Purpose
The purpose of REACH Distance Learning (REACH) Handbook for The University of Texas Permian Basin (University) is to define and to describe academic support services and processes that involve instruction classified as distance education. The DL Handbook assures that the planning, development, and implementation of distance learning activities are in accordance with the mission of the University. The main goal is to utilize distance learning to provide effective instruction to traditional and non-traditional students. The University is committed to providing all distance students quality instruction, access to academic resources, and all other support services regardless of location.

Distance education is a formal educational delivery method in which the majority (more than 50 percent) of instruction occurs where students and instructors are not in the same physical location. Instruction may be synchronous (live) or asynchronous (not simultaneous). Instructor and students interact on a frequent basis about course content, discussions, projects, assessments, and feedback. For credit online courses are not self-paced courses. Various media are used such as e-mail, web conferencing, discussion forums, video, chat, instant messages, and other forms of computer-based/mobile device activities. (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board -THECB, Rule §4.257).

Principles of Good Practice
All distance learning courses and degree programs are conducted in accordance with the University's established policies and procedures as outlined in the current editions of the UT Permian Basin Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. REACH follows the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs, the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education, the Southern Regional Education's Board's "Standards for Quality Online Teaching", and all standards set forth by the discipline-specific accrediting bodies that accredit our degree programs. REACH performs quality reviews based on Quality Matters (QM) Higher Education Standards and Online Learning Consortium Quality Scorecard.

Organizational Structure
The Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs supervises REACH mission and personnel. REACH aligns policies and procedures established in the by UT Permian Basin’s Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and those of accrediting, certifying, and sanctioning bodies, to ensure that online courses and programs are developed and offered in a manner that satisfies the relevant standards.

Review of Policy and Compliance
The responsibility for evaluating and revising distance learning processes and procedures is that of the Office of the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Distance Education (DE) Committee is composed of faculty from active online programs at the University. The UT Permian Basin president assigns committee members annually. The DE Committee regularly reviews UT Permian Basin distance education policy and may make recommendations for change as needed.

Key Definitions
Accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, interact, and contribute in a course. In a distance learning course, accessibility is determined by the features of the
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instructional technologies provided by the University and how faculty members use those technologies to create materials and design courses.

Asynchronous activities do not occur at the same time. Tools such as e-mail and discussion boards, allow participants to communicate without having to be online at the same time.

Synchronous activities do occur at the same time. Synchronous tools (e.g. text chat, audio chat, video chat, or Web conferencing) require all participants to be online at the same time.

Class Attendance occurs by the active participation of the students through the completion of class activities. Examples include submitting an assignment, completing an exam, attending an online chat, or posting to a discussion forum. Simply logging into the course within the learning management system is not attendance.

Learning Management System (LMS) is a web-accessible software application that provides for the administration and management of course content, delivery of assessments, communication and collaboration between students and instructors, and the ability to track grades and other relevant performance data. UT Permian Basin is currently using Canvas by Instructure.

Online students use a computer/mobile device and the Internet to access course materials, including the use of e-mail, discussions, simulations, multimedia, chat rooms, and more.

Delivery Mode is the primary method or technology used to deliver instructional information to the student and used for communication between the instructor and the students.

Methods of course delivery at the University include:

Traditional courses are taught primarily face-to-face and scheduled for specific days/times at particular locations.

LMS Enhanced are traditional courses taught in a face-to-face classroom setting. The syllabus and other materials are posted online, and students may be asked to submit some work electronically. There is only a minimal amount of online activities. The class meets primarily in the traditional classroom all semester. Face-to-face instructors should exercise caution to insure that the LMS enhanced course is not a substitution for traditional classroom meetings.

Blended/Hybrid courses combine the best of traditional classroom instruction and online activities via the LMS. Students meet face-to-face for at least 51% but not more than 85% of the planned instruction when the students and instructor(s) are not in the same place. (THECB 4.257.8B) These courses allow faculty and students the opportunity to build strong personal relationships through face-to-face interaction and to explore new types of learning activities not possible in traditional classes. Online synchronous activities are published in the instructor's weekly course schedule. Hybrid courses are scheduled in classrooms on specific days at specific times and use specific section numbers for identification such as 800 series, for example, 801, 851, 820, etc. Dates and times are required on the schedule for students to see during enrollment.

