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International Distance Education
Certification Center

Synchronous
Distance Education Certification
Program Overview, Policies and Procedures

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ARELLO® Distance Education Certification Program Overview

ARELLO® certifies course design and delivery systems of distance education courses. Content review is the responsibility of individual jurisdictions.

I. Objectives of the Distance Education Certification Program

- To foster excellence in professional education by developing standards and guidelines for the evaluation of design and delivery of distance education courses, while recognizing and respecting the diversity of courses.

- To promote educational and ethical standards of professional education.

- To provide assurance that professional distance education meets established standards of acceptable quality.

- To provide guidance to providers in the continued improvement of distance education offerings.

- To ensure that the certification process evaluates the presence of essential resources and processes of providers relative to program goals and objectives.

- To encourage providers to view self-study and evaluations as a continuous obligation for improvement.

- To provide feedback that will stimulate improvement of educational offerings.

- To ensure that the evaluation, policy and decision-making processes undertaken by the certification program reflect the interests of program stakeholders.

II. Requirements for providers seeking certification

Providers applying for Distance Education Course Certification must demonstrate that they satisfy each of the following general requirements:
  A. Providers must have a stated mission and objectives that are appropriate to professional education.
  B. Each learner, potential learner, or other interested person is provided an accurate and complete description of courses offered.
  C. Providers do not discriminate with respect to age, sex, ethnic background, color, creed, or disability.
  D. Providers demonstrate they have adequate resources to develop and provide ongoing support of the course and learners.

III. Applying for certification

Course Certification
The provider must submit the appropriate application and any necessary documentation for the review. The application serves as a self-evaluation of the distance education practice of the provider and can be found on the ARELLO® Distance Education Certification Program webpage.

A <u>primary provider</u> is a course developer who has a proprietary interest in the product. Only primary providers offer synchronous distance education courses.

A <u>secondary provider</u> obtains a course from a primary provider. There are no secondary providers who offer synchronous distance education courses.

Types of Course Certification
<u>Initial Certification</u> – certification granted for the first course in a delivery method. Each new delivery method is considered an initial certification application.

<u>Subsequent Course Certification</u> – certification granted for a new course in a delivery method that has been previously certified.

<u>Recertification</u> – renewal of a certified course every three (3) years with no substantive changes.

<u>Substantive Changes</u> – substantive changes require submission of a new application.

Review of Courses
ARELLO® Headquarters will perform course design and delivery reviews for synchronous distance education courses and will also review all distance education courses submitted for recertification.

Confidentiality During Review
During the review of an applicant's submission, access to the application and any supporting documentation submitted is restricted to ARELLO® personnel involved in the certification process. ARELLO® personnel shall take appropriate steps to protect the intellectual property, copyrights and trademarks of applicants. Once an applicant's submission is approved and certification has been communicated to the applicant, the applicant's identity will become public record. The application package then may be shared, upon request with ARELLO® regulatory members. The applicant will be notified when the application package has been provided to a regulatory member.

Compliance After Certification

Throughout the certification, courses must be maintained in compliance with the ARELLO® Distance Education Standards. ARELLO® may audit courses for compliance throughout the certification period. Certification may be suspended or revoked for noncompliance.

Fees for Three-Year Certification
All fees must be paid directly to ARELLO®. Course reviews will not start until the appropriate fee has been paid.

The current fee structure for Primary and Secondary providers for asynchronous and synchronous submissions can be found on the ARELLO website's Distance Education section on the How to Certify page. If you have questions on the fee structure please contact ARELLO.

Other Fees
Supplemental ARELLO® Certification - $160.00 per course

When applying for certification, a provider has a choice of ARELLO® or IDECC® Certification. The supplemental certification option allows the provider the option to have both the ARELLO® Certification Certificate and the IDECC® Certificate available.

