

Indiana University
Office of Online Education and
University Student Services and Systems

Definitions of Distance Education
[Courses, Programs and Students]
for SIS Coding and Compliance Review
and Reporting Credit Hour Allocations

Task Force members:

*Barbara Bichelmeyer, Director, IU Office of Online Education

*Jim Kennedy, Associate Vice President, University Student Systems and Services

Joyce Alexander, Executive Associate Dean, IU-Bloomington School of Education

Margaret Baechtold, University Military and Veterans Services Coordinator, EVPURAPP

Elizabeth Boling, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies, IU-Bloomington School of Education

Susan Cote, University Bursar

Ilona Hajdu, Program Manager and Compliance Officer, IU Office of Online Education

Holly Hamilton, University Registrar, University Student Systems and Services

Steve Keucher, Associate Vice President, EVPURAPP

Todd Schmitz, Executive Director, University Institutional Research and Reporting

Joe Scodro, University Counsel

Chris Viers, Associate Vice President for International Services, Office of International Services

Dana Wayle, Vice Chancellor for Administrative Affairs, IU-Southeast

*Co-chair

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Overview

This document outlines requirements for the coding of distance education classes, programs, and students in Indiana University's Student Information System. **The correct coding of online classes is required for federal and state reporting, correct bursar billing of tuition and fees, accreditation, international student tracking, and veteran's services benefits processing. Failure to properly code classes results in non-compliance with federal Title IV financial aid regulations, which can result in substantial penalties to IU.**

The document provides an appropriate coding structure for reporting of online classes, programs, and students, to be implemented with the Fall 2013 schedule of classes and program build process, effective November 2012.

Review of Definitions

This section explains the definitions of distance education that are used by regulatory agencies and university administration to track distance education classes, programs, and students, and to ensure Indiana University's compliance with federal regulations, accreditation standards, and university policies.

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

IPEDS is the data system required by the United States Congress for use by the United States Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics.

Distance Education

Education that uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies used for instruction may include the following: Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcasts, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite or wireless communication devices; audio conferencing; and video cassette, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassette, DVDs, and CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with the technologies listed above.

- Distance Education Course: A course in which the instructional content is delivered exclusively via distance education.
- Distance Education Program: A program for which the required coursework for program completion is able to be completed via distance education courses.

Correspondence Education

Education provided through one or more courses in which the institution provides instructional materials and examinations by mail or electronic transmission to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is not regular and substantive, and it is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced. Correspondence education is not distance education.

Retrieved from: <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/ViewContent.aspx?contentId=22>

Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

The Higher Learning Commission defines a **distance education course** as one in which **75% or more of the instruction is offered by distance education**. The HLC defines a **correspondence education course** as one in which **75% or more of the instruction is offered by correspondence education**.

To determine whether a program is offered via distance education, take the number of distance education courses or correspondence education courses in the educational program divided by the total number of courses in that particular program. This should yield the percentage of distance or correspondence education offered in that program. If the result is that 50% or more of the program is offered by distance education, you should list the program as such. If the results are that 50% or more of the program is offered by correspondence education, you should list the program as such.

If the program has a combination of distance and correspondence education courses that together add up to 50% or more, then list the program in the category that represents the largest percentage.

New HLC definitions also require the reporting of in-person independent/directed study courses, weekend college (if offered), and internship/practica.

Special note:

- Institutions must properly distinguish its distance and correspondence education using the federal definitions. **The key distinction in the federal definition is whether the courses are self-paced and the interaction with faculty is student-initiated.** Courses of this nature are correspondence education regardless of whether they are delivered electronically or through any other mechanism. The U.S. Department of Education has informed the HLC that it is looking closely at whether institutions have properly made this identification and whether the HLC has reviewed the identification and that there may be Title IV consequences for institutions that have not properly made this identification.