Online courses are taught 86-100% online using a combination of asynchronous and synchronous activities, which offers greater flexibility in scheduling and convenience of access to students. This method allows the students to accomplish the same learning outcomes and to experience the same level of rigor achieved in traditional courses. Dates and times for required online synchronous activities are published in the instructor's weekly course schedule. Online courses are identified on the schedule with location as online and use specific section numbers in the
700s, for example, 701, 720, 783, and 793. Location of course on the schedule during enrollment is online.

**Academic Administration**

**Academic Calendar**
Distance learning courses follow the same academic terms as traditional courses. Full-term distance learning courses will begin during the first official week of the semester and conclude during the final exam period at the end of the semester. Half-term (seven/eight-week) accelerated courses will begin during the first official week of the half-term and conclude during the half-term's final exam period according to the Academic Calendar posted on University's web site.

**Course Approval**
The University Curriculum Committee and Graduate Council, whose members represent each college, review all University for-credit undergraduate and graduate courses, respectively. Approval procedures are described in the University’s HOP and the VPAA Academic Affairs Handbook (AAH). This process ensures that all courses of the same prefix and number will have the same learning outcomes and level of rigor, regardless of delivery mode. The Registrar’s office enters approved courses into the appropriate course catalog. The University’s student information system refers to the digital catalog to build course schedules and enables students to register into for-credit classes.

**Creating New Courses**
New course approval is initiated within the department and requires submission of a syllabus along with signed approval forms to the appropriate traditional course approval bodies (See Course Approval). Additionally, courses are approved for online delivery by the appropriate department and college with expectations the online course will meet quality standards prior to initial release to students. Quality reviews are conducted by qualified course reviewers in REACH or in collaboration with external certified Quality Matters (QM) reviewers.

**Modifying Existing Courses for Online Delivery**
Traditional face-to-face courses may be modified for distance learning delivery upon faculty request. The online course development process begins with faculty completing the Online Proposal Form which identifies an instructor as the course author and accompanied with a preliminary syllabus to build a course map.

The Online Proposal Form requires signatures of the program/department chair and college dean assuring the course has met the requirements as set forth by the University's Course Approval procedure (See Course Approval) and to assist in tracking a program’s progress beyond the 50% mark of degree required courses via online delivery. Appropriate reports are filed to THECB when a program when the number of online courses reach thresholds to qualify as hybrid/online programs.

REACH director reviews online proposals for completeness, assigns instructor training as needed, and assigns the instructional designer who manages the online course development process.

**LMS Enhanced**
Faculty who wish to supplement their traditional classroom with use of the LMS (i.e. upload syllabi, handouts, assignments, videos, etc.) may do so since all courses are available in the LMS. Faculty are responsible for the publishing of their courses in the LMS. Students cannot see courses until they are published. Publishing a course should not reduce the number of classroom contact hours. Publishing
courses in the LMS does provide services to all students such as online tutoring, book purchasing, video creation, and plagiarism checking.

**Blended/Hybrid Courses**
The University encourages faculty members to use the LMS for course and content delivery. Even though a course may not be taught completely online, the LMS may assist with synchronous class sessions, course material distribution, video creation, plagiarism check, online tutoring, and asynchronous discussions. Hybrid courses are held to same quality assurance as online courses with specific standards altered for the face-to-face session activities. REACH provides assistance in development of hybrid courses in same manner as online development.

**Offering Online Course(s)**
Online courses must meet specific minimum quality criteria prior to listing on published schedule for student enrollment. The Office of the Registrar publishes the Course Schedules for summer and fall in early April, for spring in early November. Online courses offered for enrollment are reviewed by qualified reviewers who assure that required standards are met.

**Online Instructors**
Faculty members who teach distance learning courses must possess comparable academic credentials as faculty who teach traditional courses at the University. Each faculty member must possess at least a master's degree with eighteen (18) hours of specialization in the discipline for teaching at the undergraduate level. Relative to credentials, adjunct and part-time faculty are held to the same standard as full-time faculty.

**Faculty Compensation**
Full-time faculty members teaching distance courses receive no additional compensation for those courses beyond normal guidelines in the HOP. If teaching an online course results in the faculty member teaching more than the maximum number of required teaching hours for the term, the decision to provide additional compensation for overload or extra services is that of the department chair. Compensation of adjunct faculty members who teach online courses is at the same rate as that given for traditional classes. Online courses are a part of the regular teaching load. The decision regarding the number of online courses a faculty member may teach in a term is that of the department chairperson and college dean.

