

TO Chief Executive Officers/Directors
Licensed/Registered Private Schools

FROM Lynette Kuhn, Division Chief

DATE May 14, 2020

RE Private Licensed Schools Memorandum #83

DISTANCE EDUCATION

This memo revises and replaces Board Policy Memorandum #77, issued on November 16, 2017.

Board regulations and policy clearly distinguish between distance education and face-to-face or classroom instruction. Board approval is granted to school ownership as a distance education provider.

Distance education – Instruction offered by any means where the student and faculty member are in separate physical locations so that face-to-face communication is absent; communication is accomplished instead by one or more technological media. It includes, but is not limited to, real-time or delayed interaction using voice, video, data, and/or text, including, but not limited to, instruction provided online, via correspondence, or via interactive video. Instruction provided via synchronous video from an institution in Pennsylvania to additional campus sites of the same institution in Pennsylvania is not considered distance education. The term does not include independent study or instruction which is not instructor led.

Approval to Become a Distance Education Provider

Schools must apply to request initial approval to utilize distance education for the first time. The Board will confirm that ample resources are in place to support student success, that the delivery is effective, and that appropriate orientation is provided to students and staff. Once initial distance education approval has been received, changes to modality or the expansion to additional programs must be approved by Board staff.

Initial Approval, New Program – If a school applies for the initial approval of distance education along with applying for the approval of a new program, the **New Program Application** must be submitted. Applications must specify the courses to be approved and the distance education modality to be used. Applications must be submitted by the published deadline and the New Program Application fee must be paid by the submission deadline. The application will then be reviewed by the full Board.

Initial Approval, Approved Program – If a school applies for the initial approval of distance education to be utilized in an approved program, the **Distance Education Application** must be submitted. Applications must specify the courses to be approved and the distance education modality to be used. Applications must be submitted by the published deadline and the Distance Education Application fee must be paid by the submission deadline. The application will then be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee of the Board.

Existing Approval, Approved Program(s) – Once a school (or chain of schools under the same ownership) has approval to use distance education, the school may request approval to utilize distance education in already approved programs. The school must submit the **Distance Education Application** and a **Program Change Sheet PDE 3744** for each program. Requests must specify the courses to be approved. The documents must then be emailed to Board staff for review. There is no submission deadline and no applicable fee.

If a school has started using distance education but has not received approval to do so, or received approval prior to February 11, 2016, the **Distance Education Application** must be submitted. Applications must specify the courses to be approved and the distance education modality to be used. Applications must be submitted by the published deadline and the Distance Education Application fee must be paid by the submission deadline. The application will then be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee of the Board.

Additional Considerations

- All applications and requests for approval will require a username and password for the reviewer to have full access to the courses being requested.
- If more than 25% of a program is to be taught via distance education, a minimum of 25% of the full courses must be accessible for review.

Please note: this memo also applies to programs that are approved to award specialized associate degrees. Those programs must have Board approval before they may be considered for approval by the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education to award the specialized degree. As such, the Board’s responsibility to approve the distance education modality remains in effect. After receiving Board approval for the distance education modality as outlined above, the school must also apply for approval from the Department of Education for the change to the specialized degree program. The single application submitted, will apply to both the PLS Board review and the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education’s review.

APPROVAL TYPE	FORM TO USE	ASSOCIATED FEE	APPROVAL REQUIRED	SUBMISSION
Initial DE Modality Approval within a New Program	New Program Application	\$1,400	Full Board Program Approval	SharePoint: Initial Review
Initial DE Modality Approval within a Previously Approved Program	Distance Education Application	\$1,400	Curriculum Committee Approval	SharePoint: Other Items
Approved DE Provider within Approved Programs	Distance Education Application and Program Change Sheet PDE 3744	\$0	Board Staff Approval	Email Board Staff