

Guidelines for Distance Education



**Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer
Standards and Education**

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Introduction

As the demand for training and training requirements increase, there is a need for alternatives to traditional classroom training. Alternative training methods include such distance education options as computer-based delivery systems.

The Commission encourages the delivery of quality continuing education programs for all law enforcement personnel. The Commission uses educational best practices standards as the basis of its development and evaluation of continuing education courses. The Commission has developed specific guidelines for distance education providers to follow. These guidelines apply to all distance education and alternative delivery methods.

All continuing education courses must be approved by the Commission. The Commission accepts proposals for distance education courses to be approved for continuing education credit. This approval process includes submitting a fee. The fee is based on the number of credit hours the provider is requesting. The fee schedule can be found on the Commission website (www.tcleose.state.tx.us).

Continuing Education Credit and Review of Distance Education Proposals

Policy

The Commission encourages the delivery of quality continuing education for all law enforcement personnel. The standards are designed with the intent to respond to current distance education needs. The Commission therefore reviews and amends the guidelines as necessary, focusing on a variety of delivery methods and student needs.

Commission staff conducts reviews in accordance with Commission rule 215.3, 215.5, and 215.6, which requires approval before distance learning courses can be provided. This rule also requires providers to submit a fee. This fee is based on the number of credit hours the provider is requesting (refer to the Fee Schedule). Evaluations of distance learning proposals follow the Commission's current edition of General Guidelines for Distance Education.

Procedures

Receipt of Proposals

Proposals should be sent to the Director of Education and Training Programs for review. The Education and Training Programs Division maintains a record of the date of receipt and other pertinent information pertaining to proposal submissions.

Review

Staff uses the Commission's current edition of General Guidelines for Distance Education in conducting a review. Education and Training Programs Division staff communicates the proposed results of the review to the Director of Education and Training Programs prior to responding to the training provider as appropriate. Education and Training Programs retains a copy of the proposal and the staff review for two years. Staff review the proposals in the order received, and complete the review process as promptly as other duties allow.

Credit

Proposals can either be for credit or non-credit training. Non-credit training is generally awareness or update information. Credit training is specific, job-related training. For a proposal to be approved for continuing education credit, it must contain a specific request for hours of credit. Courses are approved under the stipulation that provider will maintain the course per current legislative guidelines, TCLEOSE rules, and current educational updates.

Appeals

Any training provider wishing to appeal a refused proposal may do so in writing to the Director of Education and Training Programs. The appeal should ask for reconsideration with specific areas of disagreement listed and explained. If the training provider is still not satisfied, they may appeal in writing to the Executive Director.

General Guidelines for Distance Education

Definition

Distance education is defined by The Distance Education and Training Council as study, at a distance, with an educational provider that conducts organized, formal learning opportunities for students. The instruction is offered wholly or primarily by distance study, through virtually any media. It may include the use of: videotapes, DVD, audio recordings, telephone and email communications, and Web-based delivery systems.

The provider, through TCLEOSE approval, monitors the quality of the learning experience. The provider is the organization that creates and facilitates the learning opportunity.

Guidelines (adapted from Wm. Horton's, "E-Learning By Design" 2006)

- A. E-learning is structured to reflect the needs of learners and the nature of the subject matter. Distance learning activities are then designed to exercise basic skills, thought processes, attitudes, and behaviors
 - 1. People learn by: considering, researching, analyzing, evaluating, organizing, synthesizing, discussing, testing, deciding, and applying ideas.
 - 2. To accomplish learning objectives, we typically require three types of learning activities: absorb, do, and connect: the learner *absorbs* knowledge by reading or watching; the learner *does* practice or discovery activities to strengthen learning; and learners complete activities designed to *connect* what they are learning to their lives and work.
 - 3. Lessons consist of sequences of logically linked topics that together make positive learning experiences. Elements of a lesson include: goals and objectives, content, instructional methods, tests and activities, assessments and evaluations, and technologies.
 - 3. The selection and application of technologies for a specific lesson are appropriate for the intended learning objectives, subject matter content, relevant characteristics and circumstances of the learner, as well as resources and cost restraints.

