include both face-to face classroom meetings and additional asynchronous and/or synchronous Distance Education sessions.

Distance Education Course Requirements

- a) Distance Education Courses must be approved by the Curriculum Committee and faculty, even if already offered in the regular law school curriculum. Academic content, method of course delivery, and the method of evaluating student performance shall be reviewed as part of the course approval process. Faculty wishing to teach a Distance Education Course must submit a *Request for Approval of New Distance Education Course*, which is available from the chair of the Curriculum Committee.

¹ ABA Standard 306

b) Syllabi for Distance Education Courses must comply with the Law School's Minimum Syllabus Requirements and must identify student learning outcomes, including appropriate methods of assessment and evaluation of student progress toward learning outcomes consistent with ABA Standard 302.

c) Distance Education Courses must include interactive tools and course design elements that provide the opportunity for regular and substantive interaction between faculty and students and among students.

d) Faculty must regularly monitor student effort, provide opportunities for communication, and provide regular and prompt feedback on student effort and performance. Faculty will respond in a timely fashion to student questions and concerns, and will state in the syllabus what their response time is likely to be (e.g., 24 hours). Faculty will alert students in advance if it appears that they will deviate materially from that response time.

e) Distance Education Courses must be designed to use the technological resources available at the law school, supportable by the law school, and reasonably available to students. Faculty training and assistance will be provided by the Associate Director of Distance Education and IT Services.

f) Each course must be hosted on a secure website and have a process for verifying the identity of students registered in the course, including a unique, secure login and password. At the Law School, online courses offered through eCampus shall be presumed to meet this requirement.

g) Each class must protect student privacy consistent with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

h) Each required examination for a course that does not permit students to use outside materials must be proctored by assigned personnel or by using available technology. Take-home exams will be processed Student Services to ensure verification of the student's identity and to protect the student's privacy.

Student Requirements

a) Students may not register for a distance education course until they have completed at least 28 credits. No Distance Education Course may be offered to fulfill any first-year curriculum requirement.

b) The law school will not grant a student more than a total of 15 credit hours toward the J.D. degree for Distance Education Courses.

c) Students are expected to know how to manage computer issues and to have reliable technologies to fulfill course requirements. An up-to-date PC or Mac-based computer with access to high-speed internet is required.