Discussion Facilitation Guide

Distance Education Program Effectiveness: *Sources of Data*

This guide supports program leaders (e.g., Program Coordinators, Chairs, College DE Liaisons) in preparing for and facilitating a team discussion about Distance Education Program Effectiveness. The goal is to determine what data that will be collected and how, which traditional offerings can serve as comparison points, and how the eventual results might inform improvements to the student experience in the DE program. The outcome of the discussion should directly inform what is documented in the *Distance Education Program Effectiveness* form, which is submitted in [HelioCampus](#) each Spring semester.

Who to Invite

To ensure a well-rounded and informed discussion, we recommend inviting individuals who bring curricular, instructional, and operational insight into the DE program. The goal is to have the right perspectives to shape the plan, without overloading the meeting with too many attendees.

Essential Participants

- **Program Coordinator(s)** – This includes the person responsible for completing the *Distance Education Program Effectiveness Effectiveness* form in HelioCampus.
- **Faculty teaching in the DE program**
- **Academic advisor(s) or staff**

Highly Recommended

- **College DE Liaison** – May be able to provide insight on reporting expectations, trends, and potential comparators in the college.
- **Department Head or Associate Head** – To ensure DE strategies align with overarching departmental priorities and resource planning.

Optional, Depending on Context

- **Instructional designers/online learning support staff**
- **Data analysts or assessment support staff**
- **Faculty from clearly aligned comparator programs or courses** – In cases where a comparator is already well-defined, their input may help clarify alignment, confirm available data, or support the comparison process

Before the Meeting

The list below includes items that can help support a productive discussion. Not all of these need to be prepared or distributed in advance—some may simply be useful to review or discuss during the meeting.

● The [Distance Education Program Effectiveness Reporting Guidelines](#).
● Previous *Distance Education Program Effectiveness* and *Academic Program Assessment* reports submitted in HelioCampus.
● Program learning outcomes and/or key course learning outcomes.
● Recent student experience data (e.g., retention/graduation rates, satisfaction surveys, SCEs, advising usage).

Meeting Goals

By the end of this meeting, the team should:

● Identify at least one student learning outcome and how it will be measured in the DE format. (This might mirror what is submitted in the *Academic Program Assessment* plan).
● Identify at least one student experience metric to assess the DE student experience.
● Identify a traditional comparator for each data source.
● Discuss how future results might be revisited and used to guide meaningful improvements to the student experience.
● Identify areas for data collection, who will be involved in the data collection, and any outside support that may be needed.

Questions for Discussion

Clarify the Program & Context

● What makes this DE program unique compared to similar/comparable traditional programs (i.e., student demographics, requirements for completion, etc.)?
● What recent trends might be helpful to consider, or what have we noticed is currently impacting the student experience in our program?
● Is there anything we want to know more about based on these observed trends?

Identify Sources of Data

1. Learning Outcomes

   DE programs must identify <u>at least one</u> learning outcome and how it will be directly measured..

   - Which program learning outcomes are already planned for assessment in the upcoming year as part of the *Academic Program Assessment* plan?
   - Are there learning outcomes that might be influenced in unique ways by the DE delivery format and are therefore worth closer attention?
   - Are there key courses in the DE program where student learning could be meaningfully assessed?
   - What direct assessment methods (e.g., rubric, portfolio, exam) are already in use, or could be adapted?
   - How feasible is it to collect and disaggregate data for DE students separately from traditional students? Who will be responsible for this?
   - Based on this discussion, which outcome(s) and measure(s) will give us the clearest insight into student learning in the DE modality?

2. Student Experience:

   DE programs must identify at least one metric related to the student experience. Examples are available [here](#), but programs are encouraged to select metrics that are most relevant to their specific context and goals.

   - What aspects of the DE experience are most important (or potentially most challenging) for our students?
   - What student experience data are we already collecting (e.g., surveys, course evaluations, resource usage) that might be useful for this purpose?
   - Are there additional data points we could request or gain access to, either from institutional surveys or internal systems?
   - Which data sources can be disaggregated by modality (DE vs. traditional), or could be adapted to allow for that?
   - Based on this discussion, what data source will give us the most useful insight into the DE student experience?

Identify Comparator(s)

Choosing an appropriate traditional (FTF) comparator helps ensure that DE findings are meaningfully contextualized. Use the questions below to explore which traditional programs, courses, or student groups make the most sense to compare against each of your data sources.

- Should comparators be selected based on similar course content, format, or student demographics—or a combination of those factors?
- *For the **learning outcome** data:* Which traditional program or course(s) provides the most meaningful comparison (e.g.,similar curriculum, structure, or credential level)?
- *For the **student experience** data:* Which group of FTF students has a comparable context or set of support structures?
- Does it make sense to use the same comparator for both learning and experience data, or should we use different ones for each?

Looking Ahead: Anticipated Use of Results

While no decisions need to be made yet, it's helpful to reflect on how the data collected might inform future improvements. Use the prompts below to guide a brief discussion about possible uses of findings once available:

- Once we have this data, how might we use it to improve the DE program?
- What would a successful or equitable outcome look like for DE students in this context?
- Are there any changes or improvements we're already considering that this data could help support or validate?
- How do we plan to revisit the findings in the fall and determine next steps?

Notes Template

Use this section to summarize decisions and capture action items from your meeting:

Item	Notes / Decisions
Learning Outcome & Measure	
Student Experience Data	
Comparator(s) Chosen	
Planned Use of Results	
Data Collection Needs	
Support/Next Steps	