

Mississippi   
online course   
application Guide

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Mississippi online course application

**DISTRICT GUIDANCE**

# **OVERVIEW**

The Mississippi Department of Education allows for local education agencies to offer courses through distance and online learning as outlined in board policy Part 3, Chapter 56, Rule 56.1 - Distance Learning, Blended Learning, and Online Courses (Rule 56.1). In accordance with Rule 56.1, courses offered through the Mississippi Interactive Video Network (MIVN), or blended learning courses for which the local education agency provides the certified teacher, do not require additional approval.

For an online course to be approved for use under paragraph 2 of Rule 56.1, local school districts must submit an application to the Mississippi Department of Education for approval to ensure the vendor/provider’s content, curriculum, and assessments are aligned to Mississippi’s course standards.

Districts will submit a **Mississippi Online Course Application (MOCA)** that includes a review of proposed distance and online courses. The evaluation rubric is derived from the Southern Regional Education Board’s (SREB) *Checklist for Evaluating Online Courses* and the International Association for K-12 Online Learning’s (iNOCAL) *National Standards for Quality Online Courses*.

# **APPLICATION PROCESS**

School districts must complete an initial review of courses being proposed for use as distance and online courses. A district may work with other districts to submit a MOCA when multiple districts plan to offer courses provided by the same vendor.

A district online course review team must be comprised of a minimum of three (3) reviewers, to include at least two (2) content specialists (classroom teachers, curriculum specialists) and one (1) technology specialist to complete the review.

The MOCA shall include three (3) components: (1) the Application Cover and Signed Assurances, (2) the Online Course Review Rubric, and (3) the Online Course Alignment Crosswalk.

Completed MOCAs will be submitted electronically for final review and approval by the Mississippi Department of Education. The completed application, including the three required files, must be submitted via a single email to [onlinecourses@mdek12.org](mailto:onlinecourses@mdek12.org).

Once a course has been reviewed it will receive one of three statuses: Denied, Approved, and Conditional Approval. If a course is denied, the rubric with comments will be sent back to the school district to be used for future applications. Conditionally approved courses will require the district to work with the MDE reviewer to make required changes prior to final approval. Approved courses will be added to a master list of approved online courses for use by all school districts for a period of 5 years, or until the curriculum framework is revised, if sooner than 5 years.

# **APPLICATION COMPONENTS**

1. **APPLICATION COVER AND SIGNED ASSURANCES**

The Application Cover and Signed Assurances must be signed by the district superintendent, a district representative, and the district school board chairperson.

1. **ONLINE COURSE REVIEW RUBRIC** The district online review team will collectively complete and submit one (1) rubric for every course being proposed for use as a distance or online course. The review rubric is comprised of five sections described below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section A** | The course provides online learners with multiple ways of engaging with learning experiences that promote their mastery of content and are aligned with Mississippi content standards. |
| Content |
| **Section B** | The course uses learning activities that engage students in active learning; provides students with multiple learning paths to master; the content is based on student needs; and provides ample opportunities for interaction and communication — student to student, student to instructor and instructor to student. |
| Instructional Design |
| **Section C** | The course uses multiple strategies and activities to assess student readiness for and progress in course content and provides students with feedback on their progress. |
| Student Assessment |
| **Section D** | The course takes full advantage of a variety of technology tools, has a user-friendly interface and meets accessibility standards for interoperability and access for learners with special needs. |
| Technology |
| **Section E** | The course is evaluated regularly for effectiveness, using a variety of assessment strategies, and the findings are used as a basis for improvement. The course is kept up to date, both in content and in the application of new research on course design and technologies. Online instructors and their students are prepared to teach and learn in an online environment and are provided support during the course |
| Course Evaluation and Support |

1. **COURSE ALIGNMENT CROSSWALK** The crosswalk will be completed by one (1) of the content specialists on the district online review team using the template provided by the Mississippi Department of Education [see page 33 for the MOCA alignment crosswalk]. One (1) crosswalk must be submitted for each course being proposed for use as a distance or online course. **The district must provide a URL for each course being submitted for review, as well as a username and password, if applicable, in order for the Mississippi Department of Education review team(s) to access the online course to review content contained in the course crosswalk and confirm alignment.**

