Private Career Colleges Act, 2005

Policy Directive #9

Distance Education Programs at Private Career Colleges

November 23, 2012

Introduction

This policy directive is designed for private career college (PCC) operators and should be read in conjunction with Fact Sheet #10 – Approval of Distance Education Programs at Private Career Colleges. This policy directive contains the program standard required for vocational programs using a Distance Education (DE) training method.

Fact Sheet #10 contains the requirements PCCs must follow when submitting programs for approval pursuant to the *Private Career Colleges Act, 2005* (Act).

PCC operators should also reference Fact Sheet # 3: Third Party Program Assessment for the description of the subject-matter, adult education and distance education requirements related to program assessments.

The Superintendent has committed to undertaking a review of this policy directive within a year's time, to allow any learning and feedback to be augmented and improve the approvals and standard outlined herein.

Program Standard

Pursuant to subsection 53(1.1) of the Act, a policy directive issued by the Superintendent may result in the revocation of approval for a vocational program or a class of vocational programs. In the case that a PCC currently has approval for a DE program, the Superintendent is required to provide a PCC with a minimum period of **six months** following the date the policy directive is issued to comply with the directive prior to revoking a program approval. Therefore, PCCs with currently approved DE programs will have until **May 23, 2013** to submit their programs for re-approval under this policy directive.

In order to satisfy the program standard, DE programs at PCCs must be offered in hybrid format. This means that at least 20% of every DE program's duration (excluding practicum) must be offered through face-to-face instruction or via a synchronous mode consisting of:

- Classroom *or* real time with a qualified[1] subject-matter instructor;
- Student evaluation; and/or
- Laboratory/clinical work.

Distance Education Program Standard

DE is defined as a process of transferring knowledge without teacher and student physically meeting each other; where both are making use of correspondence, audio, video, and/or computer-based technologies or any combination thereof[2].

This policy directive is intended to address the class of vocational programs where DE is the primary **mode of training delivery**. This policy directive is intended to be general in its application to DE programs, but in addition to meeting the standards contained in this policy directive, it is noted that PCCs may exceed the requirements contained herein.

DE Standard for Program Approval

Criteria	Details	Submission Requirements
Institutional Eligibility		
PCC is sufficiently viable to support the development and maintenance of the DE program in question.	Favourable score must be obtained in the Private Career College Capacity Assessment[3]. Calculated and assessed based on a PCC's submitted audited financial statements, in conjunction with other information available to the Superintendent to illustrate the PCC's standing as having effective and adequate capacity to set up and maintain the DE program.	

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[1] Please refer to requirements contained in the Act prescribed for qualified instructors.
[2] Please see the list of definitions in Appendix D.
[3] Private Career College Capacity Assessment is a holistic review process administered on a case by case basis, whereby an institution's financial and business risk as well as compliance history is assessed.

Criteria	Details	Submission Requirements
PCC is an established business.	A PCC must have been a registered PCC in Ontario for a minimum of three successive periods of the college's registration.	
Training Delivery Standard to Gain Program Eligibility		
The program is delivered as a hybrid program.	At least 20% of every DE program's duration (excluding practicum) must be offered through face-to-face instruction or via a synchronous mode consisting of: • Classroom *or* real time with a qualified[4] subject-matter instructor; • Student evaluation; and/or • Laboratory/clinical work.	If requested, a student time table within a detailed time-based program showing in-class time versus distance education time must be available for review by the Superintendent[5] for each course.
PCC meets any additional requirements as prescribed by an external regulatory body, as applicable.	An external regulatory body may require that a higher portion of a program's duration (excluding practicum) is offered through face-to-face or via a synchronous mode. In such an instance, the PCC is required to abide by the requirements set forth by the other regulatory body.	PCCs must obtain and submit to the Superintendent a letter demonstrating that the format and content of their DE program will provide students with the necessary knowledge to meet entry-to-practice requirements, as applicable.
Institutional Capacity Required in Order to Meet DE Standard		
PCC provides a reliable, sufficient, and scalable Learning Management System (LMS)[6].	The LMS includes: • Online teaching and learning systems available 24 hours a day, seven days a week within the program dates; • Troubleshooting support that includes a help desk with a live person available <u>at a minimum</u> of 12 consecutive hours a day, five days a week, except for public holidays and during holiday period; • Clear documentation of storage, back-up, disaster recovery plan, and security and emergency protocols; • Historical logs and physical documentation of exceptions, breaches, capacity usage, upgrades, work-arounds, bolt-ons, etc.; • Firmly established systems for timely,	A chart of the program's learning management systems, where all features and tools of the learning management systems are described to ensure that they meet the course delivery requirements. In order to demonstrate how a particular PCC intends to meet this standard the PCC must submit any relevant contracts with third-parties that provide the services.

