



Abstract Request for Institutional Change

Submitted to the Higher Learning Commission of the
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

Description of the Change

Northern Arizona University is seeking Commission approval to offer unlimited on-line programs in keeping with our mission, on-campus academic programs, and resources.

The University presently offers 29 undergraduate and graduate degree programs, certificates, and endorsements on-line.

Anticipated Outcomes of the Institutional Change

The University seeks to expand and improve student learning through distance degree and certificate programs delivered on-line in a virtual, learner-centered community.

Through the design and delivery process, the University has enabled greater engagement of core faculty in distance programs and of students with a community of learners.

Northern Arizona University also seeks to increase the ability of the institution to develop programs that respond to needs of learners, employers, communities, and other stakeholders regardless of location.

Plans to Implement, Sustain and Evaluate the Proposed Change

The University has robust systems in place to ensure and support assessment of student learning in all degree programs and general education. These systems are buttressed by two key policies that require assessment of student learning in degree programs: Assessment of Student Learning and Academic Program Review. On-line degree programs are guided by the same policies promoting assessment of student learning.

With its strong infrastructure and growing faculty expertise, Northern Arizona University is poised to be increasingly successful in the assessment of student learning in on-line degree programs. One critical resource for further progress in this area is the Center for Research, Development and Assessment of Learning in Electronic Environments (CRADLEE).

Uniform policies govern the development of on-line and traditional curricula. NAU's full-time faculty, with support from department chairs, college deans and administrative staff, have responsibility for design and oversight of all on-line courses and programs.

Once a new program is approved, the responsibility for the implementation and oversight of the program resides in the academic unit. All decisions regarding curriculum, staffing and students are made by faculty in academic programs.

The process for web course development links faculty with a team of consultants and an instructional designer.

CRADLEE also supports research and development projects to promote improvements in instructional design, innovative use of technology to enhance student learning, and stronger assessment of student learning in electronically delivered courses and programs.

Assessment of student learning in electronically delivered programs is guided by uniform University policies and systems to ensure assessment of student learning informs improvements in instructional practices and curricular design.

There are 30 offices that provide a full range of academic and student support services to on-line students.

For students who cannot or choose not to come to one of our offices, complete academic and student support services are available through the Extended Programs/Distance Learning Service Center. Students may access the service center via Web, e-mail, telephone, and instant messaging.

Academic support services are available on-line, including tutoring, tutorials, and career planning.

Future development of on-line academic programs will continue at a pace determined by the assessment of student needs and potential demand.

Evidence obtained through various assessments of student learning and success will provide guidance for the improvement of on-line programs. Evaluation of on-line academic programs at Northern Arizona University is guided by the *Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs*, as referenced throughout the Request for Institutional Change.