Synchronous Distance Education Policies and Procedures

ARELLO® Distance Education Standards are applicable for a variety of delivery methods and education models that utilize any number of different technologies. This policy document has been created to provide additional specificity to the ARELLO® Distance Education Standards and pertains to the design and delivery of synchronous distance education courses. ARELLO® uses these policies with the Standards to measure the quality of courses submitted for certification. All providers are required to meet the minimum requirement for each policy.

Failure to comply with the responsibilities listed in this document shall be grounds for suspension or withdrawal of its grant of certification from ARELLO®. The sanctions against certified courses by ARELLO® are appealable under the procedures set forth in this document.

Application Policies and Procedures

Policy 1: The appropriate application must be submitted.

Procedure 1a: An application is required with each submission, both certification and recertification. Each course is reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the ARELLO® Distance Education Standards.

Procedure 1b: Once a provider has completed the application, a submission can be made online through the Course Management System. To obtain a provider profile within our program, please contact the ARELLO® Director of Distance Education.

Procedure 1c: Once the appropriate application, any other documentation, and payment have been received, the course is assigned to a reviewer who may contact the provider via the Course Management System for additional information as deemed necessary to complete the objective evaluation. The length of this review process is variable based on the course submitted.

Procedure 1d: The provider must provide access to all course information and documentation including a timed outline and narrative, PowerPoint slides, planned activities, etc. The review will not begin until all information has been received.

Procedure 1e: Application fees are non-refundable.

Procedure 1f: A provider who submits an incomplete application will have thirty (30) days to comply with ARELLO® application requirements. If a provider fails to submit a complete application, the application will be cancelled and fees forfeited.

Policy 2: ARELLO® may deny certification of any course submitted by a provider.

Procedure 2a: ARELLO® may deny certification to any course that does not meet the ARELLO® Standards based on the review.

Procedure 2b: During the course review, the ARELLO® Reviewer may cite deficiencies in the submission for certification. The provider will have forty-five (45) days to remedy the deficiencies cited by the reviewer. If the provider has not responded within that timeframe, the application will be deemed abandoned and fees forfeited. After the provider has notified ARELLO® that the deficiencies have been remedied, the course will undergo a final review. If the course does not meet the Standards at that time, the course will be denied. If the course is submitted again in a new submission, ARELLO® shall assign the course to a different reviewer.

Procedure 2c: To help ensure public protection against course providers that may operate unethically, ARELLO® may deny certification of any course submitted by a provider whose owners and/or instructors have a documentable record of breaching public trust. Breaching public trust may include, but is not limited to, felony convictions and/or disciplinary action on a jurisdictional license. ARELLO® reserves the right to perform limited background checks on those owners or instructors associated with certified courses. Organizations denied certification on this basis may appeal using the procedures described in these polices. Course content is expected to be original or appropriately referenced. Courses containing plagiarized content will not be approved.

Policy 3: Certification is granted when a submission is in compliance with the ARELLO® Standards.

Procedure 3a: The provider will be promptly notified through the Course Management System when the course has been certified.

Procedure 3b: A summary certificate listing a description of the course will be published online as proof of certification on the ARELLO® and/or IDECC website. Certificates are available for download in the Course Management System immediately and can be found in the provider profile under "Manage Certified Courses."

Synchronous Course Design Policies and Procedures

Policy 4: Distance education courses are required to have a learner orientation and support services.

Procedure 4a: The orientation must be provided prior to the learner beginning the course. Learners are required to receive a syllabus and/or learner manual to ensure they have all expectations, requirements, policies, and directions provided to them at registration and/or sent no later than the day preceding the course start date.