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[4] Please refer to requirements contained in the Act prescribed for qualified instructors.

[5] Unless stated otherwise, submissions must always be provided to the Superintendent or his/her designate. The designate is usually the PCC's assigned Inspector.

[6] Requirement for a learning management system (LMS) is not meant to be restrictive, that is, an LMS could provide additional enhancements that are not incompatible with the features outlined in this Directive. LMS is synonymous with a "course management system".

Criteria	Details	Submission Requirements
	accurate and adequate verification of student identity. For example, for synchronous studies, through web conferencing, this would include voice *and* visual recognition. For asynchronous studies and homework, this would involve the use of software to monitor the student's work and identify inconsistencies or some equally effective method. • Proper measures to assure that assessments of a student and evaluations of his or her work are kept private and confidential. • LMS is scalable to the proposed number of students.	
PCC has adequate resources, policies and processes in place that deal with orienting instructors and students on the use of technologies employed by the PCC to deliver distance-education programs. The PCC must have professional development opportunities available for instructors, including training on the use of technology and other innovative modes in delivering a vocational program.	The PCC's policies must outline how: • Students and instructors will be prepared in the use of existing and new technologies as they are adopted; • Instructors are oriented on, and kept up to date with regard to the LMS and best practices in online pedagogy; and • Regular opportunities for ongoing professional development for instructors and others responsible for program development will be provided.	All instructors will receive training on the PCC's learning system before they teach a course. Evidence of this learning (including at minimum, the names of instructors who received the training and showing when the training was completed and when the first class was taught) shall be retained by the PCC and provided upon request. A list of professional development courses and the number of instructors attending shall be retained and provided upon request. A statement of how the students will be prepared for DE and the use of the technology adopted by the PCC shall be retained and made available upon request, if applicable for the content and learning objectives of program.

Criteria	Details	Submission Requirements
The PCC has adequate and effective policies and procedures in place, concerning compliance with federal and provincial copyright law.	It is the responsibility of PCCs to ensure that they operate in accordance with relevant copyright law as applicable and use other licenses and permissions, as appropriate.	
The technology and equipment made available by PCCs to students and instructors are sufficient for the delivery of the program in order to meet vocational outcomes, and in the proposed format and for the anticipated number of students. Where students are asked to provide their own equipment, it must be clear to the students what standards that equipment has to meet prior to their enrolment into the program.	Technology and equipment provided by the PCC must be sufficient for the delivery of the program in the proposed format and for the anticipated number of students. PCCs must endeavour to provide up-to-date technology and equipment in every program. The PCC must provide each student with a clear statement of the standards required for any equipment provided by the student.	A PCC must provide a copy of its current standards for equipment and a statement that it complies with these standards. If the student is required to supply or able to use their own equipment, the PCC must make clear what standards that equipment must meet to be functional for the program of study.
Program Design and Administration		
Where a PCC contracts with a third-party to deliver all or part of a DE program, the PCC is still responsible for the program's quality. Program approval is not transferable to any third party, but a PCC may contract to receive the support or services of a third	Every agreement between a PCC and a third party provider engaged to deliver all or part of a DE program must: • Outline that program approval is given to the registered PCC and is not transferable; • Establish that the PCC bears responsibility for all aspects of the program's delivery; • Clearly define the performance expectations regarding all aspects of the program's delivery; and • Include provisions to ensure quality control of all aspects of the program's delivery. Prior to a PCC contracting with a technology provider, the PCC must disclose the identity of	Copies of quality compliance and commitment agreements with the third party must be filed with the Superintendent.

