

Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program Bluefield University – Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine

Policy Order No: ED_002_22
 Effective Date: June 15, 2022
 Revised: December 29, 2023 (*adopted*)

MHSA Policy for Distance Learning in the Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program

1.	PURPOSE	1
2.	DEFINITION.....	2
3.	POLICY CONTENTS	3
3.1.	Curriculum and instruction	3
3.1.1	Regular and substantive interaction	3
3.2.	Attendance	4
3.3.	Faculty.....	4
3.4.	Institutional effectiveness	4
3.5.	Library and learning resources	4
3.6.	Student services.....	5
3.7.	Education and compliance	5
4.	DURATION OF POLICY	5

1. PREAMBLE

In an era characterized by technological advancements, evolving educational paradigms, and a dynamic healthcare landscape, the Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program at VCOM-Bluefield remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering a rigorous, innovative, and accessible educational experience. Recognizing the diverse needs, aspirations, and realities of our student body, this preamble outlines the guiding principles, values, and objectives that underpin our Distance Learning Policy.

This policy underscores our institutional commitment to harnessing the transformative potential of distance learning modalities, ensuring that students across geographical locations, professional commitments, and personal circumstances have equitable access to high-quality anesthesia education. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies, pedagogical innovations, and evidence-based best practices, we endeavor to cultivate a vibrant, interactive, and inclusive virtual learning environment that mirrors the academic rigor, collaborative ethos, and professional excellence synonymous with our on-campus offerings.

Emphasizing flexibility, adaptability, and learner-centeredness, our Distance Learning Policy is designed to accommodate diverse learning styles, preferences, and needs while maintaining the integrity, standards, and outcomes associated with our esteemed anesthesia education program. Through comprehensive guidelines, transparent expectations, and robust support structures, we aim to empower students to navigate the complexities of distance learning with confidence, resilience, and a steadfast commitment to academic and professional excellence.

Furthermore, this policy reflects our unwavering dedication to fostering a culture of continuous improvement, innovation, and responsiveness to the evolving needs and aspirations of our student community. By embracing distance learning modalities, we aspire to expand access, enhance engagement, and enrich the educational experience, equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies requisite for leadership, innovation, and advocacy in the anesthesia profession.

In essence, this preamble reaffirms our program's commitment to leveraging distance learning as a strategic enabler of academic excellence, accessibility, and innovation within the MHSA Program. As we navigate the opportunities and challenges inherent in distance education, we remain steadfast in our shared commitment to upholding the highest standards of educational quality, integrity, inclusivity, and excellence, ensuring that all students can thrive, contribute, and succeed in their educational and professional endeavors.

2. PURPOSE

In an effort to provide the most appropriate, accessible, and most academically rich educational experience, the MHSA Program may consider distance and online education methodologies. This includes providing policies, standards, guidance, and support for the instructional development and delivery of instruction using learning management systems, learning tools, video, and web conferencing systems. The University's academic review of distance, web-based and/or online education methods is comparable to campus-based program, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction. It is up to the Program and the College of Science & Health Sciences to ensure all faculty participating in online, distance or web-based education are certified through the University's certification process.

The Program's utilization of distance and education coursework will be in alignment with the University's mission, [the 21st Century Distance Education Guidelines](#), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges' (SACSCOC), [Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#), and will apply to all academic program initiatives, regardless of delivery modality. All distance and correspondence education programs and courses will adhere to the University's published academic policies and procedures, and the SACSCOC's [Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education \(On- Line Learning\)](#). The University will ensure all distance learning initiatives have appropriate support services and resources.

3. DEFINITION

In alignment with institutional policies, the MHSA Program defines online distance education as "electronic to individuals" and delineates into three categories: (1) fully online; (2) blended/hybrid; and (3) virtual delivered coursework, as further defined in this policy.

"Asynchronous Online Course": Any course offered fully over the Internet and is a formal education process in which a student learns entirely through online delivery of content and instruction. Students are not required to have in-person meetings with the instructor or student peers.

"Blended/Hybrid Course": A course that combines two modes of instruction: online and face-to-face and is a formal education process in which a student learns at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace. A program/course is designated as blended/hybrid if 50-84% of the content/curriculum is delivered online with more than mandatory face-to-face sessions totaling at least 50% of the instruction time.