Retrieved from <http://ncahlc.org/>

Indiana Commission Higher Education (ICHE)

Definitions for distance education courses and programs used by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education are under review by the commission at the time of development of this report. Currently, the commission follows the Sloan consortium definitions for distance education courses and programs:

Distance education **course** = **80% or more of the content** in a course is delivered via distance.
Distance education **program** = **80% of requirements to meet the degree/credential** are offered via distance.

Both of the above are based on the definitions from the Sloan Consortium:

<http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/goingthedistance.pdf>

Compliance Issues

Federal Title IV Regulations

In order to be eligible for Federal Student Aid (FSA), Indiana University must be in compliance with federal Title IV regulations. Given the federal source of both Title IV regulations and IPEDS, the Title IV definitions for distance education are very similar to IPEDS definitions.

Distance Education

A distance education program at a domestic school is considered an eligible FSA program if it has been accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the Department for accreditation of distance education. It is not subject to the rules that apply to correspondence coursework, which are discussed in the next section.

Distance education means education that uses certain technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor, and to support **regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor**. The interaction may be synchronous (student and instructor are in communication at the same time) or asynchronous. The technologies may include

- Internet,
- audio conferencing, or
- one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices.

A course taught through video cassettes or discs is also considered a distance education course but only if one of the three technologies listed is used to support interaction between the students and the instructor.

Correspondence courses

Unlike distance education courses, which are now treated in the same way as all other eligible programs, **some restrictions apply to correspondence courses**. A correspondence course is a home-study course provided by a school under which the school provides instructional materials, including examinations on the materials, to students who are not physically attending classes at the school. **Interaction between instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student**. Correspondence courses are typically self-paced. When a student completes a portion of the instructional materials, the student takes the examinations that relate to that portion of the materials and returns the examinations to the school for grading.

- If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, the course is considered to be a correspondence course.
- If a school adds telecommunications technology, such as electronic delivery of course materials or an online discussion board, to a correspondence course, the school must ascertain the predominant method of instruction (correspondence or telecommunications), keeping in mind that a telecommunications course must use technology to support regular and substantive interaction between students and the instructor. The school must apply the rules for the predominant method in administering its participation in the FSA programs.
- A course that is delivered in whole or in part through the use of video cassettes or video discs is a correspondence course unless the school also delivers comparable instruction to students attending resident classes at the school during the same award year.

If a school offers more than 50% of its courses by correspondence or if 50% or more of its students are enrolled in its correspondence courses, the school loses its eligibility to participate in the FSA programs.

Correspondence students enrolled in certificate programs are not eligible for FSA funds.

Retrieved from <http://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1112FSAHbkVol2Ch2.pdf>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

U.S. Department of Veterans affairs enrollment certification rules require that enrollment be broken out by in-residence verses distance courses. Certifying officials must know which classes will meet VA's definition of in-residence – all others are classified as distance for VA purposes.

In-residence training for undergraduate students consists of regularly scheduled standard class sessions (at least once every two weeks). The total number of hours of classroom instruction (based on 50 minutes of instruction per hour) must equal, or be greater than, the number of credit hours awarded for the course multiplied by the number of weeks in the term. In-residence training for graduate students consists of at least two regularly scheduled standard class sessions per term, research (either on or off campus), or a combination of both. (See 38 CFR 21.4267(d)).

If a course does not meet the VA definition of residence training it is considered distance training. **This distinction can determine how much housing allowance a student is entitled to receive.** Indicators of instructional modality in the schedule of classes or other sources must be consistent and reliable to assure compliance with VA definitions when reporting enrollment data.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Federal Department of Homeland Security regulations require institutions to ensure that an international student is primarily studying at a physical location on campus for the preponderance of their education (i.e. at least 9 credits per semester for an undergraduate must be onsite).

IU should not issue SEVIS I-20's to international students for F-1 visa purposes for degree programs in which a student cannot complete the program physically onsite/on-campus.

International Services needs clear identification of course (class) attributes to determine if a specific course section should be distance education for immigration compliance purposes. International admission offices need to know if an academic program and/or academic plan are sufficiently onsite/on- campus to be a visa eligible option for the student.