Criteria	Details	Submission Requirements
party, related to the technological infrastructure of the program.	the provider to the Superintendent and obtain the Superintendent's prior approval to retain the third party[7].	
The proposed program's name must contain reference to DE (for example, Business Administration - Distance Education or Food Services Worker - Virtual, etc.).	A DE program's structure and mode of delivery must be clearly indicated in all advertising/marketing materials.	Copies of advertising, marketing, web based and social media materials used in advertising, marketing and promotion must be made available on request and accurately describe the program and comply with the Act and regulations.

When contracting with students for DE programs. PCCs must use the Superintendent-approved student contract containing an Addendum related to the DE program, along with the information required by the Addendum.	Contracts with students must include:
	• Details about the program's mode of delivery;
	• A description of the software and hardware and the degree of technical competence in using them that will be required of a student;
	• A student's attestation that he or she has access to the required software and hardware and possesses the technical skills to use them; and
	• An identification of all learning materials (required and optional), including:
	  • Cost;
	  • Whether the materials are expected to be bought or are loaned to the student; and
	  • For loaned materials, the duration of the loan must be disclosed and cannot be shorter than the duration of the related course.
	• The Superintendent-provided addendum outlining a PCC's responsibilities as established by this DE framework.
	• Service Standards (see next criteria for details).
	• Clear identification of minimum Internet
		Student files must be complete and up to date, and be ready to show to the Superintendent or his/her designate upon request.
		
		Any applicable fees charged to students for loaned materials must be clearly stated in the itemized list of program fees.
		The Superintendent-provided addendum[8] outlines the PCC's responsibilities and must be provided to students as part of the student contract.
		A statement added to Student Rights and

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[7] If a PCC has received the approval of the Superintendent to contract with a particular third party to deliver one program, the PCC does not have to obtain the Superintendent's approval to use that third party for subsequent programs.

[8] Please see Appendix A: Information to be added to Student Contracts: PCC Responsibilities Related to DE Program Delivery.

Criteria	Details	Submission Requirements
	speed access, equipment, and software required by students to take courses. PCCs should review their expulsion policy, to ensure feasibility and alignment with students' enrolment in DE programs.	Responsibilities is to be added for every student[9].
Students must be made fully aware of the Service Standards of the PCC in relation to the DE program at the time of enrolment.	Students must be provided with a service standards statement for the DE program, which makes clear what response time they can expect for: • an email query sent to their instructor regarding the course and their academic needs[10], • turnaround time for an assignment or assessable activity submitted electronically or in person, • response time from the PCC with respect to technical issues associated with the learning system in use, • response time from the finance department with respect to an email or telephone query with respect to student financial issues, and • response time from the PCC with respect to emails associated with assessment and grades.	The Service Standards of the PCC for the DE program must be made available to all PCC staff and to the Superintendent upon request.
The program schedule of instruction, and instructor availability are identified and fully disclosed and include the mode of delivery and the number of hours expected to be spent by a student in face-to-face and in asynchronous learning.	(a) A description of the duration of the program and each course that is a component of the program must be: • Described in hours and weeks; and • Provide a minimum and maximum duration and a start and end date. (b) Schedule: • The program and every course schedule must be clearly identified and fully disclosed to the student; and • The schedule must clearly inform students of the course/program components that are offered through face-to-face or real time instruction and the timing of these components. The schedule must also inform students of the course/program components that are offered through asynchronous learning.	

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[9] Please see Appendix B: Student Rights and Responsibilities Statement.
[10] Response time for queries by students must be consistent with requirement stated in the next section.

