Frequently Asked Questions
Distance Education
July 2025

1. What is considered distance education?

Distance education means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include:

1. The internet
2. One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices
3. Audioconferencing
4. Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed above in 1 through 3.

2. What are the timelines for implementation?

January 1, 2026   A tab will be added to the CoAEMSP Self-Study Report to include data on your distance education program. The information will be based on the Distance Education Evaluation Tool.

January 1, 2026   New LoR applications will provide information on distance education.

July 1, 2026   Programs submitting the Self-Study Report (SSR) after this date will be required to complete relevant information pertaining to distance education.

Programs currently offering a distance education model are exempt from notifying CoAEMSP. That information will be included in their next self-study report.

3. We know what a traditional onsite/in-person class looks like. What is a hybrid or blended method?

Hybrid or blended is a method of delivery in which all didactic and laboratory instruction is provided using a combination of onsite (in-person) ***and*** distance education instruction, which may be synchronous or asynchronous.

4. Can an AEMT or Paramedic program be completely online?

AEMT and Paramedic programs require skill practice, competency evaluation, and simulations and therefore cannot be considered a completely online program.

5. **What is the difference between synchronous and asynchronous methods of conducting a class?**

    Synchronous learning is when instructors and students gather at the same time and place (virtual or physical) and interact in real-time. Interactions may be in-person, live-streaming lectures, or participating in video-conference discussions.

    Asynchronous learning is when the instructor and students engage with the course content at different times (and from different locations). Students access materials at their own pace. Asynchronous activities may include watching pre-recorded lectures, reading assigned materials, and participating in discussion boards.

6. **In distance education formats, what is meant by substantive interaction with the instructor?**

    Substantive interaction ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor on a predictable and regular basis during the course or program that provides the opportunity for the program to monitor the student's engagement, academic progress, development of expected competencies, and to provide regular feedback regarding that progress.

7. **Our class is a traditional in-person format, but we use our learning management system (LMS) to post assignments, videos, and other activities. Is that considered hybrid distance education?**

    Courses offering full onsite (in-person) delivery that use a learning management system for assignments and other activities are **not** considered to be providing instruction through distance education.

8. **Our program offers both a traditional in-person course and an online course. Do the programs have to be similar in content, hours, and other requirements?**

    Yes, regardless of which course format a student attends, they must receive comparable education using similar resources and experiences. Schedules may vary but the syllabi, clinical and field experiences, and required competencies must be comparable.

9. **Can students that are living in another state and who are enrolled in my hybrid course complete hospital clinicals and field internship rotations in their local area?**

    Yes. Your program will need affiliation agreements and approval from that State Office of EMS. If your program medical director does not have a license in that state you will need to secure an assistant medical director that meets the requirements in the CAAHEP *Standards*. Establish a mechanism for your program clinical coordinator to orient liaisons at the hospital clinical and field experience sites and to train the capstone field internship preceptors and to monitor student progression during these experiences.

    Some programs have their clinical coordinator visit the student during the out-of-state rotations to evaluate the clinical and/or field sites and the students.

10. **Why must I notify the State Office of EMS in each of the states where students are living?**

    Some states may be restrictive regarding educational programs offered to their citizens from an out-of-state program. Seeking permission and/or acknowledgement is required and protects the students and the program.

11. Why must I notify our college's institutional accreditor that we are offering a hybrid course?

Check with your college because institutional accreditors vary regarding processes and approvals needed with a distance education format.

12. Why does CoAEMSP and CAAHEP have new policies and requirements for distance education now? Programs have been using online learning for some time.

As technology has advanced, hybrid educational formats have become more prevalent. CAAHEP and the U.S. Department of Education developed definitions, best practices, and recommendations to inform the accreditation standards and policies to protect the students.

13. I know the CAAHEP *Standards* list distance education as a substantive change that must be reported. We have been offering a hybrid course but have not notified CoAEMSP. What do I have to do now? Will we be in trouble?

No, your program is not in trouble. Evaluating programs offering distance education modalities will be phased in. Programs are expected to review the CoAEMSP policy regarding distance education and implement the strategies and practices identified. At the time of the program's next self-study report, you will identify that you conduct hybrid classes and complete the requested information which the site visitors will review.

Programs submitting an SSR after July 1, 2026, will be required to use a revised SSR that includes information on distance education and formats.

14. What additional policies or information do I need to provide for students enrolled in a hybrid course?

Policies and information include but are not limited to:
1. Information regarding which aspects of the education will be delivered through a distance modality.
2. The technology requirements for the distance course content.
3. Technology support available to the students.

15. Our hybrid course is asynchronous. How can I verify that the individual completing the assignments, watching the videos, and taking the exams is the enrolled student?

Software is available that can verify student identity. The system must be able to verify that the student who registers for an online or distance education course or program is the same student that participates in the classes and activities and completes the course graduation requirements.

16. We are considering adding a hybrid option. What preparation do my instructors need?

The program sponsor must provide:
1. Instructional design support for instructional staff in delivery of distance education.
2. Professional development opportunities for instruction using distance delivery.
3. A process to evaluate faculty on effectiveness in teaching via distance delivery.

17. **We offer both traditional classroom and hybrid options. How do I report these on the CoAEMSP Annual Report?**

   The Annual Report distributed in 2026 will include instructions for identifying distance education cohorts