Procedure for SIS Coding of Distance Education Classes/Credit Hour Allocations

Indiana University will define distance education classes, and provide coding in its Student Information System, in accordance with United States Department of Education (DE) Title IV regulations and Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Definitions.

Definition: A Distance Education class is a class in which 76% - 100% of the instruction is offered by distance education.

Distance education is defined as education that uses certain technologies to deliver instruction to *students who are separated from the instructor*, and to support *regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor*. The interaction may be synchronous (student and instructor are in communication at the same time) or asynchronous. The technologies may include

- Internet,
- Audio conferencing, or
- One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices.

A class taught through video cassettes or discs is also considered a distance education class but only if one of the three technologies listed is used to support regular interaction between the students and the instructor.

Online education is a subset of distance education that uses Internet technologies to provide more flexible access to content and instruction at any time, from any place. In online education, instructional content is intentionally designed and delivered asynchronously on the Internet to replace classroom instruction time (contact hours) between the student and instructor. *To determine what percentage of a class is online, divide the number of classroom contact hours replaced by instruction designed and delivered online by the total number of contact hours required for the class.*

Correspondence education classes are home-study classes provided by a school under which the school provides instructional materials, including examinations on the materials, to students who are not physically attending classes at the school. Interaction between the instructor and student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence classes are typically self-paced. Correspondence education is not distance education.

Coding: To support IU reporting and provide meaningful information to students, all classes will be coded with one of the following mode of instruction codes. *Lack of compliance with these definitions by Indiana University could lead to loss of eligibility for federal funds, loss of revenue, and jeopardy for accreditation of the various IU campuses.*

[OA] Online All: 100% of instruction is provided through asynchronous online education in which the student is not bound by place or time.

[OI] Online Interactive: 76% to 99% of instruction is provided through online education.

[HY] Hybrid, Traditional: 26% to 75% of the instruction is provided through online education. The remainder of the instruction is provided through traditional face-to-face instruction.

[HD] Hybrid, Distance: 26% to 75% of the instruction is provided through online education. The remainder of the instruction is provided by distance education used to support synchronous interaction between the instructor and student.

[DO] Distance, Other: 76% or more of the instruction is provided by distance education used to support synchronous interaction between the instructor and student.

[CT] Closed Circuit TV*: 76% or more of the instruction is provided by synchronous Closed Circuit TV.

[OC] Correspondence: 75% or more of the instruction is provided by correspondence education.

[P] In-Person: Traditional campus-based face to face instruction. Only 0% to 25% of the instruction may be offered online.

[IN] Internship/Practica: Internships or practica experiences for which credits are awarded by the institution. Only 0% to 25% of the instruction may be offered online.

[IS] Independent/Directed Study: Classes where instructors interact individually with students through a flexible format. Only 0% to 25% of the instruction may be offered online.

The flowchart on page 9 can be used to determine the Mode of Instruction for a class. Alternatively, Mode of Instruction can be found by calculating the **Online %** for a class and locating the corresponding code in the table below:

Quick Reference for Instruction Mode Coding		
Code	Meaning	Online % (#Online Contact Hours / #Total Contact Hours)
OA	Online All	100% is online education
OI	Online Interactive	76% to 99% is online education
HY	Hybrid, Traditional	26% to 75% is online, remainder is face to face
HD	Hybrid, Distance	26% to 75% is online, remainder is distance ed
DO	Distance, Other	76% to 100% is synchronous distance education
CT*	Closed Circuit TV	76% to 100% is synchronous closed circuit TV
OC	Correspondence	75% to 100% is correspondence
P	In Person (Face to Face)	0% to 25% is online education
IN	Internship	0% to 25% is online education
IS	Independent/Directed Study	0% to 25% is online education