**Faculty Responsibility**
The course instructor is responsible for the course content, content delivery, student evaluation, assessing learning outcomes, and timely communication within the online learning course. REACH staff work with faculty to assure best practices for online instruction are met. Staff review online courses prior to each offering and make recommendations as needed.

**Faculty Training**
REACH will certify faculty to teach online. The approval process requires that instructors successfully complete the following foundational training courses:

- Online Canvas Training – White Belt for course enhancement; Green Belt for online teaching.
- Best Practices for Teaching Online

Training is flexible to meet faculty needs, time restraints, and preferences. Some faculty receive hands-on training in a lab setting. The training is available online to give faculty opportunity to practice using the LMS and to have a student experience. REACH awards digital training badges to identify the type of training completed. Badges are associated with user accounts in the LMS under the individual’s profile.
Continuing Education in Distance Learning
Faculty teaching online courses will have knowledge and skills of contemporary technologies and pedagogical techniques by participating in individual and group professional development activities.

After successfully completing the foundation trainings, faculty are encouraged to enhance their proficiency in the use of the LMS tools for continual improvement of their skills. New features are regularly added to the LMS as well.

Additional courses, webinars, and workshops are offered for experienced users for advanced LMS features, web 2.0 tools, web conferencing, audio and video. Courses are announced via e-mail, listservs, REACH website, and LMS announcements.

REACH maintains subscriptions to professional organizations such as the Online Learning Consortium (OLC), QM, and WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET) to extend professional development opportunities and to keep informed on current issues in distance learning.

Staff Support
REACH employs full-time staff who advise and assist the University’s faculty in all types of instruction independent of delivery method, including course development and instructional design. Support is provided individually, during group training, and adapts to faculty needs.

Accreditation Requirements
The University complies with the regional standards and requirements of its institutional accreditor, SACSCOC, and several national accreditation requirement standards in the colleges, schools, and departments such as TEA, CAEP, AACSB, ABET, CAATE, NASM, NASAD, and CCNE.

Copyright Compliance
Faculty members are expected to understand and adhere to copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code), as updated by the Technology, Education, and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act. Copyright law must be followed when performances, displays, copies or other reproductions of copyrighted material are made available to students. This includes the posting of copyrighted material to the University's LMS or to other online sites.

Under the TEACH Act, it is permissible to make copyrighted materials available to students, providing such materials:

- Do not exceed an amount or duration comparable to that typically displayed in a live classroom setting;
- Are directly related to the course content;
- Are an integral part of the teaching content;
- Are intended solely for and are available only to students enrolled in the course; and
- Are retained only for the class session.

The students must be notified that the materials may be subject to copyright protection.

More information on copyright is available at J. Conrad Dunagan Library, Copyright and Fair Use: Copyright. The University follows UT System Policy UTS 107 Use of Copyrighted Materials.

For publishing to the University website and public servers, the University complies with Texas’ State Website Linking and Privacy Policy. Refer to University’s Linking Notice.
Ownership of Educational Materials and Copyright Laws
Materials developed using University funds shall belong to the University. Course development paid for by the University shall also belong to the University's Unit. Faculty will ensure compliance with all copyright laws concerning the use and reproduction of printed materials and transmission of films, recording, videotapes, or other protected works. The University of Texas System provides the Copyright Crash Course for quick reference and use in mandatory compliance training.

Other Course Providers
Distance learning courses are available from other colleges, universities, corporations, or non-profit organizations. In the event faculty of UT Permian Basin wish to freely adopt, purchase, or lease modules or entire courses from a Third Party, such courses or modules must be evaluated by the appropriate curriculum committee, department chairperson and/or dean to ensure that the materials meet all quality criteria set forth by the University, before any legal agreements are signed between the parties. Agreements are signed by executive administration with University signature authority (President, VPBA).

The University of Texas Online Consortium (UTOC) provides a web presence to share online courses open to students at any UT component. UTOC promotes collaborative online degree programs offered among University of Texas components. UTOC soon will change branding to Finish@UT.

UTOC manages and supports the Texas Information System (TIS) application which allows the University’s students to take online courses from other UT components and vice versa. To enroll in an online course offered through TIS, the student must create an account, and complete an online Registration Request which is approved by their advisor and the UT component offering the course. More information about registration and the TIS can be found on the UTOC website under How It Works at The University of Texas System Online Consortium.