- 4 Course curriculums and e-learning are developed by individuals with special competencies in content, instructional methods, or technologies and subject matter experts
 8. The learning design is evaluated on a regular basis for effectiveness, with findings utilized as a basis for improvement.
- B. Distance learning opportunities are effectively supported for students through fully accessible modes of delivery and resources.
1. The providing organization has a student support system to assist the student in effectively using the resources provided. This system includes technology and technical support, site facilitation, library or information services/referrals, and problem-solving assistance.
 2. The provider considers the needs for student support in relation to the distance learning mode(s) used and makes provision for delivery of appropriate resources based on the design of the learning activities, the technology involved, and the needs of the student.
 3. Access to support services (such as scheduling, registration, and recordkeeping) is convenient, efficient, and responsive to distance students as well as consistent with other elements of the delivery system.
 - 4 Support systems are accessible to and usable by the students and are sufficiently flexible to accommodate different learning styles.
 5. The provider discloses to the student all information pertinent to the learning opportunity (such as course prerequisites, modes of study, evaluation criteria, and technical needs) and provides some form of orientation for those desiring it.
 6. Support systems for each learning opportunity are reviewed regularly to ensure their currency and effectiveness.
- C. Distance learning initiatives must be backed by an organizational commitment to quality and effectiveness in all aspects of the learning environment.

1. Involvement in distance learning is consistent with the overall mission of the provider; policies regarding distance learning are integrated into the provider's overall policy framework.
 2. The providing organization makes a financial and administrative commitment to maintain distance learning programs through completion and to support faculty and student services needed to ensure an effective learning environment.
 3. Administrative and support systems (registration, advising, assessment) are compatible with the learning delivery system to ensure a coherent learning environment.
 4. The organization's curricular and administrative policies incorporate the needs of distance learning as well as traditional learning activities.
 5. The provider makes a commitment to the research and development of distance learning, maintaining a systematic evaluation of the content, processes, and support systems involved in its distance learning activities.
 6. The provider makes an investment of resources and effort in professional development and support of both faculty and staff involved in distance learning.
 7. The providing organization recognizes effective participation in distance learning in its promotion and reward system for faculty and staff and ensures that its policies regarding promotion, tenure (if applicable), and departmental/program funding reflect the integration of distance learning into the organization's mission.
 8. The policies, management practices, learning design processes, and operational procedures for distance learning are regularly evaluated to ensure effectiveness and currency.
 9. The provider does not distinguish between learning accomplished at a distance and learning accomplished through other means in recognizing student achievement.
- D. Distance education programs organize learning activities around measurable learning objectives, assist the student to achieve these objectives, and assess student progress by reference to these objectives.

1. Learning objectives are described in precise standards, measurable performances, and well defined conditions.
 2. The learning design is consistent with and shaped to achieve the intended learning objectives.
 3. Distance education media and delivery systems are used in a way that facilitates the achievement of intended learning objectives.
 4. Learning objectives are assessed in a way relevant to the content and the distance education delivery system.
 5. Assessment of learning is timely, appropriate, and responsive to the needs of the students.
 6. Intended learning objectives are reviewed regularly to assure their clarity, utility, and appropriateness for the students.
- E. The provider has a plan and infrastructure for using technology that supports its learning goals and activities.
1. The technology plan defines the technical requirements and compatibility needed to support the learning activity.
 2. The technology plan addresses system security to assure the integrity and validity of information shared in the learning activities.
 3. The technology facilitates interactivity among all elements of a learning environment and places a high value on ease of use by students.
 4. The technology selected for distance learning is fully accessible and understandable to students and has the power necessary to support its intended use.
 5. Providers communicate the purpose of the technologies used for learning, and through training, assist students, faculty, and staff to understand its etiquette, acquire the knowledge and skills to manipulate and interact with it, and understand the objectives and outcomes that the technologies are intended to support.
 6. The technology infrastructure meets the needs of both students and instructors for presenting information, interacting within the learning community, and gaining access to learning resources.

Evaluation Criteria for Distance Education Providers

As part of the Commission's requirements for Contractual Training (215.5), Training Coordinators (215.9), and Risk Assessment (215.13) criteria used to evaluate all training providers, distance education course providers must meet specific requirements and maintain records that will be open to Commission review.

Distance Education Providers are required to keep records containing:

- Proper paperwork necessary to comply with any state/federal guidelines required of training providers.
- Commission approval for courses offered
- Curriculum documents including a lesson plan outlining goals and objectives
- Instructor information to include credentials/qualifications making them a Subject Matter Expert (SME) and current experience or training within the past 2 years
- Number of courses provided
- Number of students taught and student/instructor ratio
- Number of students that dropout or fail to complete courses
- Average scores for students in each course
- Percentage of students passing/failing the course
- Number of complaints about provider

The Commission evaluations are based on:

- Course offering – Is the course provided according to Commission standards?
- Completeness of curriculum documents – Do the documents follow the Commission's requirements?