Procedure 4b: Items in the orientation should include but are not limited to:

- criteria for successful completion of the course;
- exam information;
- equipment and system requirements including a testing and confirmation of access to a reliable internet connection and a computer with functioning video camera and audio;
- technical support availability and contact information if issues arise;
- contingency plan regarding technical issues;
- how credit will be reported to regulatory agencies, if applicable;
- code of conduct for the course provider and students describing accountability for all which must include the following:
    - Students must use video and be present on the camera at all times without the use of still pictures or icons
    - Students must be present the entire course with the only exception being a temporary loss of connection up to 15 concurrent minutes each contact hour
    - Students must behave appropriately and pay attention as if they were sitting in a classroom
    - Students cannot be participating in other activities such as driving, phone calls, office paperwork, conversations with people who are not involved in the course, or anything else unrelated to the course
    - Students must not participate in general or personal comments using the course's chat tool
- links to the school's policies on cheating or misrepresenting learner identity; and
- any other relevant state or jurisdiction specific requirements.

Procedure 4c: Learners must have adequate access to the range of services necessary to support their learning.

Policy 5: Distance education courses are required to have learning objectives.

Procedure 5a: The learning objectives must describe the expected outcomes of the learning process and how well the learners are expected to master the content at the intended level.

Procedure 5b: Learning objectives must follow Mastery Based learning principles and must be written in performance terms utilizing Bloom's Taxonomy.

Policy 6: All courses submitted for Certification are required to have quantifiable evidence of clock hour request.

Procedure 6a: Providers are required to submit written documentation of timing justification. A written rationale for why the amount of content in the course justifies the amount of time requested is required.

Procedure 6b: A course must be offered for the time which is certified by ARELLO.

Procedure 6c: A detailed timed outline must be submitted for approval and certification. When courses are offered, the amount of time must be documented using start time and end time for all course offerings.

Procedure 6d: ARELLO® will only certify courses for a fixed number of clock hours. No variation or range of the clock hours shall be approved.

Procedure 6e: Time studies are not required for courses taught completely by synchronous delivery; however, providers will still be required to submit written documentation of timing justification.

Procedure 6f: ARELLO® recognizes an instructional hour as 50 minutes.

Policy 7: All courses submitted for Certification are required to have a time tracking system.

Procedure 7a: Providers will be required to show evidence of start and end times for all course offerings. Evidence can include screen captures, time logs, chat logs, documentation from a moderator, etc.

Policy 8: Distance education courses are required to have interactivity.

Procedure 8a: Interactivity is a critical part of the learning process for distance education. ARELLO® requires that all courses have learning strategies that provide interactivity throughout the course.

Procedure 8b: ARELLO® requires evidence of proper interactivity which can include, but not be limited to, supplemental reference material, exercises, quizzes, polling questions, chat box, breakout groups, and final exams. Providers must ensure that each learner has participated in interactions in order to receive course credit.

Procedure 8c: For every credit hour of course content, there must be evidence of at least one activity.

Policy 9: Distance education courses are required to have evaluations of the learning experience.

Procedure 9a: All courses certified through ARELLO® are required to have an evaluation of the learning experience. The evaluation must assess the effectiveness of the instructor, course delivery, and course content. This important feedback tool allows the provider to continue their commitment to providing quality distance education.

Procedure 9b: Tabulation of the responses to each question presented in the evaluation is required for recertification of the course. All comments must be provided.

Policy 10: All courses submitted for certification are required to have a qualified instructor.

Procedure 10a: ARELLO® certified courses are required to have an instructor with a current Certified Distance Education Instructor (CDEI™) designation. ARELLO® requires a qualified instructor for every certified course.

Procedure 10b: Learners taking distance education courses require instructional support that can only be provided by a qualified course instructor. The CDEI™ instructor must possess the knowledge and experience necessary to teach the course for which they are approved.

Procedure 10c: Instructor credentials must be submitted with the application and reflect experience and expertise in the subject matter and the distance delivery. If instructors are changed or added, the credentials must be submitted and approved by ARELLO® before they can teach or instructionally support the course.

Procedure 10d: Instructor contact information is required to be provided to the learner and available throughout the course. Learners must be able to contact the instructor for any content questions.