Academic Integrity of Distance Learning Courses
Distance learning courses are comparable to traditional, campus-based courses in terms of course descriptions, expectations, and learning outcomes. It is the responsibility of the faculty to ensure that the rigor and quality of courses and programs are consistent across delivery platforms and that rigor and quality are maintained.

Requirements such as a grading scheme, examinations, research projects, course evaluation, faculty evaluation, attendance policy, and clock hours required are considered part of academic integrity.

Testing/Assessment
Instructors are expected to design to the standards to measure student success in their courses. A variety of measures should be used, such as case studies, essays, research projects, labs, papers, exams, applications, and real world experiences.

Examinations are to be administered as scheduled. The instructor is not obligated to repeat or remind students of examination due dates. It is the students’ responsibility to acquire necessary materials from the course in the LMS. No make-up examinations will be given without instructor approval.

Proctors - Web-based and Non-Web Proctored Exams
REACH provides web-based proctoring service for testing of remote students through contracted third-party providers taking University-designated exams. Faculty decide on the level of proctoring appropriate for their online course. Authorized access to these services is through the LMS. REACH pays for annual licensing costs for Respondus Lockdown Browser (LB) and Respondus Monitor to deter cheating.
Faculty activate Respondus Browser/Monitor on their exams in the LMS. Respondus LB locks the desktop down to allow only the test to be open. In addition to the LB features, Monitor records the testing environment and flags suspicious activity for the instructor to review. Respondus LB/Monitor are no additional cost to the students.

The use of web-based professional proctoring service that includes live proctors watching remotely requires the student to pay a fee directly to the proctoring service provider. Students are notified of additional costs for this service upon registering for the courses in the enrollment system with a notification alert and in the course syllabus available prior to start date of class.

**University Honesty Policy**
University policy states that it is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with the Student Conduct policies concerning academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor, or the attempt to commit such acts. All persons involved in dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures stated in the University’s HOP.

**Accessibility (Americans with Disabilities Act)**
The University, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, provides “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities. Any student with a disability who is requesting an accommodation for a course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter from the ADA Officer for Students. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. The University makes every effort to select instructional technologies that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. In distance learning courses, special arrangements may be made to deliver the course in an alternative format as needed.

The REACH online course development process monitors content creation for compliance with ADA requirements. The LMS has the Universal Design Online Content Inspection Tool (UDOIT) which enables any instructor to identify accessibility issues in their course. UDOIT was created by the Center for Distributed Learning (CDL) at the University of Central Florida.

**Course Offerings**
Courses currently offered by the University via LMS are listed on UT Permian Basin Course Schedule website under the UT Permian Basin Academics > Course Schedules.

The following sections are designated for online or hybrid courses:

- Online Sections 70X (regular term),
- 72X (whole summer),
- 78X (First accelerated session), 79X (Second accelerated session);
- Hybrid Sections 80X (daytime), 85X (evening)

**Course Review**
All courses, traditional and online, will be reviewed by observation or examination by the department chair and/or college dean, to ensure that all criteria are met as set forth in this University’s HOP. Periodic quality reviews of online courses will be conducted electronically by REACH staff or external qualified
QM reviewers. Results of the reviews are presented to faculty with any recommendations for changes or updates. Ongoing monitoring of distance learning courses is the responsibility of the department chairs and deans. Shadowing of instructors allows supervisors to review faculty-student interactions during live courses. REACH recommends a full-time experienced instructor shadow/mentor instructors who are new to online teaching or new to a specific course. Supervisors should send requests for shadowing to the LMS administrator at reach@utpb.edu.

**Faculty Evaluation**
Student evaluations contact the same questions for all courses, whether delivered traditionally or by distance. Delivery of online evaluation is set by default unless an instructor identifies the choice of paper evaluation. If requested, REACH handles the printing and distribution to administrative assistants who arrange distribution to classes. Completed evaluations are collected and returned to REACH for scanning and report distribution to respective faculty, program chairs, department heads, deans, and the VP of Academic Affairs.

**Library Resources**
Traditional and remote students may access the University’s J. Conrad Dunagan Library via the LMS and through an EZ proxy server. All J. Conrad Dunagan Library services are available to online students via Skype, Facebook, and YouTube. Individual sessions for reference and research assistance is available.