Criteria	Details	Submission Requirements
	(c) Protocols to ensure that prior to the half-way point of the DE program and prior to the end of the program, a student is examined/evaluated by: • PCC instructors, or • Superintendent-approved proctors. Evaluation will take place at the cost of the PCC. Marking of quizzes/tests/ exams may only be completed by instructors. (d) Instructor availability: • Each qualified instructor must clearly indicate at the start of the course firm "office hours" during which he/she will be available online to respond to inquiries immediately or in real time, and • In respect of inquiries by students submitted outside of an instructor's office hours, instructors must respond to the inquiries within **two business days**. Whenever an instructor is unable to meet the foregoing performance standards, the PCC must advise the affected students as soon as possible and provides appropriate and reasonable accommodations with regard to deadlines for assignments/evaluations.	If the PCC plans on using proctors, at the time of program approval, the PCC must submit the names of proctors for use to be approved. Once the proctors have been approved for one program, their names do not need to be submitted in future program approvals.
An instructor delivering a DE program(s) is competent in the delivery of training through DE means, in addition to meeting the instructor qualifications in Ontario Regulation 415/06.	Instructors delivering programs via DE must meet the following requirements: • Have experience in DE as evidenced by previous employment experience and/or related credentials and/or • Have received appropriate training in the use of the PCC's technology and systems prior to the commencement of their teaching duties.	
Learning resources: PCC ensures that all required course learning materials are available to all DE program students and instructors as outlined in the Details column.	Course learning materials (pre-published materials such as books and the program outline) must be made available at the start of the program and for the full duration of the program. Course learning materials produced by the PCC specific to the program (such as notes, slides, etc.) must be made available as the materials	

Criteria	Details	Submission Requirements
	are delivered in the program and for the rest of the program, as per the program schedule.	

Maintaining Approval or Obtaining Re-approval

In order to maintain approval or obtain re-approval upon expiry, a PCC must meet the following Performance Objectives.

Performance Objectives		
Criteria	Details	Submission Requirements
The PCC must collect, validate and report mid-program and final grades for all students in all DE programs.	In order to obtain meaningful student evaluation data and until the implementation of Key Performance Indicators for all PCC programs, PCCs must collect, validate and report aggregate mid-program and final grades for all DE program students to the Superintendent.	Aggregate mid-program and final program grades must be submitted to the Superintendent every six months[11].
Course revision and currency: All courses involving DE delivery will be reviewed on a cycle appropriate to the content of the course so as to ensure currency and relevance.	Each program shall have a program cycle for revision and review, as indicated in the program submission. This cycle will be tied to the program approval period and may mean that in order to gain re-approval for a specific DE program after expiry, the PCC in question must demonstrate that the program has undergone necessary updates or course revisions as the Superintendent may require.	However, consistent with the approval of other vocational programs, if the revision and review of a program results in a substantive change under section 13 of Ontario Regulation 415/06, the PCC must submit all necessary documentation and obtain prior approval in order to offer the program with changes.

Effective Date

This policy directive is effective as of November 23, 2012.

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[11] Data must be submitted electronically every January 10th and July 10th, using excel spreadsheets provided in Appendix C.

This document is a legal document and is binding on all private career colleges. Every private career college shall comply with and be operated in accordance with this policy directive.

Need More Information?

If you have questions about the *Private Career Colleges Act, 2005* contact the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities at:

Private Career Colleges Branch
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
77 Wellesley Street, Box 977
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Telephone: (416) 314-0500 or 1-866-330-3395 or Fax: (416) 314-0499
OR

Visit our website at:
http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/postsecondary/schoolsprograms/pcc/

The full text of the act and regulations can also be downloaded from the Ontario government E-Laws website at:
www.e-laws.gov.on.ca

Appendix A:

Addendum to be added to Student Contracts:
PCC Responsibilities Related to
Distance Education Program Delivery

This addendum is to be added to Student Enrolment Contracts relating to DE programs and is subject to the *Private Career Colleges Act, 2005* and the regulations made under the Act.