Procedure 10e: Instructors should not allow more than 30 students unless an additional moderator is assisting with the monitoring of students. Moderators are not required to hold the CDEI.

Procedure 10f: In order to be approved as the instructor for the course, the instructor applicant must provide evidence of having been involved in the development of the course.

Policy 11: All courses are required to provide secure and accurate documentation of learner identity.

Procedure 11a: Providers must explain what methods and tools are utilized to ensure proper sufficient proof of learner identity.

Procedure 11b: Some jurisdictions may require some form of identity verification from the learner attesting to the learner's identity. Providers must maintain these verifications in compliance with the respective jurisdiction's requirements.

Certification Maintenance Policies and Procedures

Policy 12: Providers must give advance notice of substantive changes to a course.

Procedure 12a: A provider considering substantive change(s) to a course(s) should notify ARELLO® in writing of any proposed changes sixty (60) days in advance of the change.

Procedure 12b: Substantive changes are generally defined as any changes in the course that will affect the certified instructional design and/or delivery. Substantive changes may be:
- changes in course clock hours;
- major content revisions;
- new facilities or locations; or
- additions, removals or modification of course instructors.

Procedure 12c: ARELLO® may require fulfillment of certain application requirements, depending on the nature of the change(s) to the course(s).

Policy 13: Providers must file an application for a renewal of certification every three (3) years.

Procedure 13a: Prior to the expiration of certification, it is the provider's responsibility to file an application for a renewal of certification. Recertification for each course is required every three (3) years.

Procedure 13b: In order to continue to use the "ARELLO® Certified" credential for these courses, providers must successfully complete the recertification process for each course.

Procedure 13c: Application for recertification shall be submitted at least 90 days prior to the expiration of the current certification period. An application is deemed timely submitted if it is electronically submitted on or before the deadline.

Procedure 13d: If ARELLO® needs additional time to consider and take final action on the application for recertification, ARELLO® may extend the current certification period for up to 120 days.

Procedure 13e: If the application for recertification is submitted within the 90-day period of the expiration date, a late recertification fee applies. Unavoidable circumstances such as documented medical emergencies and natural disasters do not warrant a late recertification fee.

Procedure 13f: The course will not be eligible for recertification after the expiration date and must be filed as a new course.

Policy 14: Courses must be offered as they are certified.

Procedure 14a: Providers representing a course as ARELLO® certified to regulatory agencies or the public have the responsibility of only advertising and offering the course as it was certified. If minor changes are needed to maintain current course content, those changes do not require a resubmission of the course for certification. However, modifications resulting in the course being offered for additional clock hours is considered a substantive change and do require another certification since a timing analysis is required to substantiate the increased number of hours. Offering a certified course for fewer hours with no content changes does not require another review.

Procedure 14b: Providers are prohibited from manipulating the instructional design of the course and offering the course as certified without approval by ARELLO®.

Policy 15: Providers may not use the ARELLO® certification logo without current certification.

Procedure 15a: Only after ARELLO® grants certification may a provider utilize the ARELLO® certification logo and so denote its certification status. Providers may advertise certified courses as "Course Design and Delivery Certified by ARELLO®" as long as certification is current and in good standing. Courses that are advertised as ARELLO® certified must be offered as certified.

Procedure 15b: Providers advertising certified courses shall ensure that the delivery method, course titles, and clock hours advertised are consistent with what is listed on the ARELLO® certification summary certificate.

Procedure 15c: While certified, providers must use the ARELLO® certification logo or "Course Design and Delivery Certified by ARELLO®" on learners' course completion certificates.

Policy 16: Providers must notify ARELLO® of any change in provider accreditation, approval or jurisdictional licensure status.

Procedure 16a: A provider of any ARELLO® certified course must notify ARELLO® within thirty days (30) of any denial, suspension, revocation, probation, or any other final or interim adverse action affecting any accreditation status of the provider.

