APPENDIX D: GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES

In this era of rapid technological advances and the changing needs of traditional and nontraditional students, we recognize the need (and desirability) of taking courses and programs to our constituency more often and in different forms. Many distance learning courses and programs will be delivered in traditional fashion, but at distant sites; other courses will rely on Web and video technologies for most or all of their delivery. Further, it is impossible to know what additional, desirable technologies will emerge in the future. Regardless of how learning takes place, the quality of courses must be assured to students. In this light, the following assurances are warranted:

Departmental/Unit Responsibility

- Academic departments will be responsible for maintaining the same high standards for all courses, regardless of the mode of delivery.
- Academic departments/units are responsible for assuring that distance learning delivery of graduate courses, including electronically delivered instruction, is comparable in quality and content to the corresponding traditional campus instruction.
- Essential student services and course-related materials (books, journals, computer facilities, laboratories and other resource material) are accessible at all sites.
- Fair and appropriate staffing policies are adopted by the delivering unit as it relates to distance and electronic instruction.
- Departments/units using distance or electronically delivered instruction will describe a process for how and when courses and programs will be evaluated. In general, courses and programs will be evaluated on schedules that are the same or similar to those used with traditionally taught courses/programs.
- Courses and programs will be assessed regularly, based on standards determined by departmental units. Delivery methods and content (as well as those aspects of courses evaluated in traditional courses) will be assessed regularly.

Administrative Responsibility

- Although distance and electronically delivered courses must be identified in the UNCG database of courses, they will not be so distinguished on students’ transcripts from courses delivered in more traditional ways.
- Degree programs that require students to complete more than one-third of its hours through distance learning will consult with the Graduate Studies Committee in advance.
- Resources will be made available to assist faculty who wish to place courses/programs on the Web. In this manner, students and faculty can be assured that technologies are being used most appropriately.
- Faculty will receive the same course load credit for courses taught through various distance delivery media as for those taught traditionally.

Faculty/Student Responsibility

- Course/program prerequisites clearly describe any technical/technological skills necessary for course participation. Any hardware or software requirements are included in this description. This information should be included in a course syllabus or other appropriate document.
- Any required (or desirable) supplemental materials (e.g., library requirements, laboratory space/specifications, etc.) will be clearly described.
- Courses/programs employ explicit strategies that promote interaction between faculty and students and among students. Student-faculty interactions include faculty availability (“office hours”) via face-to-face, e-mail, or telephone meetings.

Student assessment will consider any limitations of the delivery method, like security, graphics resolution, audio difficulties, etc. Assessment strategies should be tailored to the specific needs of students, site and delivery mode, and should be examined during the normal course of evaluation (e.g., should not be separate from typical course evaluation procedures).