

Developing Distance Education Graduate Programs

at
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Campus distance education program development guidelines must follow the framework provided by the UNC System office and the Board of Governors. The *Policies for Distance Education Programs* can be found at the UNC General Administration (UNC-GA) Academic Planning website (http://www.northcarolina.edu/aa_planning/de/index.htm).

Distance education programs in which 50 percent or more of a degree program is provided must be authorized by UNC-GA. Important principles to note in developing, conducting and assessing degree-related distance education activities are:

- The academic standards and quality of a program shall be consistent with and comparable to the academic standards and quality of regular, on-campus instructional activity.
- Institutions are urged to consider the potential for collaboration with other institutions in order to avoid unnecessary duplication.
- Accreditation and notification requirements from the Commission on Colleges (COC) of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) must be adhered to.

UNC-GA has specified requirements for distance programs which each campus must follow. See [Section G on Program Requirements](#) in the UNC Policy Manual for additional guidance.

Existing Graduate Degree Programs

Intent to Plan

Proposals for offering existing graduate degree programs off-campus must submit a *Notification of Intent to Plan* (Appendix F using Appendix G as a guide).

- The Department or Curriculum must create the proposal and have it approved through all internal, departmental or program processes.
- The Dean of the appropriate College or School must approve the proposal prior to submission to The Graduate School.
- The Academic Policy Committee and the Administrative Board of the Graduate School must approve the proposal prior to submission to the Office of the Provost.
- Upon review approval, the Provost will submit the proposal to UNC-GA.

Notification to UNC-GA may be sent at any time, but at least one month prior to submission of the request to establish and three months prior to the proposed date of establishment OR when the institution is required to notify SACS (whichever comes sooner).

Submission of the intent to plan does not constitute a commitment on the part of UNC-GA to approve the program. UNC-GA will maintain a website with all programs being planned system-wide.

Authorization to Establish

Proposals for offering existing graduate degree programs off-campus must then submit a *Request for Authorization to Establish* (Appendix G). It may be submitted one month after the

notification of intent to plan has been submitted and at least two months prior to the proposed date of establishment.

The proposal should be reviewed once again by the same campus units that reviewed the intent to plan before it is submitted by the Provost to UNC-GA. Upon review of the request to establish, senior staff of The Graduate School may choose to bypass certain steps if the proposal remains substantially unchanged from the intent to plan. The Provost may also ask to have a proposal reviewed by other external groups (e.g. Faculty Council).

Approval and Reporting

Once reviewed and approved by UNC-GA, they will notify the Provost, who will inform the University and campus offices involved. The program evaluated together with the usual assessment process for the Department or Curriculum.

New Graduate Degree Programs

If the proposal to plan and establish a distance education degree program is for a new academic degree not currently offered at UNC Chapel Hill, the regular *Academic Program Development Procedures* will be followed along with the *Policies for Distance Education Programs*. Appendices A, B and C should be used and include information regarding the intent to offer the program off-campus.

More detail on the UNC-GA process, including distance education program requirements and review criteria, can be found on the Academic Affairs website:

http://www.northcarolina.edu/aa_planning/de/index.htm