Procedure 16b: A provider who has been granted certification must notify ARELLO® in writing of any state agency or other regulatory body attempting to withdraw approval or licensure of the institution or any of its courses, programs or instructors.

Procedure 16c: An instructor who is convicted of or pleads guilty or nolo contendere to any crime other than a traffic violation must make written report thereof to ARELLO® within thirty (30) days after the conviction or plea.

Course Audit Policies and Procedures

Policy 17: ARELLO® is authorized to perform course audits.

Procedure 17a: ARELLO® may, on its own motion, or on behalf of a stakeholder, perform a course audit or investigate a complaint and any evidence presented in connection with the complaint.

Procedure 17b: At any point during the time a course is certified, ARELLO® may perform the following enforcement procedures for primary and/or secondary providers that include but are not limited to:
- anonymously audit courses;
- randomly check courses to ensure course design is consistent with the certification;
- request that the provider document evaluation data from learners that have completed the course;
- request that the provider verify course orientation;
- request documentation of instructor interaction with learners;
- monitor the advertising regarding certified courses; and
- other concerns brought to our attention by stakeholders of the program.

Appeal Policies and Procedures

Policy 18: Any stakeholder may appeal decisions made by ARELLO®.

Procedure 18a: Decisions made by ARELLO® that may be appealed are issuance, denial, revocation, suspension or withdrawal of certification or recertification.

Procedure 18b: Stakeholders may dispute the decision made by ARELLO® through the review appeal process.

Procedure 18c: Appealable actions are limited to four grounds as follows:
1. ARELLO® or its agents failed to consider all the evidence and documentation presented in favor of a provider's application or audit documentation.
2. ARELLO® or its agents acted erroneously by disregarding its own Standards and/or Policies and Procedures.
3. There was a bias demonstrated by ARELLO® or its agents.
4. The evidence provided to the course reviewers at the time of the decision was materially in error.

Procedure 18d: The appellant must submit a written appeal to the ARELLO® CEO no later than thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the contested decision. All documentation supporting the appeal must be submitted to the CEO.

The appeal must relate to one of the grounds cited in Procedure 22c and justification must be provided in writing.

In order to appeal, the appellant must submit:
- written appeal which states the grounds for the appeal;
- list of Distance Education Certification Standards and/or Policies and Procedures pertinent to the contested decision and subsequent appeal; and
- accompanying documentation, including any appended program responses.

ARELLO® will have full access to all other documents and records filed during the initial certification and/or recertification process. The appellant must provide any additional documents or records requested by ARELLO®.

After receiving the written appeal, the ARELLO® CEO will review the appeal and consult with the ARELLO® Distance Education Staff on the decision. The ARELLO® CEO will notify the appellant in writing of the decision of his or her action within thirty (30) days of receiving the appeal.

If the appellant wishes to appeal the decision of the CEO, they may do so by making their final appeal in writing to the ARELLO® Education Certification Committee (ECC) for consideration in a

formal hearing. The ECC is the governing body over the ARELLO® Distance Education Certification Program. The ECC may appoint a subcommittee to review the appeal.

Appeals are administrative, non-judicial, hearings.

During any hearing, the appellant and ARELLO® shall have the following rights:
- To be represented by a representative(s) of their choice
- To be present during any hearing
- To present oral testimony keeping within any established time limits
- If the appellant waives personal appearance, the matter will be heard and decided based on the evidence submitted

The ECC's deliberations following the conclusion of any hearing and its subsequent decision process will be in closed session.

All such appeals may only be heard at a scheduled meeting of the ECC. The full ECC, or subcommittee, may take one of two actions:
- Affirm the decision of the CEO
- Overturn the decision and vote for other action

In either case, the Chair of the ECC will provide reasons for its actions and notify the appellant in writing within forty-five (45) days following the meeting. If the ECC affirms the prior decision of the ARELLO® CEO, there is no further remedy available to the appellant. The decision of the ECC will be final and binding on all parties.