



***Considerations for Private Career Schools  
wishing to offer training, in whole or in part,  
via Distance Education***

The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), 13B.01.01.22-27, contains the following additional requirements that specifically address Interactive Distance Education offered by Private Career Schools. Distance Education is also addressed throughout COMAR 13B.01.01.01-21, for which distance education programs must also be in compliance. The regulatory considerations listed below are *not intended to be all-inclusive*, only to highlight often overlooked considerations when applying to offer a program in-part or in-whole via distance education. It is the responsibility of the applicant to read and understand State regulations governing private career schools (13B.01.01.01-.27), whether or not the regulations and policies are mentioned below as “considerations.”

***All applications will be reviewed based on the requirements of COMAR.***

***Real-time or delayed interaction between faculty and students (13B.01.01.22B)***

Interaction between faculty and students is a critical component of distance education. Distance education segments must include appropriate interactivity within student instruction, and schools must plan for timely accessibility of faculty by students. Programs must engage sufficient instructional materials and methods to achieve active involvement of students.

***A program developed by a team of qualified faculty, administrators, and technologists (13B.01.01.22C)***

Application materials require that the school disclose how the program was developed. This is to assure that the program was created to meet not only curriculum requirements, but technology and administrative requirements as well. Technology considerations include, but are not limited to, information exchange privacy and safety issues (13B.01.01.24F), minimum technology specifications for students as well as faculty, technology requirements of the school to meet all equipment and electronic needs including assuring smooth interactivity between students and faculty, monitoring issues, faculty support services specifically related to distance education (13B.01.01.23A), and basic online navigation of the program. Administrative requirements include, but are not limited to, admissions requirements (13B.01.01.24B) catalog and policy disclosures, enrollment contracts, payment and accounting issues, ongoing academic and attendance evaluations, and student grades and transcripts.

***Qualified faculty (13B.01.01.22D)***

Faculty qualifications differ when comparing the skills necessary to teach a resident training program to a distance education program. Distance education instructors must have appropriate technical skills as well as the academic and experiential background to teach a distance education program. Evidence of faculty qualifications must be contained in their personnel forms submitted with an application. Additionally, the school must provide training for faculty who use technology in instruction (13B.01.01.23B).

***Admissions requirements (13B.01.01.24A&B)***

Distance education admissions standards must be sufficient “so that each student admitted... may expect to be able to complete the program successfully,” as in a resident training program (13B.01.01.08A). Accepted students must have sufficient background, knowledge and technical skills to undertake a distance education program. The measurement and proof of this must be documented. It is the school’s responsibility to develop, measure and document the admissions standards for distance education programs, and include these policies in the application to MHEC.

## *Considerations for Private Career Schools wishing to offer training, in whole or in part, via Distance Education*

### Learning and Student Resources (13B.01.01.24D&E)

Schools must have the appropriate and sufficient learning resources for students who receive instruction delivered in whole or in part by distance education. Learning resources include, but are not limited to, training necessary to function in a distance education environment, support services for student technical questions, outside resources such as databases or libraries or related websites, and effective education and training services for faculty. Additionally, distance education students must have access to equivalent student services provided to resident training students, such as academic counseling, financial advising and placement assistance or information.

### Evaluation and Assessment (13B.01.01.25)

Just as with resident training programs, State regulations require frequent assessment and documentation of student academic and attendance progress. Assessments should include measurements of mastery of learning objectives as well as measuring and monitoring attendance, all of which must be in accordance with the school's approved academic and attendance policies (e.g., 80% attendance rate, graduation requirements). These evaluations and assessments should be similar or equitable to those of resident programs. Additionally, adequate provisions must be made to safeguard the security and integrity of student testing and evaluations, as well as to authenticate the student's identity. Evaluations and assessments must be documented in each student's file.

### Financial Guarantees for Distance Education (13B.01.01.26B)

By regulation, the school must secure a financial guarantee, regardless of the age of the school, sufficient to cover the 100% tuition liability of the program portions taught through distance education.

### Tuition, Fees and Refunds (13B.01.01.27)

For programs that combine resident training and distance education, tuition prices must be separately listed for the two types of instructional delivery methods, with a total tuition price also included. As with resident training requirements, fees must be itemized on the enrollment contract. Charges for the resident portion of the program cannot be assessed until the student attends the first resident class session.

Refund policy requirements for distance education programs, or portions of programs taught via distance education, vary from the current resident training refund policy requirements. For a program or portion of a program delivered by distance education, a school must, after the 7-day cancellation period has expired, offer a prorated refund based on the proportion of the program completed by the student. This is determined by the percentage of submitted lesson assignments completed by the student compared to the total number of lesson assignments in the program or portion of the program delivered by distance education. Therefore, when developing the distance education curriculum, the school must plan and implement frequent and evenly spaced lesson assignments throughout the program to assure a fair and equitable refund should the student withdraw. The school is still required to maintain documentation to verify that a refund has been made.

### Program Performance

Keep in mind that all programs must meet minimum performance standards, regardless of how they are delivered. What this means to the school is that, just like resident programs, it must track and document distance education program graduates and their related job placements (or testing results if approved to do so). Therefore, when considering whether a program should or can be offered online, the school must determine how it will be collecting the required program performance data. The consequence of a program not meeting minimum performance standards, whether taught as resident, distance education or a combination of both, is that it will be subject to having its approval revoked.