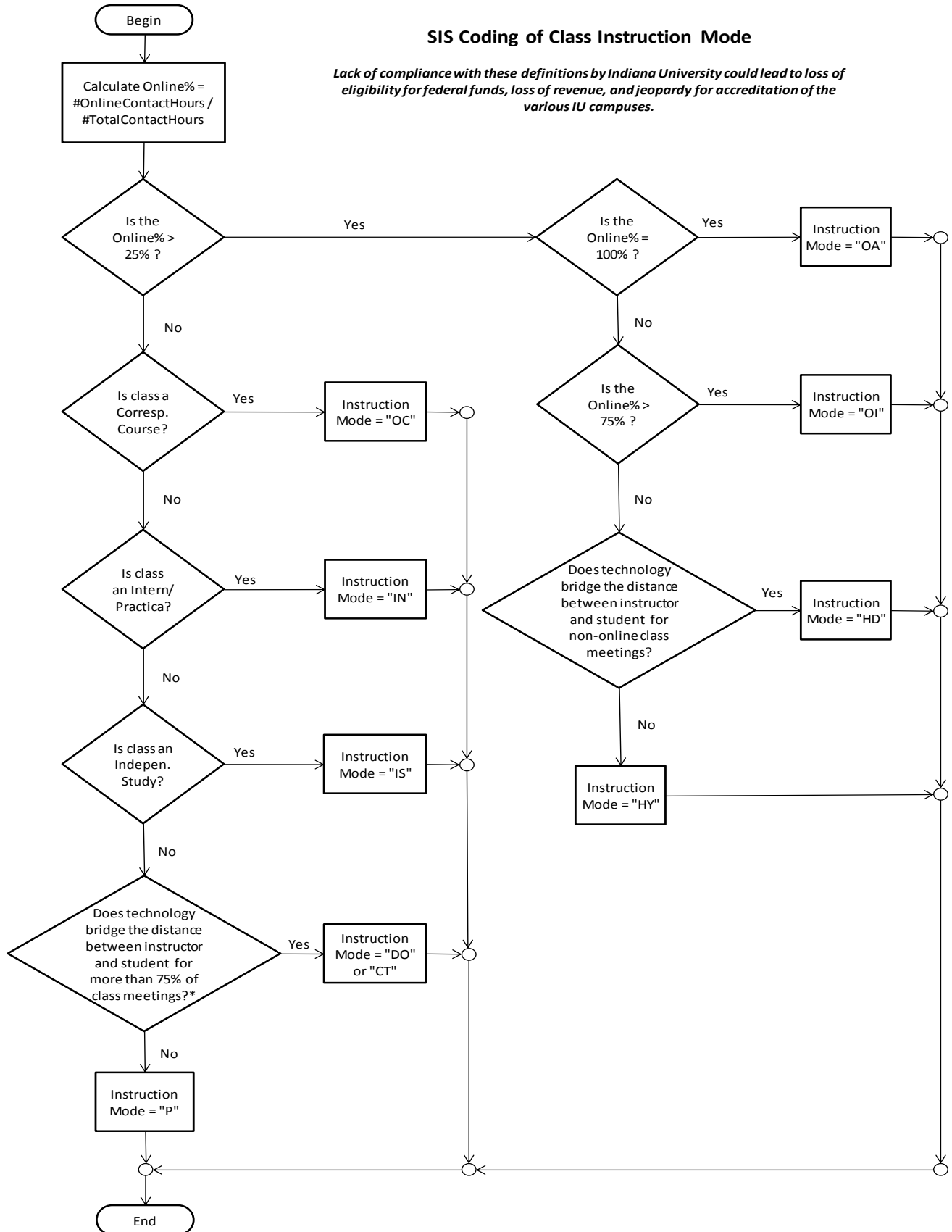
*Closed Circuit TV is a special case of the DO (Distance, Other) category. CT classes can be re-coded as DO classes, and the CT category discontinued, with no loss of granularity for reporting purposes.