“Correspondence Education”: A formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced. (SACSCOC Distance and Correspondence Education Policy Statement, Revised and Edited SACSCOC Board of Trustees, September 2020).

“Course Design Template”: A template for all asynchronous and synchronous online, blended/hybrid, web- or technology-enhanced, and face-to-face courses with common components, criteria, and guidelines that faculty can augment with their needs and requirements.

“Distance Education”: A formal educational process in which most of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or other digital media if used as part of the distance education course or program (SACSCOC Distance and Correspondence Education Policy Statement, Revised and Edited: SACSCOC Board of Trustees, September 2020). A program/course is designated as fully online/distance learning if 85-100% of the content/curriculum is delivered online with mandatory face-to-face sessions totaling no more than 15% of the instruction time.

“Synchronous Online Course (i.e., “Virtual Delivered”): Any course that is offered at a scheduled, predetermined time (synchronously) with students connecting to a virtual room or location and interacting with faculty and fellow students via a web/video conferencing platform.

“Web- or Technology-enhanced Course”: A traditional course offered with some content elements delivered over the Internet and is a formal education process in which a student learns through traditional classroom delivery of content and instruction. Use of technology typically does not reduce the time traditionally spent in the face-to-face class.

4. POLICY CONTENTS

This policy defines the framework to develop, deliver, support, and coordinate distance and/or correspondence education programs and courses within the Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program as well as establish procedures for maintaining compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges’ [Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy Statement](#), [Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education \(On-Line Learning\)](#), and [Guidelines for Addressing Distance Education and Correspondence Courses](#).

The Program will use the following guidelines in implementing and reporting on distance and correspondence education programs:

4.1 Curriculum and Instruction: The academic content and requirements for distance and correspondence education content and courses will be equivalent to the academic content and requirement for campus-based programs and courses. The faculty assumes primary responsibility for and exercises oversight of distance education and correspondence programming, ensuring both the rigor of the content and the quality of instruction and are responsible for maintaining the same high standards for all courses, regardless of delivery method; and for regularly assessing the content and methods by which the courses are delivered.

For all educational content offered through distance education or correspondence courses, the course length will be appropriate and will embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with the institution's mission and is based upon appropriate anesthesia and healthcare fields of study. Additionally, the Program will ensure it reports accurate distance education headcount enrollment and agrees to professional licensure disclosures as required by 34 §C.F.R. 668.43.

4.2 Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI): Good online instructors engage in regular and substantive interaction (RSI) with students to promote a strong sense of instructor presence in the online classroom. Prior to the student's completion of a course or competency, the Program ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors by:

1. Providing the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency; and
2. Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed based on such monitoring, or upon request by the student.

Regular and substantive interactions must:

1. Be with an instructor as defined by the institutional accreditor
2. be initiated by the instructor,
3. be scheduled and predictable,
4. be academic in nature and relevant to the course; and
5. include at least two of the following:
 - i. direct instruction,
 - ii. coursework assessment or feedback,
 - iii. information about the course content,
 - iv. group discussion of the course content, or
 - v. other instructional methods approved by the institutional accreditor

4.3 Attendance: Documenting that a student has logged into a distance education course is NOT sufficient, by itself, to demonstrate academic attendance by a student. The student must participate in class or was otherwise engaged in an academically related activity. Examples of acceptable evidence of academic attendance and attendance at an academically related activity in a distance education course/presentation include, but are not limited to the following:

1. student submission of an academic assignment,
2. student submission of an exam,
3. documented student participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction,
4. a posting by the student showing the student's participation in an online study group that is assigned by the institution,
5. a posting by the student in a discussion forum showing the student's participation in an online discussion about academic matters.

6. an email from the student or other documentation showing that the student-initiated contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course.

4.4 Faculty: As with campus-based programs and courses, faculty assigned to develop, design, and teach distance and/or correspondence education courses will be equally qualified; and the criteria for the evaluation of faculty teaching distance and/or correspondence education courses will be similar. The MHTSA Program is responsible for ensuring faculty are qualified to teach distance and/or correspondence education courses.

