

## Chapter 56: Distance Learning/Online Courses

*Rule 56.1 Distance Learning/Online Courses.* The purpose of the distance learning/online course policy is to provide guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) regarding the use of distance learning and online courses through the Mississippi Virtual Public School (MVPS), the Mississippi Interactive Video Network (MIVN), independent study programs, and other distance learning/online course providers not already approved by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE).

For the purposes of this policy, **distance learning** is defined as a technological delivery model in which regularly scheduled real-time instruction occurs during the school day where students and instructors are not in the same place and in which a Mississippi-certified teacher is responsible for providing instruction. **Online learning** is defined as a delivery model that is an interactive computer-based and internet-connected learning environment in which students are separated from their teachers by time or location or both and in which a Mississippi-certified teacher is responsible for providing instruction. **Blended learning** is defined as a hybrid instructional delivery model where pupils are provided face-to-face instruction in part at a supervised school facility away from home and in part in a computer-based, internet-connected learning environment with some degree of pupil control over time, location, and pace of instruction and in which a Mississippi-certified teacher is responsible for providing instruction.

1. The **Mississippi Virtual Public School (MVPS)** is an online course system that has been approved by the MDE. The provider is selected through a Request for Proposals process. All courses have been reviewed for alignment to the respective framework. All MVPS courses are assigned a course code that is listed in the *Approved Courses for the Secondary Schools of Mississippi*. There is no limit to the number of online courses that can be taken for Carnegie Unit credit through the MVPS. Enrollment must have prior approval by the principal. MVPS courses can be used for credit recovery. The school district does not provide the certified teacher for the MVPS courses. The school district is required to provide a site coordinator. The MVPS course(s) are free to students on a first-come-first-served basis contingent upon availability of funds appropriated by the legislature, with seniors given priority. Once all MVPS seats are used, districts, schools, or parents may pay the cost for additional students to take MVPS courses.

The **Mississippi Interactive Video Network (MIVN)** is a distance learning system that has been approved by the MDE. This system links certified teachers in one school with classes of students in other schools or districts as a means of delivering real-time instruction. These courses are listed in the *Approved Courses for the Secondary Schools of Mississippi*.

The MDE has approved a limited number of online correspondence courses for **independent study programs** taught by institutions of higher learning in Mississippi. These courses are listed in the *Approved Courses for the Secondary Schools of Mississippi*. LEAs are responsible for determining course funding structure.

2. For all **distance and online courses other than the delivery methods listed in Section 1 above**, LEAs must submit an application to the MDE for approval to ensure

that the vendor/provider's content, curriculum, and assessments are aligned to Mississippi's course standards. LEAs are responsible for determining course funding structure. In order to count as a credit toward graduation, course codes must be listed in the *Approved Courses for the Secondary Schools of Mississippi*. There is no limit to the number of courses a student may take. Enrollment in such courses must have prior approval by the principal.

For **blended learning courses** in which an LEA provides a face-to-face Mississippi-certified teacher, no prior approval from the MDE is required. For online programs or computer-assisted instruction in which an LEA is using for the sole purpose of credit recovery, no prior approval from the MDE is required. For online dual enrollment courses through a Mississippi Community College or Institution of Higher Learning, no prior approval from the MDE is required.

3. Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, any LEA that provides a distance learning/online program other than the delivery methods listed in Section 1 above shall develop and implement a distance learning/online course policy and handbook guidance that has been adopted by the local school board and that includes the rules, regulations, and processes for online courses. The rules, regulations, and processes shall be available to faculty, students, and parents/guardians.
  - a. At a minimum, LEAs must ensure the following through local board policy:
    - i. Teachers are licensed by the Mississippi Department of Education to teach the respective course;
    - ii. Background checks are conducted for the teachers;
    - iii. The content, curriculum, and assessments for each course are aligned to the competencies, objectives, and standards of the respective Mississippi course;
    - iv. Appropriate course codes are used;
    - v. A facilitator is assigned to assist students;
    - vi. Students have access to the technology needed for courses;
    - vii. Students have all instructional materials needed for courses;
    - viii. The district grading policy is followed;
    - ix. Students enrolled in the courses take the required state assessments where applicable; and

- x. Documentation is maintained on file at the central office.
- b. At a minimum, the LEA student handbook shall include the following:
  - i. The process for notifying parents about the program;
  - ii. Minimum criteria to determine eligibility for participation;
  - iii. The number of distance learning/online courses that students can take at one time;
  - iv. If the distance learning/online course program can be used for credit recovery and/or remediation;
  - v. The courses by grade level and content area for the distance learning/online program; and
  - vi. The process for monitoring student progress and notifying parents of student progress during the course.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-1-3 and § 37-161-3 (Adopted 10/2006, Revised 2/2016)