- Number of instructors used – Based on student/instructor ratio.
- Qualifications of instructors used – Does the instructor have specific and/or additional training or experience in the courses taught?
- Number of courses provided – Are there sufficient resources and staff to support all courses offered?
- Number of students taught – Are there qualified instructors for all courses offered?
- Average scores for students in each course – Is there a distribution of scores in each course.
- Percentage of students passing/failing – Is there a high percentage of students passing or failing the course?
- Number of complaints about provider – What kind, how many, what was done?

Course Checklist

Providers should comply with the following requirements when sending a course for review. If these documents are not provided, the course is returned to the provider. Proposed courses should be consistent with the Commission's current development guidelines. If a course is based on a Commission Instructor Guide, the provider includes all parts of that Instructor Guide.

Any course submitted for approval must include the following items in a narrative form as the basis for review.

- Needs Assessment for the course being proposed – articulate reasons why this course is needed.
- Needs Assessment for the delivery method – why is this course being offered in the format selected – if distance education method chosen, articulate reasons why this delivery method best meets the needs of the student
- Qualifications to develop courses – lists of previously developed courses in modality and format chosen and qualifications of developer
- Documents of permission to use copyrighted material (if appropriate) – all forms of media must be documented (including, but not limited to, text, graphics, animation, audio, and video)
- Statement of security of delivery method – e.g. secure web site for sensitive material
- Abstract: What is this course designed for:
 - Example: This course is designed to provide the student with the information required for
- Need for Course: What benefit does this distance course provide?
 - Example: This course will allow officers to ...
- Course Qualifications: Is there an agreement from a qualified instructor to conduct this course?
 - Example: A specialist from X, has agreed to conduct this course.
- Qualifications of Instructor: What special knowledge of background does the instructor have?

- Example: The instructor has 15 years experience as ...
- Availability of Instructor: When will the instructor be available to interact with students?
 - Example: The instructor will be available by phone (1-800-555-5555) between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm and by email at xyz@state.com
- Date of Course Development: When was the course developed?
- Target Population: Who is the course for?
 - Example: Licensed Texas Peace Officers
- Pre-Requisites: Are there any requirements to enroll in this course?
 - Example: Students must have an Intermediate Jail Certificate before enrolling.
- Special Requirements: What arrangements for students requiring special accommodations (ADA) have been made?
 - Example: Before enrolling, the student must contact the instructor to identify any special needs.
- Provider/Instructor Deadlines (if applicable): How long does the provider/instructor have to response to students once they have submitted a lesson or exam?
 - Example: The instructor will contact the student within 10 days of receiving lessons or exams.
- Student Deadlines: How long does the student have to complete the course (if applicable)?
 - Example: The student must complete the course within 60 days of receipt.
 - Note: The course should include detailed instructions for students on how to submit coursework for grading.
- Material Requirements: Does this course require any additional books or materials?

- Example: The student must use the current Penal Code as a supplement to this course.
- Equipment requirements (if applicable) – what equipment does the student need to successfully run the application?
 - Example: The student must use Blackboard to interact with the training course.
 - Installation instructions (if applicable) – how the program is installed on the student’s computer
- Evaluation: How will the student be graded?
 - Example: The student will be graded using the standard 100-point scale. Any scores under 70 percent will be considered failing.
- Special Instructions for Exams: What is required for exams?
 - Example: The student’s supervisor will be sent the final exam and will serve as the proctor or test will be taken at conclusion of in-class instruction.
- Remediation Plan: What accommodations are made for students having difficulty with the course?
 - Example: Students will be allowed one make-up exam during the course.
- Reference Materials: Will the references used to create the course/lesson be included at the end of each section or a comprehensive list found at the end of the course?
 - Example: A complete list of references is located on the last page of this booklet.
- Copyright Material Approval: Has any copyrighted material been approved for use?

Example: Releases have been granted for the use of Y. These releases are kept on file at our office.

If the submitted course is in distance format, the provider must also submit a electronic copy of the course and all technical documentation to the Commission.

In addition, the course content must contain the following items:

Introduction – explanation of the course and requirements (the above review document may be used)

Learning objectives – what the student is expected to be able to do (stated in measurable terms)

Lesson Plan – document outlining a specific detailed description of the course of instruction for each individual lesson. Providing specific definitions, activities, measurable learning objectives, equipment, instructional media requirements, how-to's of conducting training, and strategies for the assessment of learning objectives.

Unit exams (if required) – with questions coming directly from the learning objectives

Final exam or assessment (Ex: group/discussion/scenario-based) – with questions coming directly from the learning objectives

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