

Rice University Policy No. 846

DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION

I. General Policy

Rice University provides distance and online education courses and programs to extend its academic reach and enhance classroom instruction. It is the policy of the university to ensure that such distance and online instructional resources are of high quality; that appropriate support is available to students; and that enrollments in such courses comply with federal and state regulations and the principles of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

This policy applies to *for credit* courses and programs; and covers all faculty, staff and students, and any arrangements that the university makes with third parties involved in distance and online education.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Provost** and the **Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Digital Education** will jointly develop procedures and guidance related to distance education, based on federal and state laws and regulations, principles of SACSCOC, and applicable university policies and protocols relating to approval of courses, majors and degrees. Further, Rice Online, under the Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Digital Education, will serve as a strategic resource in the development of courses or programs, and is responsible for ensuring that online courses or programs meet relevant requirements. Rice Online is also responsible for ensuring workflow/process completion and retaining appropriate records to demonstrate that the university has met its objectives and obligations.

III. Definitions

Distance and Online Education Course has been defined by SACSCOC as a formal educational process in which 50 percent or more of the instruction in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place.

Distance and Online Education Program has been defined by SACSCOC as any series of courses leading to a degree, certificate, achievement, or credential, in which 25 percent or more of the credit hours or effort can be achieved through online or distance education.

IV. Elaboration of Policy

A. Developing and Implementing Courses and Programs

All proposals for new or revised distance and online courses and programs will be first coordinated through the normal process for course or program approval (e.g., the relevant committees, Faculty Senate, and Dean approvals). Once approved, the Office of the Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Digital Education, in consultation with the Office of the Provost, will coordinate the execution of any online or distance course to ensure that the course meets the standards the university has set for its online presence and meets the requirements of this policy.

B. Expectations for Courses for Credit

All for credit online courses associated with Rice University must be developed and administered following the Rice Online workflow process and policies. This process has been designed to ensure that Rice meets the additional requirements applicable to distance or online education, as mandated by the Department of Education, the State of Texas, other states, and SACSCOC. The current workflow is

included as Appendix 1 (which may be modified or updated at any time with approval of the Provost and the Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Digital Education).

All faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants teaching an online course for credit must first successfully complete training provided by Rice Online (or demonstrate to Rice Online sufficient proficiency in online pedagogy) and sign an agreement that specifies the processes, roles and responsibilities for those teaching an online course. Learning outcomes, course development, and summative and formative assessments, both direct and indirect, must be developed and conducted by the relevant faculty and department consistent with SACSCOC principles.

The course must use methods approved by Rice Online to verify the identity of the student, and provide for reasonable assurance of academic integrity, including confirmation that the student who registers is the same student who participates in and completes the course. Participating in this context includes participating in asynchronous and synchronous class sessions, in completing coursework assignments, and producing assessments for grading and determining final grade.

Methods that provide for reasonable assurance of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, using a secure login and password, facial identification of students online, virtual proctoring or in-person proctoring at Rice-approved proctoring sites, and pedagogical methods that support academic integrity. Any additional costs or fees required of the student because of these methods must be communicated to the student at the time of registration or enrollment.

C. Guidance for Non-Credit Courses

While beyond the scope of this policy, the Rice Online workflow and process is also a resource for developing non-credit courses. At a minimum, the workflow process will ensure that courses meet the university's quality standards, measures to ensure integrity are included, instructors are trained, appropriate support services are available, and learners are informed of their rights and responsibilities.

D. Student Responsibilities and Services

Any individual taking a Rice University course must do so with integrity and in accordance with the honor code and applicable sections of the General Announcements. All online courses include a mandatory orientation that will cover academic integrity and behaviors such as plagiarism. Any individual taking a Rice University course must also meet expectations for appropriate behavior (including the Code of Student Conduct and sexual misconduct policy).

Sexual harassment and sexual misconduct will not be tolerated in any course environment. The following acts and behaviors fall short of Rice's expectations wherever they occur and are therefore unacceptable within the university community: sexual comments or jokes; explicit photographs, drawings, videos, or other visual depictions (unless clearly germane to the subject matter of the course); gender-based insults, slurs or put downs; and all other forms of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct.

Any individual concerned about prohibited behaviors can make a report to the course instructor, to the Rice Online program administrator, or through the Rice Title IX process (for more information see safe.rice.edu). Those involved may be removed from the course, program, or the university, and may face additional consequences.

