2.9 Accountability and Assurance Plan for Continuing Education

Last Revised: January 2011

Policy Statement: The College administration will maintain appropriate internal auditing and accountability procedures for continuing education programs. All procedures will be consistent with recommendations of the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges and the mission of the College.

Purpose/Definitions: Piedmont Community College provides quality continuing education programs for both workforce development and personal enrichment. An internal audit plan for program management of continuing education programs provides accountability and assurance that includes Class Visitation, Student Membership Verification, Instructor Verification, College Approval Process for Conducting a Continuing Education Class, and College Responsibility for Accuracy in Reporting Practices in Continuing Education Programs.

Approval Authority/Monitoring Authority: This policy is mandated by the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges and NC Administrative Code 23 NCAC 2E.0305(c). Piedmont Community College’s Board of Trustees has approval authority for this policy. The Vice President, Continuing Education has monitoring authority for this policy.

Procedure: The College is required to publish, maintain, and utilize an internal audit plan. The College President shall periodically report to the Board of Trustees on the findings of the internal audit.

1. Class Visitation
   A. The instructor’s supervisor, or a designated representative as approved in writing by the Vice President, Continuing Education, shall visit at least fifty (50) percent of all off-campus and distance education classes (defined in C below) and twenty-five (25) percent of on-campus classes each semester. Self-supporting and community service classes, and classes of twelve hours or less are excluded. Written documentation concerning all class visits will be kept on file, and copies will be forwarded to the Vice President, Continuing Education for review and for purposes of establishing an audit trail.
   B. The Vice President, Continuing Education shall make selected unannounced visits to a minimum of ten (10) percent of off-campus classes. Written documentation concerning all class visits will be kept on file, and copies will be forwarded to the Vice President, Continuing Education for review and for purposes of establishing an audit trail. The Vice President, Continuing Education may delegate this visitation requirement to an appropriate upper level administrator or supervisor with the written approval of the College President. Registration periods may not be considered an appropriate time for unannounced class visits.
   C. An off-campus class is defined as any class not held in institutionally owned or leased property or a center under the supervision of a resident supervisor or director who is on-site during the entire period the instruction is taking place therein. A distance education class is
defined as a class that is offered through distance education technology (including information highway, Internet, and telecourses) and which does not physically meet on campus for at least half of the time scheduled. For Internet classes for which it is not possible to physically visit the class, visitation shall be conducted electronically, using a system that allows the instructor’s supervisor and the Vice President, Continuing Education to log on and monitor activity in the class. System Office program auditors will be given access to this system so that they may perform unannounced class visits for these classes as well.

2. Student Membership Verification
   A. If the class meets physically with the instructor or other College staff, student signatures on appropriate forms (class receipt forms, class registration forms, fee rosters, etc.) are required for student membership verification. If the form must be signed by a teacher, appropriate measures should be taken to assure that the students are enrolled properly. In all instances, State Board policies in the Administrative Code shall be followed. These documents are kept on file until courses have been audited by Audit Services.
   B. If the class does not meet physically (such as Internet or other distance education courses), one of the following two criteria is required for student membership verification:
      1. Evidence of payment of the applicable registration fee by the student or obtainment of a waiver as defined in 23 NCAC 2D.0203(a). This evidence must link a specific student’s payment to the specific class paid (23 NCAC 2D.0324(a)(2).
      2. In cases where no registration fee is paid (e.g., the student is 65 or over), electronic certification (i.e., e-mail) or correspondence by the student is required for student membership verification in the course.

3. Instructor Verification (23 NCAC 2D.0324(b)(2))
   A. Once a year the Continuing Education directors will be responsible for reviewing all Continuing Education instructor contracts in their respective areas. The directors will determine whether students are registered in accordance with the contract and that all documentation has been completed to clear payment to the instructor. By their class visits, directors will verify that instructors have actually taught the class in accordance with their contracts. Appropriate forms (class receipt forms, class registration forms, etc.) signed by enrollees and instructors must be utilized for all Continuing Education classes. The directors are responsible for ensuring that all audit files/documents are complete and ready for audit. Written documentation of review by the directors will be forwarded to the office of the Vice President, Continuing Education.
   B. Each instructor is required to sign an instructional contract for each class and to sign all attendance sheets at the end of the course to verify that the contracted instructional services have been rendered.
   C. The College ensures that its employees are competent instructors who are qualified to instruct in their assigned program area.

4. College Approval Process for Conducting a Continuing Education Class
A. All courses offered through the Continuing Education Division shall have the prior approval of the Vice President, Continuing Education and shall be consistent with the Mission and goals of the NC Community College System and Piedmont Community College. Approval is granted to offer those courses that appear in the North Carolina Community College System Master Course Listing. Any courses that do not appear in the Master Course Listing must be approved in writing by the Vice President, Continuing Education and submitted to the North Carolina Community College System seeking addition to the Master Course Listing prior to being offered. Criteria for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) prescribe that each college must have a planning and evaluation process. Applicable segments of these criteria will be utilized in developing the College’s internal plan and in evaluating educational progress.

B. A database of all Continuing Education courses shall be maintained electronically on the College’s central information system and will include day, time, and location. Directions to all off-campus classes must be on file with the continuing and adult education office.

5. College Responsibility for Accuracy in Reporting Practices in Continuing Education Programs

A. The President will ensure that the College’s “Accountability and Assurance Policy for Continuing Education” is applied and maintained consistent with the plan as approved by the Piedmont Community College Board of Trustees. The Vice President, Continuing Education will report the plan’s audit results to the President twice per year. The President or designee will report the plan’s audit results to the Board of Trustees annually.

Legal Citation: North Carolina Administrative Code 23 NCAC 2E.0305(c), 23 NCAC 2D.0203(a), 23 NCAC 2D.0324(a)(2), and 23 NCAC 2D.0324(b)(2).