Prior to being assigned to teach a distance and/or correspondence education course, the MHTSA Program will verify the faculty member's eligibility. Faculty teaching distance education coursework will be required to demonstrate proficiency in computer usage; online content development, delivery, and management; pedagogical uses of specific instructional technologies; online course readiness and design; strategies for developing online student engagement and faculty-to-learner, learner-to-learner, and learner-to-content interactions; and the requirements for incorporating accessibility technologies in an alternative delivery format.

Policies for faculty evaluation include appropriate recognition of teaching, service, and scholarly or creative activities related to distance education courses.

4.5 Institutional effectiveness: The University's academic review of distance education components of the MHTSA Program will be comparable to campus-based components, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction. The Program will assist with the implementation of an evaluation process for exemplary course design using Quality Matters national standards, best practices, and instructional design principles.

4.6 Library and learning resources: Equivalent library and learning resources will be available to students during distance programs and courses, as most instructional resources are available online from Bluefield University, VCOM and/or Auburn University. As with campus-based courses, the requirements of the various course content will determine the requisite library and learning resources. Elements of library support and learning resources will include, but not be limited to, electronic document delivery, electronic journals, full-text databases, end-user searching, reference assistance and instruction, network access, reciprocal borrowing and interlibrary loan services, cooperative arrangements with other libraries for collection access, cooperative development of databases, and other strategies that emphasize access to resources.

4.7 Student services: During any online or distance portion of any coursework in the MHTSA Program, students will have adequate access to the range of appropriate academic and student support services. Additionally, personal information will be protected. The University protects the privacy of all students, including distance education students, through the strict adherence to the rules of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99)

An array of techniques will be used to protect distance and/or correspondence education students' privacy and identity. These include secure login and password, proctored examinations (supervised face-to-face, electronic, and/or online services), and authentic assessments. For all proctored examinations, student must present an official, current University picture ID prior to taking the examination.

4.8 Education and compliance: All faculty teaching distance education courses will complete annual training in best practices in online learning pedagogy and the range of software products used by Bluefield University and/or VCOM.

All distance education courses will be reviewed using the best practices and accepted national standards as outlined by Quality Matters (QM) and will be conducted periodically.. The Quality Matters standards ensures the online components of courses promote learner engagement and provide students with the tools and information needed to be successful learners. The quality assurance process addresses the following components:

1. Course Overview and Introduction
2. Learning Objectives (Competencies)
3. Assessment and Measurement
4. Instructional Materials
5. Learning Activities and Learner Interaction
6. Course Technology
7. Learner Support
8. Accessibility and Usability

5. DURATION OF POLICY

This Distance Learning Policy for the Master of Health Science in Anesthesia Program established by MHSA Program Administration and is effective as of the date above and shall remain effective until amended or terminated by the President and Provost.

A. Publication

This policy shall be widely published and distributed to the Program community to ensure publication and distribution thereof. The Office of the Dean of Anesthesiologist Assistant Programs will make every effort to:

- Communicate the policy in writing, electronic or otherwise, to the MHSA Program community within 14 days of approval by the Program Advisory Council
- Submit the policy for including in the online *MHSA Policy Manual* within 14 days of approval by the Program Advisory Council
- Post the policy on the appropriate audiences on the policy's content, as necessary; and
- Educate and train all stakeholders and appropriate audiences on the policy's content, as necessary.

Failure to meet the publication requirements does not invalidate this policy.

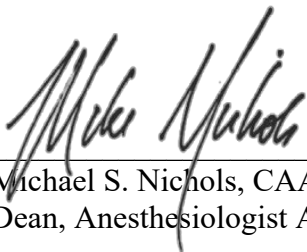
B. Review Schedule

List the following:

Next Scheduled Review Date:	06/15/2025
Approval by, Date:	Advisory Council, September 10, 2022
Revision History:	06/15/2022. 12/29/2023.
Supersedes:	Not applicable

C. Related Documents

1. [21st Century Distance Education Guidelines](#)
2. [Bluefield University Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#)
3. [VCOM Policy on the Use and Misuse of Digital Copyrighted Materials](#)
4. [Code of Virginia § 23.1-903 Distance Learning](#)
5. [Distance Education and Correspondence Courses Policy Statement](#)
6. [Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education \(On-Line Learning\)](#)
7. [Guidelines for Addressing Distance Education and Correspondence Courses](#)
8. [Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#)
9. [Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric, Third Edition](#)



Michael S. Nichols, CAA, MBA
Dean, Anesthesiologist Assistant Programs