J. Conrad Dunagan Library offers remote access to wide variety of web-based information, many full text and eBooks. Dunagan Library participates in TexShare which is a cooperative agreement with other Texas universities, community colleges, and public libraries. This program allows UT Permian Basin students, faculty and their associates, and staff to use other libraries in the State of Texas.

Faculty and students may attend scheduled instruction on library resources or arrange for an appointment, virtual or in person. To arrange instructional sessions, contact the Reference and Instruction Librarian. Any currently enrolled student, and currently employed faculty or staff member may submit a reference requests via phone at 432-552-2396, chat through FalconChat, or email.

**University Bookstore**
The University Bookstore (http://www.bkstr.com/texas-permianbasinstore/home) provides information on textbooks associated with each course. All students may make bookstore purchases using the online service or they may elect to acquire books and resources for courses from alternate sources. The LMS has embedded Follett Discover in every class for easy access for faculty to adopt course materials and students to purchase any textbooks and/or e-books without having to leave the LMS.

**Class Size**
Minimum course capacity in online courses is dictated by University policy. Department administration, faculty resources, and student demand may require maximum online class size to be flexible to student demand. The University has contracted Instructional Connections to provide appropriately credentialed online academic coaches for classes over specified enrollments. The enrollment limit to qualify to use academic coaches is set by the academic dean. The request form for academic coaches with specific academic requirements are completed by the instructors of record. Instructional Connections provides resumes for faculty to select their academic coaches. Deadlines for requests are 2 weeks prior to the class start date. REACH validates the identity of academic assistants prior to the LMS administrator creating their LMS account. LMS accounts are created manually for non-University students/staff/faculty. Academic assistants are required to submit a notarized User Authorization form every academic year.
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REACH manages accounts for academic coaches and their placements into online courses when designated enrollments are met.

**Student E-Mail**
Each registered student at the University is provided e-mail account which is set to preferred e-mail in the student information system (my.utpb.edu) and is to be used for all official correspondence. This e-mail address is automatically associated with each student enrollment upon import into the LMS to ease communication between faculty and students.

The Outlook 365 e-mail is the University e-mail platform. Students who prefer to receive e-mail at an alternate e-mail address have to set their University e-mail to forward inside of Outlook 365 (https://outlook.office.com) and is not recommended. Students are responsible for appropriate management of their e-mail forwarding orders.

**LMS Student Orientation Training**
Students are introduced to the LMS components in online tutorials and a detailed online LMS orientation to learn how to submit assignments, take quizzes and exams, view grades, use the discussion board, send emails, and learn other elements that may assist them in completing their online course successfully. Tutorials are open to all students. Students may self-register for the LMS orientation once they have received their credentials and registered in at least one course in my.utpb.edu. Using the same credentials, students may log in under the Course Login on every University web page and Join the LMS orientation. Naming of the LMS orientation changes on regular basis. For example, Learning Online Orientation and Virtual Guide to Online Learning are two recent names. Several programs have incorporated portions of the LMS orientation for program orientations. Links to those orientations are distributed to new students in specific programs through e-mails from their advisor or the program chair.

**Student Authentication**
In accordance with SACSCOC Distance and Correspondence Education Policy Statement, "the institution must demonstrate that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identify of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (1) a secure login and pass code, (2) proctored examinations, and (3) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.”

The University’s Distance Education policy requires faculty to have two methods to verify that students participating in their online courses are indeed the same students who officially enrolled in the course. The University’s Information Resources Division (IRD) issues secure login and password credentials to restrict access to the LMS, University e-mail, and all digital support services. Proctoring software and outsourced proctoring services are part of the Online Student Authentication options for faculty to use. Other options for faculty include activities in course work such as field or clinical experiences with approved ID, synchronous/asynchronous video activities using approved ID, or other specified technologies or procedures faculty must specify in their syllabus.

The faculty determine the best method for their course. Students may be required to be physically present for course assessments via electronic means using live proctors through webcams or recording of activity during testing. Faculty members may require students to go to a pre-approved proctor site for course assessments monitoring by an official site representative. The student is required to produce a University student ID, a government issued picture ID, or an approved form of ID.
**Verification of Enrollment**

The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) requires students to complete academic activities before they may be counted in attendance at any time during the semester. The USDE will not accept the simple act of logging into the University's LMS as proof of attendance at any time during the semester. Students must complete an academic activity to be counted as attending.

