

Criteria for Authorization to be a Distance Education Provider

The North American Division Commission on Accreditation (NADCOA) does not accredit curricula, or programs. In order to be an accredited entity within the Seventh-day Adventist system of education, the entity must be a school operated within the guidelines presented in the local union or NAD code. Companies or individuals who provide online curriculum cannot be accredited by NADCOA.

Schools that offer a traditional curriculum and want to share more than two courses with other schools, or individuals, must be approved to do so through the Distance Education Provider Protocol. Schools that offer one or two courses to schools within their conference may do so with permission of the local conference office education department. All schools offering more than two courses must complete this application regardless of the location of the schools or individuals served.

Traditional NADCOA accreditation covers in school, face-to-face instruction. Best practice in the field of distance education dictates a different set of criteria that will ensure quality student learning, transmission of Adventist values, and sound business practices for schools offering courses to students who are not physically present every day in the classroom. This instrument is the approval process to become a provider. At the next AAA evaluation of the school a distance education supplement will need to be completed in order to stay as a distance education provider.

Because the school is already accredited by AAA and they are only requesting permission to expand to be a distance education provider, many of the criteria that would apply to a traditional brick and mortar school will also apply to a distance education provider school. The criteria listed below are specifically designed to address the needs of the distance education aspects of the school. These are not intended to cover other aspects of the traditional program. In addition, the school must be approved to offer classes at the level they are delivering them. For example, if a junior academy wishes to offer grades 11 or 12 courses, they must also, in addition to this application, apply for senior academy status.

A. Philosophy, Mission, and Goals

The philosophy and mission of the school must be broad enough to include all students, their spiritual, physical, social, and academic needs.

B. Organization and Administration

The following elements of organization and administration are required.

- a. The school is approved to offer credit for the courses they are delivering.
- b. The school board has made provision for administrative oversight of the program and provided the needed human resources to accomplish the tasks.
- c. The local operating board must take into consideration the needs and concerns of partner campus constituencies.

- d. The school must ensure the accuracy, safety, and confidentiality of all academic records, including transcripts, attendance, discipline, etc. of students at remote sites.
- e. A clearly outlined process has been established for the instructors to receive and return student work in an efficient and timely manner.
- f. A plan has been developed to ensure appropriate oversight of partner campuses, including regular on-site visits by school personnel. Oversight should include adequate facilities, supervision, student services, etc.
- g. Best practices including iNACOL, ISTE, NCPSA, NAD, and regional accrediting bodies have been consulted and included in the structure of the program.
- h. All supporting entities have approved the distance educational delivery system and structure, local board, conference K-12 board of education, union office of education, etc.
- i. There is a process in place to ensure compliance with all state and local regulations regarding distance education for both ends of the partnership.

C. Finance

The school should be prepared to implement a financial plan for the support and operation of the distance education program which includes, but is not limited to the following:

- a. An adequate budget has been developed to operate the distance education program so that it does not negatively impact the traditional local school program by siphoning off resources that would otherwise be committed to local needs.
- b. Provisions are made to structure the program so that if the local school is the employer of any staff at the partner campuses, instructors, administrators, facilitators, etc. that retirement, medical, and other benefits are covered, as per policy.
- c. Tuition rates and other fees are established to meet budgetary needs specific to the distance education program.
- d. Rates are established that are appropriate to the entities providing subsidies.
- e. A plan for hiring and compensation of partner campus facilitators has been developed and approved by the local and partner campus school boards.
- f. The plan to establish a distance program has been reviewed and approved by the local board, conference and union. It is understood that potential partner sites must receive the approval of their local conference and union leadership in order to participate in any distance program.
- g. The host school has a technology plan in place that would specify the needed hardware and software, and it is funded.
- h. There is a voted plan in place to continually upgrade technology resources, both hardware and software.
- i. Provisions are made within the technology plan to standardize, as far as possible, all required hardware and software on the partner campuses.

- j. Provisions are made for technology support services, such as help desk, live chat, email support, etc.

D. Curriculum

The school has all required courses available to offer to all distance program students in subject areas as specified by the union education code to meet denominational and government graduation requirements.

- a. Electives are offered to meet the interest and needs of students.
- b. Alternation of subjects is in accordance with union policies.
- c. The content and curriculum of offered courses follows NAD, union, and conference standards.
- d. Provision has been made to ensure adequate student seat-time and/or student-teacher interaction.
- e. Decision relative to curriculum and other major programming efforts are made through a process that includes multiple individuals and are approved by the board or a board appointed and authorized committee.
- f. There is a process in place to ensure oversight and review of classroom instruction in the distance program.
- g. An appropriate assessment protocol has been established to demonstrate effective learning through the distance program.

E. Faculty and Staff

A distance education program is very different from a traditional program when it comes to staffing. The main campus must ensure that student learning is taking place, the mission and values of the church are upheld and the students are in a safe environment.

- a. A qualified faculty and staff are in place holding valid denominational teaching and administrative certification with appropriate endorsements in assigned teaching areas.
- b. All faculty and staff are Seventh-day Adventists in regular standing and have the personal and professional qualifications for the assigned positions and responsibilities.
- c. Instructional staff carry teaching loads as outlined in the union education code. For blended classrooms, adjustments in local classroom sizes are made to accommodate any distance students in attendance.
- d. Steps have been taken to ensure that all students, local and distance, have equal and adequate access to educational resources, including media, library resources, technology, etc.
- e. Provision is made for all students, local and distance, to receive educational, career, and personal counseling from qualified personnel.

- f. Steps are taken to ensure that adequate extracurricular and social opportunities are provided all students in the distance education program, whether through their local elementary school or their local church, or through some other means.
- g. Plans are in place to provide sufficient professional development instruction to qualify teachers to meet the specific and unique requirements of a distance program classroom.
- h. A formal plan is in place to provide ongoing professional develop and training for teachers and facilitators.
- i. Background checks are performed on all school employees and volunteers, including instructors, facilitators, support personnel, etc. prior to any involvement with students, whether in person or via technology.

F. Facilities and Equipment

- a. The technology resources provided for the distance program are sufficient to ensure consistent adequate access for all students.
- b. There is adequate provision for meeting the needs physical education, music and fine arts programs for distance students.
- c. Adequate arrangements have been made to ensure lab and other resources are available at all sites to support such science courses as biology, chemistry, and physics (appropriate labs must be planned for students studying at home).
- d. There is a three- or five-year plan to fund, implement and maintain up-to-date technology to support the distance program. (screens, cameras, microphones, security for delivery platform, document cameras, LMS, up-to-date computers, copyright licenses, etc.).