

Viewpoints

Department of Ed Creates New Distance Education Reporting Requirements for Colleges



On December 30, 2024, the United States Department of Education issued new regulations that require colleges to report student enrollment in distance education courses.

The new rules require institutions to report information into the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) about which students who received Federal financial aid are enrolled in distance education courses.

Distance education courses are defined as any class that uses the internet or audio conferencing “to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously.”

Under the rule, a student who is enrolled in “even one class that allows for distance education” would be considered a hybrid learner for reporting purposes.

The regulations go into effect on July 1, 2026, and the reporting requirements begin on July 1, 2027.

“Online learning can reach more students and sometimes at a lower cost to students, but what we know about the outcomes of online education compared to traditional in-person instruction is woefully inadequate,” said U.S. Under Secretary of Education James Kvaal. “The new reporting in this final rule will help the Department and the public better assess student outcomes at online programs and help students make informed choices.”

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