

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Distance education occurs when instructional content is delivered exclusively via technologies such as the Internet to communicate with students in real time (synchronously) or asynchronously.

Synchronous interactions may take place using live chat sessions and videoconferencing while asynchronous communications may involve E-mail, discussion boards, and feedback on submissions.

Distance delivered programs are those in which 50% or more of the required courses for the degree are available to be taken as distance delivered courses. Distance delivered courses are those in which 75% or more of instruction and interaction occurs via electronic communication, correspondence, or equivalent mechanisms. Distance education courses are instructor-led requiring frequent and effective instructor-student contact, facilitation and feedback.

Online courses are the same quality and meet the same learning outcomes as face-to-face courses. This may provide increased flexibility and independence for students, but it also means that online students must learn to manage their time well, balance competing demands, and have sufficient technological skills and resources to ensure their success in this learning environment. Successful online students are self-directed, motivated, and comfortable working with technology.

State Authorization for Distance Education

University of Providence is authorized to conduct educational activities within the State of Montana. Thus, students living in Montana while enrolled in a major offered online and students living in Montana or commuting to Montana while engaged in on campus courses are not impacted in any way by state authorization requirements. Additionally, students who are engaged in international experiences are not impacted by state authorization.

SARA (State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement) is an agreement among member states that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. SARA pertains to approval of distance education courses and programs offered across state lines by institutions that already have degree authorization in at least one state. Montana is part of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) regional compact. Institutions within in a SARA state with state authorization in its own state can also offer distance education courses and/or programs to any other SARA state member.