For comparison purposes, the following table summarizes the correspondence between the course attribute values used to denote distance education classes prior to Fall 2013 and the new Instruction Mode values:

Mappings from pre-Fall 2013 Course Attributes to Instruction Mode	
Pre-Fall 2013 Attribute Value	Corresponding Instruction Mode Value
xxIS Independent Study	IS Independent Study
xxHY Hybrid	HY Hybrid, Traditional OR HD Hybrid, Distance OR OI Online Interactive
xxTV Interactive TV	CT Closed Circuit TV OR DO Distance, Other
xxOI Online Interactive	OI Online Interactive OR OA Online All

SIS Coding of Class Instruction Mode

Lack of compliance with these definitions by Indiana University could lead to loss of eligibility for federal funds, loss of revenue, and jeopardy for accreditation of the various IU campuses.



SIS Coding of Distance Education Plans

In the past, various SIS coding structures have been used to identify distance education academic plans. The current coding practice is to embed 'DA' (Distance Accessible) or 'DE' (Distance Education) into the plan code.

Plan Code	Plan Description
NRSDARNBSN	Nursing RN to BSN
COMMSDEBS	Communication Studies BS
CJUSDABS	Criminal Justice BA

This coding structure makes it difficult to extract all of the online education academic plans, since there are instances where the 'DA' is not a designation for Distance Accessible:

Plan Code	Plan Description
PRRADASPR	Pre Radiograph AS
AUDIOLDAUD	Audiology D Aud (Dr. Audiology)
MEDARAS	Media Arts AS

Other previously used coding structures for distance education plans include "ONL" at the beginning of the plan code and "DE" at the end:

Plan Code	Plan Description
ONLFINMBA	Finance MBA
ONLMGMTMBA	Management MBA
LNGMSEDDE	Language Education MSED
ISTMSEDDE	Instructional Systems Technology

In order to select distance education academic plans, the plan name must first be dissected, and this is not always 100% accurate. Therefore, none of the current or past coding structures are ideal for easily extracting a list of distance education academic plans. While it remains critical that separate plans be used to designate Distance Education plans from their traditional, "bricks and mortar" counterparts, adding an attribute or flag to the academic plan table will solve reporting issues.

Procedure for SIS Coding of Online Education Degree Programs

Indiana University will define distance education programs, and provide coding in its Student Information System, in accordance with United States Department of Education (DE) and Higher Learning Commission (HLC) calculations.

Calculation for Distance Education/Correspondence Program

To determine whether a program is offered via distance education:

1. Count the total number of courses in the educational program
2. Count the number of distance education courses or correspondence education courses in the program (Distance Education Instruction Modes = OA (Online All), OI (Online Interactive), CT (Closed-Circuit TV), HD (Hybrid, Distance), or DO (Distance, Other))
3. Divide the number of distance education or correspondence courses (#2) by the total number of courses (#1) to yield the percentage of distance or correspondence education offered in that program
 - a. If 50% or more of the program is offered by distance education or correspondence education, then this constitutes an online program (see coding below)
 - b. If the program has a combination of distance and correspondence education courses that together add up to 50% or more, list the program in the category that represents the largest percentage (see coding below)

This calculation/determination should reflect “intended” offerings of DE programs (i.e. advertised and promoted as a DE program). Degree programs that “may” have the majority of the coursework achieved through the fortuitous and random offering of DE classes should not be considered distance programs.

