

SACS on the Library and Distance Education

Source: PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION: FOUNDATIONS FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT (2008 Interim Edition)

3.8 Library and Other Learning Resources

- 3.8.1** The institution provides facilities and learning/information resources that are appropriate to support its teaching, research, and service mission.
(Learning/information resources)
- 3.8.2** The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources.
(Instruction of library use)
- 3.8.3** The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution.
(Qualified staff)
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Source: Best Practices For Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs

4. Student Support

4c includes:

- ❖ Library resources appropriate to the program, including, reference and research assistance; remote access to data bases, online journals and full-text resources; document delivery services; library user and information literacy instruction, reserve materials; and institutional agreements with local libraries.
 - ❖ Training in information literacy including research techniques.
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Source: Distance Education Policy Statement

Library and Learning Resources

Students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources. (CS 3.8.2 and CR 2.9)

Course requirements ensure that students make appropriate use of learning resources. (CS 3.8.2)

Access is provided to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs. (CS 3.8.1 and CS 3.8.2)

Summary: You might notice a theme here: even distance learning students need not just library resources, but instruction in accessing them.

Why library instruction in this “information age?”

Students need to be able to critically evaluate and select:

- **Resources:** online catalog, databases, *and* Internet in order to discover the information that best meets their need. Students must learn to:
 - analyze their information needs and identify the appropriate resources to resolve those needs.
 - *effectively and efficiently* utilize the resource. (a search yielding millions of “hits” isn’t effective or efficient)
 - identify and acquire relevant information sources. It’s not enough to know that information exists. It must be accessed and “ingested.”
- **Sources:** books, articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers, and Internet resources
 - Students need to be able to seek and find bias, and take it into account in their research.
 - Students need to “consider the source” of the work, asking: who paid for it? why? what are they “selling?” – and take these factors into account.
 - Items need to be evaluated for credibility, authority, accuracy, objectivity.

In the end, students need to synthesize the information they “ingest” and create new information. In doing so, they need to be sure to analyze where their ideas originate and cite them appropriately.

Services your library might provide for Distance Education students

- Delivery of electronic and print books, articles and media
- Virtual reference services
- Designated Distance Education librarian
- Librarians “embedded” by teaching faculty within course management system to provide instruction, guidance and services to students.
- Virtual office hours
- Handouts, research guides, title lists available on the library website or within course management system
- Tutorials designed with your institution’s students and curricular needs in mind

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