I _____ (name of student) am enrolling in the
_____ (name of program) program at
_____ (name of PCC and campus, if applicable). I
understand that this program will be delivered using a Distance Education
mode of delivery. This means that at least a portion of my training will be
delivered using correspondence, audio, video, and/or computer-based
technologies or any combination thereof.

I understand that this PCC will provide me with information about the
following matters:

- The school's responsibilities to me as a student enrolled in a distance
  education program;
- Details on how the instruction will be delivered;
- A program timetable for each course showing in class time versus
  distance education time;
- Orientation materials (including resources, policies and processes) on the
  use of the relevant technologies needed to enable me to complete my
  program successfully;
- Itemized list of all learning materials required *prior* to start of the program;
- Whether I can use software and/or hardware and/or other equipment that I
  currently own *or* whether I have to buy new equipment *or* whether the
  school will lend me the equipment;
- The technical standards this equipment must meet (e.g. minimum Internet
  speed);
- If the school lends me the equipment, the duration of the loan and any
  fees associated with the loan;
- Description of the hardware, software and equipment the degree of
  technical competence I need in using them;
- Identification of minimum Internet speed access required;

- Service Standards of the PCC in relation to this DE program, including response times to questions regarding assignment evaluation, grades, technical issues and financial matters;
- Instructor availability; and
- The complete, itemized costs of this DE program.

I _____ (name of student) have read and understood this form. I acknowledge that I received this form <u>as part</u> of my Student Enrolment Contract _____ (student initials).

_____   _____
Signature of Student   Date

Appendix B:

Student Rights and Responsibilities Statement

This addendum now forms part of the Student Rights and Responsibilities and is subject to the *Private Career Colleges Act, 2005* and the regulations made under the Act.

As part of my student contract, the private career college in which I am enrolling will provide me with information regarding PCC Responsibilities Related to Distance Education Program Delivery, if I am enrolling in a Distance Education Course. If I do not receive the information <u>as part</u> of my Student Enrolment Contract, I may contact the office of the Superintendent of Private Career Colleges by writing, emailing, calling or faxing:

- Superintendent of Private Career Colleges,
  Address: Private Career Colleges Branch,
     Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities
     77 Wellesley Street, West, Box 977
     Toronto, Ontario
     M7A 1N3

  Email: PCC@ontario.ca

  Phone: 416-314-0500
  Toll free: 1-866-330-3395
  Fax: 416-314-0499

Appendix C:

Aggregate Mid-Program and Final Grade Reporting Chart

PCCs must collect, validate and report mid-program and final grades for all students in all DE programs and report these to the PCC's Inspector in the following table format. Data must be submitted electronically every January 10th and July 10th.

The total number of students reported on in any six month period must be greater than five. If any six month period a PCC has five or fewer students, they may report in the next period when there are more students. In this case, the PCC must report this to their Inspector.

PCC Operating Name	Campus	Program Name	Evaluation Method: Quiz, Test, Exam	Mid-Term/Final or other	Date Administered	Grades

Appendix D:

Definitions

Distance Education – a process of transferring knowledge without teacher and student physically present in the same room, where both are making use of correspondence, audio, video, and/or computer-based technologies or any combination thereof.

Hybrid programs – a program where at least 20%* of the program's duration (excluding practicum)** is offered face-to-face or via the synchronous mode and this 20% or more consists of:

> Classroom time or real-time interaction with a subject-matter instructor;
> Student evaluation and/or
> Laboratory/clinical work (Excluding practicum/work placement).

* Unless otherwise required by a regulatory body.
**Practicum/work placement is excluded from the calculation of the program total time. For example: a program 1000 hours in duration of which 200 hours are the practicum portion of the program would be required to ensure that 20% of the 800 hours (1000 hrs total – 200 hrs practicum) are face-to-face.

Synchronous mode – where instructor-led courses are conducted in real time with students participating in virtual classrooms through **audio and visual means.**

Asynchronous mode – where instructors provide materials, lectures, tests, and assignments that can be accessed by students at any time.

Superintendent – includes a designate of the Superintendent, often the PCC's assigned Inspector.