

# DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

The University of Texas at San Antonio's commitment to academic excellence includes consistency between traditional classroom instruction and distance education. The purpose of this operating policy is to provide a framework for the development, implementation and maintenance of formal degree, certificate programs and courses offered via distance education for academic credit.

The school-specific administration is responsible for the administration of distance education programs and course delivery. The school-specific deans report to the Senior Executive Vice President of Health Affairs and Health System.

All schools of the health science center shall have an opportunity to participate in providing distance education courses and/or programs and shall be encouraged to provide distance education as appropriate. Through the schools, the health science center shall ensure that all academic programs, including those delivered through distance education, are afforded an adequate resource support structure.

The University of Texas at San Antonio follows the definitions for distance education as articulated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (<https://www.highered.texas.gov/our-work/supporting-our-institutions/academic-program-resources/distance-education-resources/distance-education-modifications-resources/>): "The Coordinating Board rules define distance education as 'the formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50 percent) of instruction.' Distance education can include courses and programs offered online, off-campus face-to-face, and electronic-to-groups. Coordinating Board rules recognize two categories of distance education courses: 100-percent online courses and hybrid courses. A 100-percent online course is defined as "distance education course in which 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations. Requirements for on-campus or in-person orientation, testing, academic support services, internships/fieldwork, or other non-instructional activities do not exclude a course from this category." A hybrid course is defined as 'a distance education course in which more than 50-percent but less than 100-percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations."

For more information on the Distance Education Policy, please see Policy 2.7.4 (<https://public.powerdms.com/UTHSA/documents/1590319/>) in The University of Texas at San Antonio' Handbook of Operating Policies (HOP).

## National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA)

Texas was approved as a SARA state in 2015 and is administered by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB.) The national council has defined, "The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement is a voluntary agreement among its member states and U.S. territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance-education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state."

## Professional Licensure

States and other government entities have established standards of practice for the occupations or professions they have chosen to regulate, and they provide legal permission to practice those professions only to individuals who meet those standards. This is referred to as professional licensure, which requires individuals to meet specific criteria in order to practice in their respective fields.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) do not address professional licensing board approval for programs leading to state licensing in fields such as nursing, teacher education, psychology, etc. However, in alignment with federal regulations, SARA participating institutions are required to provide proper notification to students as to whether courses and programs will meet the professional licensure requirements in states where students are located. For specific information about professional licensure requirements for programs offered by UT Health San Antonio, please see each school's website.

For detailed information, visit the SARA Policy Manual (<https://nc-sara.org/sara-policy-manual/>)

## State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) Student Complaint Process

Complaints against an institution operating under SARA policies go first through the institution's own procedures for resolution of grievances. Allegations of criminal offenses or alleged violations of a state's general-purpose laws may be made directly to the relevant state agencies. Complaints regarding student grades or student conduct violations are governed entirely by institutional policy and the laws of the institution's home state.

However, if a person bringing a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of the institutional process for handling complaints, the complaint (except for complaints about grades or student conduct violations) may be appealed, within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made, to the SARA Portal Entity in the home state of the institution against which the complaint has been lodged.

For detailed information on the grievance process, visit the SARA Policy Manual (<https://www.highered.texas.gov/student-complaints/>)