# **RESPONSIBILITIES**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MDE** | * Provide guidance on approval process * Review district applications within established timeline * Establish course codes for approved online courses |
|  |
| **DISTRICT** | * Maintain documentation of agreement between district and vendor * Submit Mississippi Online Course Application * Determine course funding structure * Establish rules, regulations, and processes for online courses * Adopt board policy that includes, at a minimum, the requirements of Rule 56.1 (3)(a) i-x * Develop a student handbook that includes, at a minimum, the requirements of Rule 56.1 (3)(b) i-vi |
|  |
| **SCHOOL** | * Abide by all district policies concerning online learning * Ensure rules, regulations, and processes are available to faculty, students, and parents/guardians * Establish an application process requiring parental consent and principal’s prior approval for course enrollment |
|  |
| **VENDOR** | * Provide proof of teacher licensure to district * Provide proof of teacher background check to district * Deliver course content and assessments aligned to competencies, objectives, and standards of respective Mississippi courses |
|  |

# **RULE 56.1**

**Part 3 Chapter 56:  Distance Learning, Blended Learning, and Online Courses**

*Rule 56.1 Distance Learning, Blended Learning, and Online Courses.* The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) regarding the use of distance learning, blended learning, and online courses through the **Mississippi Virtual Public School (MVPS)**, the **Mississippi Interactive Video Network (MIVN)**, courses approved through the **Mississippi Online Course Application (MOCA)** process, and other distance learning/online course providers not already approved by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). The MDE does not accredit online programs or schools, but rather approves individual online courses for use in Mississippi schools.

For the purposes of this policy, **distance learning** is defined as a technological delivery model in which regularly scheduled real-time instruction occurs during the school day where students and instructors are not in the same place and in which a Mississippi-certified teacher is responsible for providing instruction. **Blended learning** is defined as a hybrid instructional delivery model where pupils are provided face-to-face instruction in part at a supervised school facility away from home and in part in a computer-based, internet-connected learning environment with some degree of pupil control over time, location, and pace of instruction and in which a Mississippi-certified teacher is responsible for providing instruction. An **online course** is defined as a course delivered through an interactive computer-based and internet-connected learning environment in which students are separated from their teachers by time or location or both and in which a Mississippi-certified teacher is responsible for providing instruction. These courses must be approved through the MOCA process.

1. The **Mississippi Interactive Video Network (MIVN)** is a distance learning system that has been approved by the MDE. This system links certified teachers in one school with classes of students in other schools or districts as a means of delivering real-time instruction. These courses are listed in the *Approved Courses for the Secondary Schools of Mississippi*.

2. For **blended learning** courses in which an LEA provides a face-to-face Mississippi certified teacher, no prior approval from the MDE is required. For online programs or computer-assisted instruction in which an LEA is using for the sole purpose of credit recovery, no prior approval from the MDE is required. For **online dual enrollment** courses through a Mississippi Community College or Institution of Higher Learning, no prior approval from the MDE is required.

3. For **all online courses other than the delivery methods listed in Sections 1 and 2 above**, courses must go through the MOCA process for approval. LEAs must submit an application to the MDE for approval to ensure that the vendor/provider’s content, curriculum, and assessments are aligned to Mississippi’s course standards. LEAs are responsible for determining course funding structure, except for courses funded through MVPS appropriation. MVPS courses must be free to students in accordance with *Miss. Code Ann. § 37-161-3*. To count as a credit toward graduation, course codes must be listed in the *Approved Courses for the Secondary Schools of Mississippi.* Additionally, online courses can only be listed upon MOCA approval. There is no limit to the number of courses a student may take. Enrollment in such courses must have prior approval by the principal.

4. Any LEA that provides a **distance learning/online program other than the delivery methods listed in Sections 1 and 2 above** shall develop and implement a distance and online course policy and handbook guidance that has been adopted by the local school board and that includes the rules, regulations, and processes for online courses. The rules, regulations, and processes shall be available to faculty, students, and parents/guardians.

a. At a minimum, LEAs must ensure the following through local board policy:

i. Teachers are licensed by the Mississippi Department of Education to teach the respective course;

ii. Background checks are conducted for the teachers;

iii. The content, curriculum, and assessments for each course are aligned to the competencies, objectives, and standards of the respective Mississippi course;

iv. Appropriate course codes are used;

v. A facilitator is assigned to assist students;

vi. Students have access to the technology needed for courses;

vii. Students have all instructional materials needed for courses;

viii. The district grading policy is followed;

ix. Students enrolled in the courses take the required state assessments where applicable; and

x. Documentation is maintained on file at the central office.

b. At a minimum, the LEA student handbook shall include the following:

i. The process for notifying parents about the program;

ii. Minimum criteria to determine eligibility for participation;

iii. The number of distance learning/online courses that students can take at one time;

iv. If the distance learning/online course program can be used for credit recovery and/or remediation;

v. The courses by grade level and content area for the distance learning/online program; and

vi. The process for monitoring student progress and notifying parents of student progress during the course.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 37-1-3 and § 37-161-3 (Adopted 10/2006, Revised 6/2018)