Individuals who are on non-immigrant visas should be aware that some visas are incompatible with online or distance education. Rice University students on a non-immigrant visa must consult with Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) *prior to* enrolling in an online course or program.

Individuals should also be aware that some private or government scholarships and grants, including some military or veteran benefits, may contain restrictions that preclude or limit application to online or

distance education, and as such, individuals are responsible for reviewing the terms of their own scholarship or grant *prior to* enrolling in an online course or program.

All students or learners will be provided with information and resources describing, at a minimum, the process and contact information for questions and concerns, including those related to written or consumer complaints, Title IX, and accessibility for disabilities.

E. Exceptions from the Rice Online Workflow Process

It is expected that all online courses and programs affiliated with Rice University will follow the university's academic approval processes, as well as the workflow established by the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Digital Education, and will meet quality and compliance standards.

Exceptions or deviations from the Rice Online workflow may be allowed when to do so will not compromise the quality or result in failure to adhere to a university policy or university obligation to the government or accrediting bodies. Any such exception or deviation to Part I of the workflow (review and approval) must follow the university's normal academic process; or to Part II and III (plan, build, run, and close) must be reviewed and agreed to by the Dean, who will then forward as a recommendation for approval to the Provost and the Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Digital Education.

V. Cross References to Related Policies

Policy 106, Substantive Changes Policy
Policy 701, Written Student Complaints
Policy 804, Procedure for Establishing New Courses
Policy 832, Appropriate Use of Information Technology
Policy 830, Sexual Harassment

VI. Responsible Official and Key Offices to Contact Regarding the Policy and its Implementation

Responsible Official: Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Digital Education
Other Key Offices: Provost
Rice Online
Faculty Senate
Dean of Undergraduates
Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Office of the Registrar

VII. Links to Procedures or Forms:

Link to [Rice Online guidance and workflow](#)
Link to [Resource page for online students](#)

Signed David W. Leebron

President

Policy History

Issued: October 31, 2017

Workflow for Online Courses

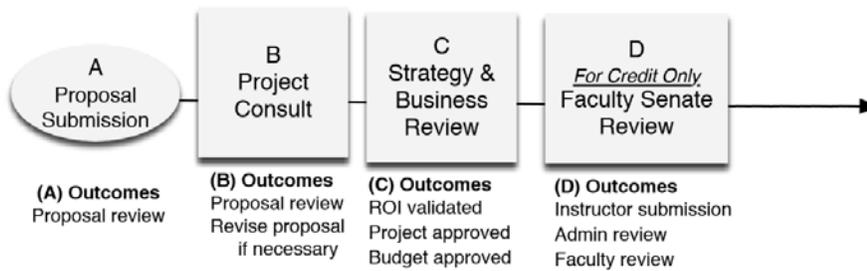
Part I

I. Project Workflow



Key

- Instructor, TA and student training
- Learning outcomes assessment (for credit only)



II. Required Documentation

Step A	Step B	Step C	Step D
Proposal	Consult notes Revised proposal	Finance comments ROL comments	FS comments OTR comments OIE comments OISS comments

III. Required Reviews & Approvals

Step A	Step B	Step C	Step D
Digital Ed VP - all Dept Chair - courses Dean - programs, courses	ROL review	ROL Approval	<i>For Credit Only:</i> SCRC approval (UG) CUC approval (UG) GC approval (Gr) Dean approval (UG, Gr) Provost approval (UG, Gr) Faculty Senate approval (program) OTR review (UG, Gr) OIE review (UG, Gr) OISS review (UG, Gr)

