Carnegie Mellon University

Distance Education Delivery at or by CMU programs / in the NAPP Process

Introduction of a new program – and even modification of an existing program – has several important components for oversight by academic units and faculty leaders. See the Enrollment Services website for the New Academic Program Process (NAPP) for details.

When distance education modality is a part or all of the planned educational delivery method, there are accreditation matters that must be managed in advance of the program launch date. This handout addresses considerations and impacts of distance education delivery for (1) domestic matters within the US and (2) the delivery of distance education beyond the US borders.

It may be difficult to imagine why such matters must be managed at all – however, both US states and other countries seek to regulate the quality, subject matter, and type of education that is delivered within their borders, to protect their citizens from poor education or unscrupulous offerings, to protect their own institutions from competition, and other reasons.

Delivery by distance education within the U.S.   What is SARA?

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is a voluntary agreement among member states that establishes 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 post-secondary institutions based in another US state. Participating states (including PA) and institutions (including CMU) agree to accept the accreditation and credentialing standards of the other participants.

In 2017, CMU applied for and was granted approval both from Pennsylvania and the SARA consortium. There are ninety-five Pennsylvania institutions in SARA.

Therefore, CMU is authorized to deliver education by distance modality to residents of all states which participate in SARA including 49 U.S. states plus Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. While California is the only state that does not participate in SARA, CMU has received approval to operate in California from the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education since CMU has a physical presence in the state of California.

Restrictions on the delivery of distance education to international F-1 students in the U.S.

The regulations governing F-1 foreign students limit the number of distance education courses that they may take while enrolled for full-time study in the U.S. Consult with staff of CMU's Office of International Education (OIE) for any related questions.

Delivery of distance education in countries outside of the U.S.

There are a variety of regulations, laws, restrictions and prohibitions in the US and/or other countries that prohibit or seek to control or tax the delivery of distance education to residents of those other countries, or prospective students who are residing or studying outside of the US. A few relevant examples follow:

- The United States (through, for example, the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)) prohibits the delivery of certain education or training to residents of certain countries and/or to certain persons/entities that are barred.
- Some countries do not recognize credentials earned online, and while foreign country laws and regulations certainly may change over time, full disclosure by reputable universities and programs, of course, is expected.
- There also are data security and privacy conventions (such as GDPR in the European Union) that may differ from U.S. and state law standards.
- Some countries tax tuition.

In short, academic program leadership should consult with the contacts (listed below) in advance of the launch of any distance education programs which target overseas markets where enrolled students will be residing in such overseas locations. CMU's NAPP process will highlight these types of issues.

CMU Programs delivered in part or entirely by distance education (Fall 2018)

Example programs at CMU that are delivered partially or completely by distance:
- Heinz - MSIT program and the Master of Medical Management
- Institute for Software Research – Software Engineering
- School of Architecture – Doctor of Professional Practice
- School of Design – Doctorate of Design
- Tepper School of Business - M.S. in Business Analytics

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