For this reason, online faculty members are required to include an academic activity for students to complete early in the semester. Completion of this activity is used to verify student attendance and participation in the course. Faculty members will report student attendance to the Office of the Registrar by the published deadline date in each term, generally the 12th day (i.e. two business weeks) of a regular term and 6th day of a short term.

At the end of each semester, faculty must report a last date of attendance for any student receiving a "W", "F" or "I" grade. The last day on which the student completed an academic activity within the course should be used to determine the last day of attendance.

**Class Attendance**

Students are expected to attend class regularly to achieve maximum benefit from educational activities. Class attendance is defined as active participation within the online course. Participation includes activities such as assignment submission, taking exams, attending online chats, and discussion. Simply logging in to the course is not considered participation.

**Office Hours and Student Expectations for Response**

Faculty teaching online courses are subject to policies and procedures of the Academic Affairs Handbook related to office/conference hours, vacations, and the like.

The goal of faculty office hours is to facilitate student access to the professor at specified times, to assist students, and to respond to needs, especially learning needs. Faculty must clearly indicate in the course material the expectation for response to student requests, including the frequency of faculty interaction with discussion boards and other communication tools. Communication plans in online course syllabi are highly recommended. Faculty members teaching online courses are expected to respond to student emails and questions within 24 hours but no more than 72 hours of receipt.

Faculty members should post and hold office hours in a format suitable to support students in their courses. For online courses, virtual office hours may require the use of the telephone, e-mail, text chat, video chat, or other technologies as needed to provide adequate support for students unable to come to campus.

**Drops and Withdrawals**

Online courses are subject to the same regulations as stated in official University publications (e.g. catalog, website). Deadlines for dropping and withdrawing from a course are on the Academic Calendar.

**Course Cancellation**

Online course are subject to the same regulations as stated in the University catalog. Courses will be cancelled in emergency situations and with ample notice if possible.

**Acceptable Use of Computer Technology**

The University prohibits the use of University computer technology to engage in activities for illegal activities or to promote personal gain and/or profit or use of University technology for organizations other than the University. The communication tools provided within an online course are to be used for course-related purposes only.
Students should not transmit messages of a romantic or sexual nature to any person or persons. It is also unacceptable to create, display, transmit or make accessible threatening, racist, sexist, offensive, or harassing language and/or material. Upon entry into the LMS, students must agree to appropriate use of the LMS resources before they are allowed to continue.

**UT Permian Basin Student Help Support and LMS Help Desk**
IRD provides an electronic ticketing system by which students/faculty/staff can report concerns and ask questions about online operations. For assistance with my.utpb.edu, University e-mail, or other technical connections with other University digital resources, students may send an e-mail direct to ird@utpb.edu which creates service ticket.

If applicable, the IRD staff will forward IRD tickets to REACH staff to follow up with the student submitted help requests. UT Permian Basin has instant messaging (IM) through Microsoft Skype for Business for all students, faculty, and staff to use for quick communication. REACH staff post their tag lines in Skype with information about Canvas and REACH phone numbers.

For LMS support, students may chat, submit help requests, or call for assistance 24/7/365 from inside of Canvas under Help & Resources icon on the side menu. University subscribes to Canvas Tier 1 support to give students the best technical support possible.

**Complaints & Grievances**
Students residing outside the State of Texas who desire to resolve a grievance are encouraged to follow the University's Student Grievance Process. The Dean of Students serves as mediators between the students and faculty, staff, an office, and other students of the University.

The bottom of every University web page has a link to Complaint Entry management form to file a University Complaint. The Complaint Administrator transmits the matter to the appropriate Responsible Executive for resolution that are communicated back to the Complainant by the Complaint Administrator.

If an issue cannot be resolved with the University, a complaint may be filed with the SACSCOCs, or the appropriate state agency for handling complaints in a student's state. The University is a member of NC-SARA for better resolution of complaints from students in SARA states.

**State Authorization Requirement for Distance Education**
The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) requires institutions offering distance or correspondence education to acquire authorization from all states from which students are enrolled. This authorization is required to maintain students' eligibility to receive federal financial aid. Presently, the University is authorized to accept enrollments for distance/correspondence education from the states listed on the University website under Approved States for Online Learning.

The University is currently a member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). Continued membership is contingent on Texas State legislative funding of state membership and THECB coordination of any state fees.