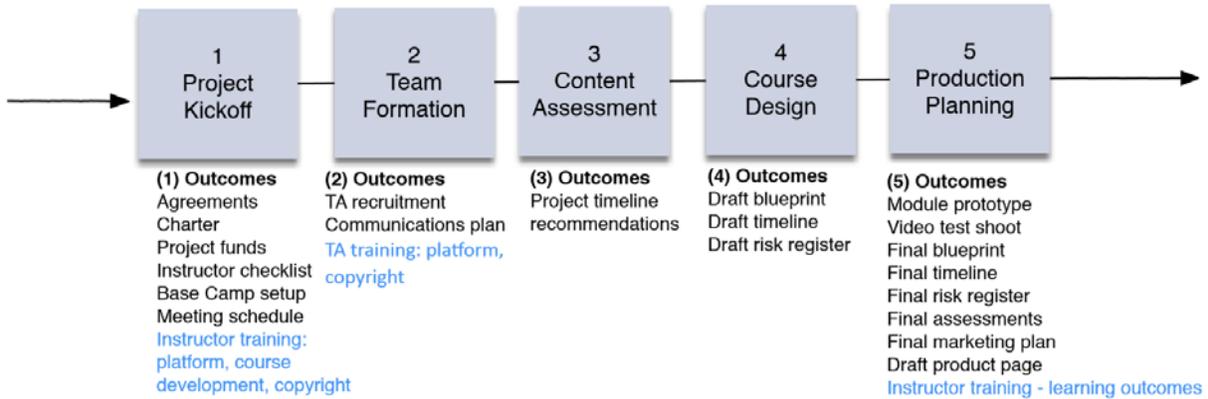
Workflow for Online Courses

Part II



Key

- Instructor, TA and student training
- Learning outcomes assessment (for credit only)



II. Required Documentation

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Agreements Charter Instructor startup checklist Instructor training verification - course development	Communication plan TA training verification- platform	Content assessment report	Course blueprint Project plan Risk management plan	Marketing plan Instructor outcomes training verification - learning outcomes

III. Required Reviews & Approvals

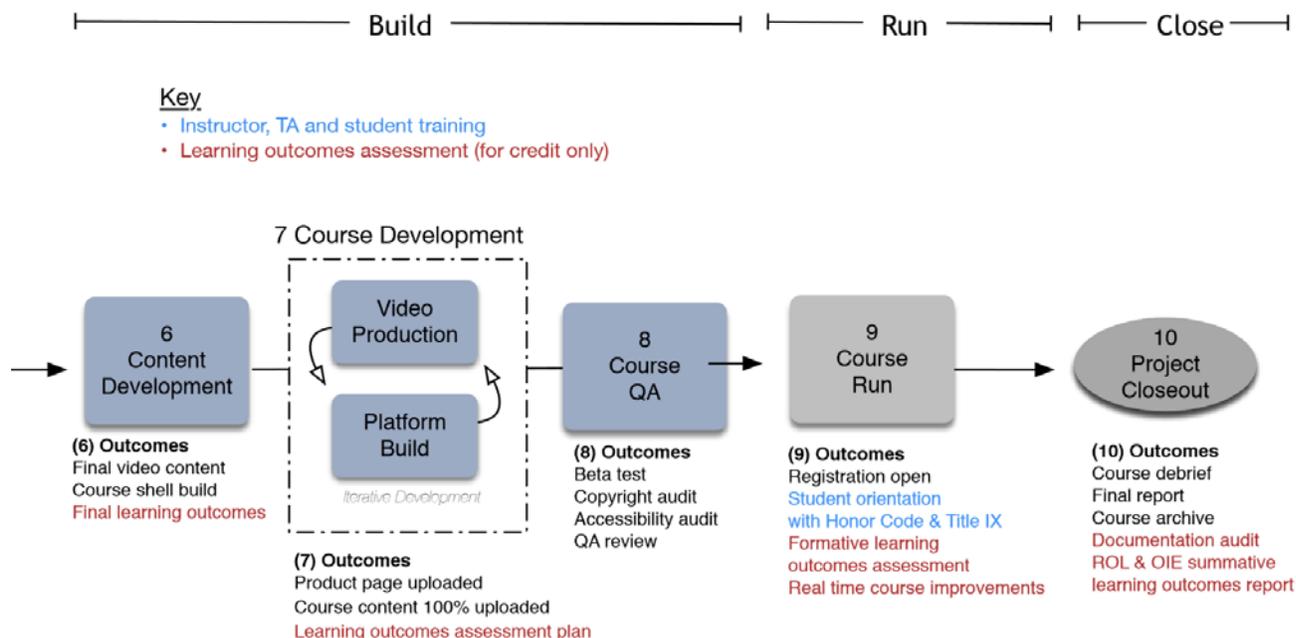
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
ROL review For Credit OTR review ROL review	ROL review	ROL review	ROL review	ROL review For Credit OIE review ROL review



Workflow for Online Courses

Part III

I. Project Workflow



II. Required Documentation

Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10
Learning outcomes	Product page Learning outcomes assessment plan	Copyright audit Accessibility audit Beta testing report QA report	Student orientation verification	Learning outcomes report Project report Closeout checklist Documentation checklist

III. Required Reviews & Approvals

Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10
ROL review For Credit OIE review ROL review	ROL review For Credit OIE review ROL review	ROL review	ROL review	ROL review For Credit ROL review OTR review OIE review

