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Board of Registration of Cosmetology and Barbering
Policy on Distance-Based Learning for Schools

Issued: January 13, 2022

The Board of Registration of Cosmetology and Barbering (“Board”) issues the following policy for schools to provide further clarification on the use of distance-based education in administering programs.

Background:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, both public and post-secondary occupational schools were mandated to close their physical premises under the Commonwealth’s COVID safety standards. To permit schools to continue their programs, the Board permitted schools to offer their complete programs through distance-based education. Schools utilized emerging technologies to offer both project-based learning assignments and live instruction through virtual meeting software to continue their programs while their physical locations remained closed to students. All industry-specific COVID restrictions were lifted on May 29, 2021, permitting schools to resume their operations in full without any capacity restrictions. With many schools finding benefits for both students and staff in providing some of their programs through distance-based education, the Board voted to permit schools to provide up to 50% of their programs through distanced-based education on June 10, 2021. The following policy shall apply to any school utilizing a curriculum with distance-based learning and shall be deemed to override any prior approvals.¹

Policy Definitions:

Asynchronous learning: education that does not involve dynamic real-time interaction with educators. Examples would include watching pre-recorded instruction, reading information, quizzes or independent research assignments or projects.

Synchronous learning: education involving direct, real-time interaction with an instructor.

Distance-based leaning: delivery of education, whether synchronous or asynchronous, through technological means, with the instructor and student in separate locations.

¹ See 240 CMR 4.04(1)(f), 4.04(2)(e), 5.07(5), 7.07(5), 8.03(6)(d), and 10.05(9)(d).



Hybrid education: an education program consisting of a combination of in-person learning and distance-based learning.

In-person learning: any form of instructional interaction that occurs “in person” and in real time between teachers and students.

Policy Guidance:

Schools may offer a hybrid education program in which up to 50% of their programs are offered through distance-based learning. Schools may not offer a program containing more than 30% asynchronous learning. Hybrid education programs are not limited in the amount of in-person learning it offers. Schools must determine how asynchronous work will be translated to clock hours.

Schools offering a hybrid education program must submit a hybrid education plan to the Board, detailing the distance-based learning and in-person portions of its programs. The plans must provide both qualitative and quantitative measurements for education for the distance-based portions of their programs. Programs may be submitted to the Board at cosmetologyandbarberingboard@mass.gov.

Hybrid education plans will not be individually approved by the Board. If a school’s hybrid education plan is compliant with the Board’s regulations and all aspects of this policy, the school may begin implementing its hybrid education program upon receipt of the plan by the Board. The Board may however reject any plan that is not consistent with Board regulations or any aspect of this policy. If a school is notified that their plan is rejected by the Board, they will need to re-submit a plan to the Board addressing any regulatory or other deficiencies.

Emergency Approval to Exceed 50% Distance-Based Learning

A school may apply for an emergency temporary approval permitting them to provide more than 50% of their program through distance-based learning by submitting a written petition to the Board describing the circumstances which prevent them from offering in-person instruction to students as well as an estimate as to when the school will be able to provide in-person instruction again. No emergency approvals shall be granted permanently/indefinitely. The need to provide a student with a reasonable accommodation due to a disability shall not be grounds for an emergency approval. Emergency approvals must be approved by the Board and will be issued to the applicant in writing with such conditions as deemed necessary by the Board. The Board delegates authority to the Executive Director to approve emergency plans, but the Executive Director retains the ability to bring plans to the Board for evaluation.

Situations that may be considered for emergency approval include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Student or instructor is not able to physically get to the school
- Student or instructor comes down with illness (e.g. COVID)
- School is in location requiring vaccine; student or instructor unwilling to be vaccinated
- School losing its physical location

Programs may not exceed 30% asynchronous learning regardless of the circumstances.

If a school is approved by the Board to offer more than 50% of its curriculum through distance-based education, the school must also offer students the ability to pause their education and adjust their enrollment contract without repercussions until the school is able to again provide in-person instruction.

The Board may rescind or amend a school's ability to utilize distance-based learning at any time.

Questions regarding this policy can be directed to the Board at cosmetologyandbarberingboard@mass.gov or 617-701-8792.