



National Reporting System
for Adult Education

A Project of the U.S. Department of Education

Draft NRS Guidelines for Distance Education

OVAE is considering the following guidelines for measuring contact hours, assessment and reporting to the NRS for students in distance education programs. The final guidelines will be submitted to the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and once approved, will be incorporated into the NRS Implementation Guidelines. This draft is for consideration and discussion by state directors of adult education and other stakeholders. See the supporting paper *NRS Issues Related to Distance Learning: Summary and Recommendations* for further information on these topics.

Definition

Distance education is formal learning activity where students and instructors are separated by geography, time or both for the majority of the instructional period. Distance learning materials are in a variety of media including print, audio recording, videotape, broadcasts, computer software, web-based programs and other online technology. Teachers support distance learners through communication via mail, telephone, e-mail or online technologies and software,

Measuring Contact Hours for Learners in Distance Education

Students in distance education must have at least 12 hours of contact with the program before they can be counted for federal reporting purposes. Contact hours for distance learners can be a combination of direct contact and contact through telephone, video, teleconference or online communication, where student and program staff can interact and through which learner identity is verifiable.

Optional Reporting of Proxy Contact Hours

In addition to direct contact hours, states may, *but are not required*, to report proxy hours of time students spent on distance learning activities. States providing distance education that want to measure and report proxy contact hours for these students must develop a state distance education policy that describes the following.

- The curricula that local programs will use in providing distance education;

- The model that will be used to develop proxy contact hours for each type of curriculum. States must develop proxy contact hours using one of the following models.¹
 - **Clock Time Model**, which assigns contact hours based on the elapsed time that a learner is connected to, or engaged in an online or stand alone software program that tracks time.
 - **Teacher Judgment Model**, which assigns a fixed number of hours of credit for each assignment based on teacher determination of the extent to which a learner engaged in, or completed, the assignment.
 - **Learner Mastery Model**, which assigns a fixed number of hours of credit based on the learner passing a test on the content of each lesson. Learners work with the curriculum and materials and when they feel they have mastered the material, take a test. A high percentage of correct answers (typically 70%-80%) earns the credit hours attached to the material.
- The proxy contact hours developed for completing activities for each type of curriculum used (teacher judgment model) or the proxy contact hours developed for completion of units of material comprising the curriculum (learner mastery model). The state may use the clock time model with curricula that track time student spends interacting with instructional material and disconnects after a preset period of inactivity; and
- Describe the procedures the state used to develop proxy contact hours. The state must use the proxy contact hour model appropriate for the distance education curricula.

States will report on their distance education policy for developing proxy contact hours annually through the Data Quality Checklist.

Assessment of Students in Distance Learning

Students in distance education should be posttested after the same amount of instructional time as other students, according to the state's approved NRS assessment policy. States that choose to develop proxy contact hours using one of the approved models will use the proxy contact hours to measure the posttest time for distance education students. For example, if the state's assessment policy requires posttesting after 80 contact hours, programs must posttest distance education students after 80 proxy contact hours, as determined by the state model.

¹ See Project Ideal (2005), *Working Paper No. 2 Measuring Contact Hours and Learner Progress in Distance Education Programs*, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, for further information on the use and development of these models.

States that choose not to collect and report proxy contact hours must develop procedures for determining the appropriate time for posttesting students in distance education and may use one of the proxy contact hour models or another appropriate method, as long as the posttesting time is after the same amount of instructional time as other students. The state will describe the methodology it employed for determining posttest time and procedures for posttesting distance education students in its state assessment policy.

Programs must administer all pre- and post- assessments used to measure educational gain of distance education students for NRS reporting in person, at a proctored program site within the state that meets NRS assessment policy. Assessments not conducted through face-to-face interaction with a trained test administrator in a secure setting are not allowed for NRS reporting.

NRS Reporting for Students in Distance Education

States will report all required NRS data elements on distance education students in all NRS tables, according to current requirements. States electing to develop proxy contact hours for students in distance education will report both proxy and direct contact hours in Table 4.

New Required Tables

States must also report data on students in distance education separately in a new Table that is identical to NRS Table 4. Only students in distance education are to be reported in this table and all contact hours (proxy and direct) are to be reported.

OVAE will generate through its electronic reporting system another table identical to Table 4 that will report students in traditional (non-distance education) classes.

Both new tables are attached.

Table 4C
Educational Gains and Attendance for Participants in Distance Education

Enter number of distance education participants for each category listed, calculate percentage of participants completing each level, and enter total proxy and direct attendance hours.

Entering Educational Functioning Level (A)	Total Number Enrolled In Distance Education (B)	Total Estimated and Actual Attendance Hours (C)	Number Completed Level (D)	Number who Completed a Level and Advanced One or More Levels (E)	Number Separated Before Completed (F)	Number Remaining Within Level (G)	Percentage Completing Level (H)
ABE Beginning Literacy							
ABE Beginning Basic Education							
ABE Intermediate Low							
ABE Intermediate High							
ASE Low							
ASE High*							
ESL Beginning Literacy							
ESL Low Beginning							
ESL High Beginning							
ESL Intermediate Low							
ESL Intermediate High							
ESL Advanced							
Total							

Include in this table only students who are counted as distance education students.

Column D is the total number of learners who completed a level, including learners who left after completing and learners who remained enrolled and moved to one or more higher levels.

Column E represents a subset of Column D (Number Completed Level) and is learners who completed a level and enrolled in one or more higher levels.

Column F is students who left the program or received no services for 90 consecutive days and have no scheduled services.

Column D + F + G should equal the total in Column B.

Column G represents the number of learners still enrolled who are at the same educational level as when they entered.

Each row total in Column H is calculated using the following formula: $H = \frac{\text{Column D}}{\text{Column B}}$

Work-based project learners are not included in this table.

*Completion of ASE high level is attainment of a secondary credential or passing GED tests. OMB Number xxxx-xxxx, Expires xx/xx/xx

Table 4D
 Educational Gains and Attendance for Participants in Program Center Settings
 (Excluding Distance Education Participants)

Enter number of participants in program center settings for each category, calculate percentage of participants completing each level, and enter attendance hours.

Entering Educational Functioning Level (A)	Total Number Enrolled In Program Centers (B)	Total Attendance Hours (C)	Number Completed Level (D)	Number who Completed a Level and Advanced One or More Levels (E)	Number Separated Before Completed (F)	Number Remaining Within Level (G)	Percentage Completing Level (H)
ABE Beginning Literacy							
ABE Beginning Basic Education							
ABE Intermediate Low							
ABE Intermediate High							
ASE Low							
ASE High*							
ESL Beginning Literacy							
ESL Low Beginning							
ESL High Beginning							
ESL Intermediate Low							
ESL Intermediate High							
ESL Advanced							
Total							

Include in this table only students who attended program centers for instruction. Exclude all participants in distance education from this table.

Column D is the total number of learners who completed a level, including learners who left after completing and learners who remained enrolled and moved to one or more levels.

Column E represents a subset of Column D (Number Completed Level) and is learners who completed a level and enrolled in one or more higher levels.

Column F is students who left the program or received no services for 90 consecutive days and have no scheduled services.

Column D + F + G should equal the total in Column B.

Column G represents the number of learners still enrolled who are at the same educational level as when they entered.

Each row total in Column H is calculated using the following formula: $H = \frac{\text{Column D}}{\text{Column B}}$

Work-based project learners are not included in this table. Participants in distance education are not included in this table.

*Completion of ASE high level is attainment of a secondary credential or passing GED tests. OMB Number xxxx-xxxx, Expires xx/xx/xx