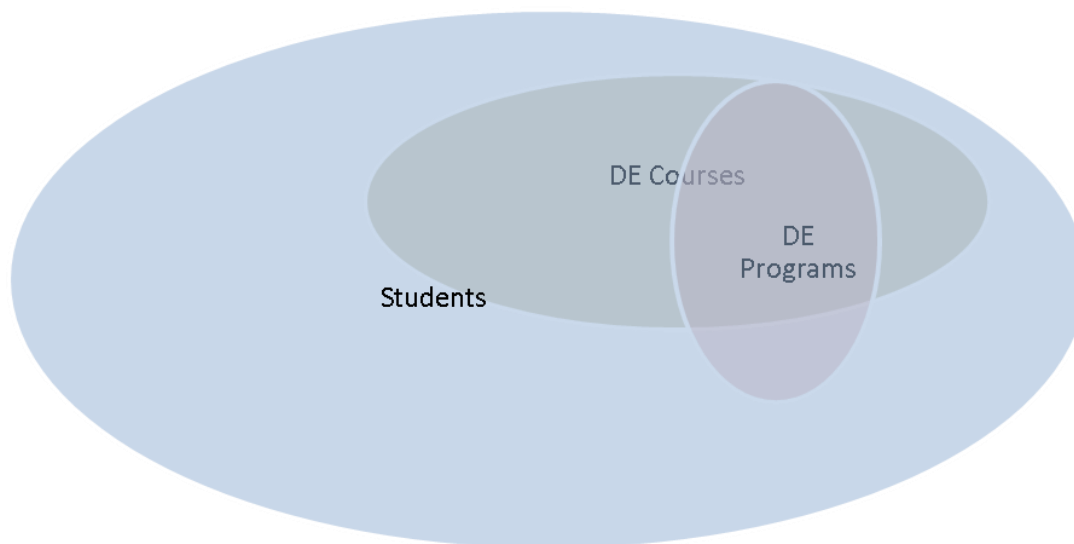
SIS Coding of Online Education Degree Programs (SIS Plans)

Whenever adding a new or reviewing an existing program plan, determine if it can be successfully completed by a student via traditional on-campus program, distance education, or either mode. If it could be either mode, then 2 separate plan codes with the different distance education indicator markers would be required. (Note: Existing and new online programs require approval from ALC, IU Board of Trustees, and ICHE).

- The SIS academic plan table (PS_ACAD_PLAN_TBL) will be modified to add one column that is two characters in length (IU_PLAN_ONL_IND) to be used as the distance education indicator.
- When new plans are added, the corresponding IU_PLAN_ONL_IND will be set to one of the following values:
 - Y** – Indicates the program is 100% distance education
 - Y8** – Indicates the program is 80-99% distance education
 - Y5** – Indicates the program is 50-79% distance education
 - N** – Indicates the program is not distance education
- IU_PLAN_ONL_IND will exist in the plan table in the data warehouse and the IUIE (Student -> Student Enrollment Services -> Control Tables -> Academic Plan)
- The online indicator will be mapped to the appropriate CIP, Term, Term Snapshot, and Cohort tables
- Any new plan codes established for a distance education plan will contain the characters “DE” just before the degree level indication (“BS”, “CRT”, “MSED”, etc.) to assist academic units and support staff with the placement of students into online vs. on-campus plans.
- This process will be used to count the number of students enrolled in online education plans for a particular term

Guidance for Reporting on Distance Education at Indiana University

A fully mature information system using the coding policies and processes outlined in this document will allow for the calculation of a variety of metrics related to distance education. Unfortunately, clear definitions of courses and programs still leave some confusion as to exactly how to count distance education students. This confusion is due to the fact that students enrolled in on-campus programs sometimes take online courses, and students enrolled in online programs may take on-campus courses (as demonstrated in the graphic below).



In order to eliminate any confusion, the questions below will be answered by all Indiana University offices using the logic given following each question.

How many distance education classes are offered?

A count of classes where Mode of Instruction = OA, OI, HD, DO, or CT

How many students are enrolled in distance education classes?

A count of students enrolled in classes where Mode of Instruction = OA, OI, HD, DO, or CT

How many online classes are being offered?

A count of classes where Mode of Instruction = OA or OI

How many students are enrolled in online classes?

A count of students enrolled in classes where Mode of Instruction = OA or OI

How many correspondence classes are being offered?

A count of classes where Mode of Instruction = OC

How many distance education programs are available from IU?

A count of academic plans (grouped by plan description) where IU_PLAN_ONL_IND = Y, Y8, or Y5

How many students are enrolled in distance education programs?

A count of students in academic plans (grouped by plan description) where IU_PLAN_ONL_IND = Y, Y8, or Y5

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