ACGC Distance Learning Definitions

Asynchronous Learning - Any learning event where interaction is delayed over time and learners can access course materials and complete assignments at their own pace. This allows learners to participate according to their schedules and be geographically separate from the instructor. This can be in the form of a correspondence course or online learning using various technologies.

Blended Learning – In this learning style, both online and face-to-face learning opportunities are incorporated throughout the curriculum design. In this model, students spend some of their time in a physical classroom and some of their time learning online, but the two modes complement each other. The online portion is usually asynchronous, allowing students to access materials, lectures, or assignments at their own pace, while in-person sessions are reserved for discussion, hands-on activities, or direct interaction with the instructor (e.g. Flipped Classroom Model). This can allow for a significant percentage, but not all the credits required for program completion, being offered fully online.

Correspondence Course

(1) A course provided by an institution 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 student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced.

(2) If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, ACGC considers the course to be a correspondence course.

(3) A correspondence course is not distance education.

Distance Education - Education that uses one or more of the following technologies l to deliver instruction to students who are geographically separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously:

(1) The internet.

(2) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices.

(3) Audio conferencing; or

(4) Video cassettes, DVDs, USB drives, and CD-ROMs, if used with any of the aforementioned technologies.

Distance Learning - Education that is conducted beyond geographical boundaries and time and is aided by technology. This learning type allows students to choose their locations and does not require

students to physically be on campus. Online educational tools allow students and instructors to interact synchronously or asynchronously and may be delivered using an LMS.

Face-to-Face (F2F) - A term used to describe a "traditional" classroom environment where the instructor and students are not separated by geographic distance or time. When applied, learning takes place entirely within a physical classroom with other students and the instructor physically present.

Hybrid Learning – This synchronous learning style combines online and in-person instruction, replacing at least some but not all required face to face meetings. Students still need to attend some on-campus learning, but this model allows for a mix of online and in-person interactions. This is a flexible model where students have the option to choose between attending class in person or participating online. In this model, some students may be physically present in the classroom while others participate remotely via video conferencing tools, at the same time. The instructor typically teaches both groups simultaneously, providing flexibility for students to switch between in-person and online attendance based on their needs or preferences.

Learning Management System (LMS) - Software, usually web-based, that facilitates distance learning as well as in person learning by centralizing the development, management, and distribution of instructional-related information and materials. An LMS provides faculty with a set of tools that allows the easy creation of course content - syllabi, course modules, lecture notes, assignments, tests and quizzes, etc. - and is the framework in which they teach and manage the class. An LMS is the platform on which the student, the instructor, and fellow learners interact while learning as a way to provide access to assignments regardless of how interactions occur (in person, online, asynchronous, synchronous).

Online Learning - Any learning that utilizes a network (LAN, WAN or Internet) for delivery, interaction, or facilitation. This would include distance learning (other than pure correspondence). This can be done with synchronous, asynchronous, instructor-led or computer-based or a combination learning styles. A program is considered online if it is delivered primarily through technology, allowing for instruction and learning to occur with the student and instructor separated by time, geographical location, or both. The program must also meet a specific minimum percentage of contact hours, as defined by the institution (e.g., 80% or more). The approved courses have gone through some formal evaluation for online delivery such as Quality Matters. Participation in course activities such as clinicals at a location near the student is not calculated in the physical presence on campus percentage.

Synchronous Learning - Any learning event where interaction happens simultaneously in real-time, whether F2F or technology supported. This learning style mimics the structure of traditional classroom instruction, with students attending lectures, discussions, etc. at a scheduled time.

Virtual - Simulated or conceptual, not physical in nature. In distance learning, the term "virtual classroom" refers to the online environment in which students and instructors interact.