DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Policy Number: 204.042
Title: Correspondence Courses
Effective Date: 1/15/19

PURPOSE: To provide procedures and an approval process for correspondence courses.

APPLICABILITY: Adult facilities

DEFINITIONS:
Correspondence course – class or program, including independent study, designed to increase knowledge or gain a credential. A correspondence course may include accredited college classes, career technical programs, religious courses, language courses, and other topics approved by the facility education director or designee.

Vendor – correspondence course provider and/or a correspondence course provider's bookstore, publisher or retail bookseller.

PROCEDURES:

A. Approval process

1. Offenders must follow the rules below prior to applying for a correspondence course.
   a) The offender must obtain written approval from the facility education director or designee prior to registration for an educational correspondence course.
   b) An offender who transfers to another DOC facility must submit a new correspondence course approval form to the receiving facility's education director or designee.

2. Offenders must provide the following written information to the facility education director or designee prior to registration and/or ordering course materials:
   a) Name of school providing the correspondence course, and whether it is accredited.
   b) A description of the course.
   c) List of books and materials that are provided with the correspondence course, and the name and address of the vendor(s).
   d) Cost of course, including tuition, books, and all other fees.
   e) First and last name, address, and phone number of the outside resource paying course costs. The education director or designee may contact the outside resource for verification.
   f) Additional information, if requested.

3. The facility education director or designee must review each request:
   a) For availability of qualified staff to facilitate course learning activities.
   b) For course content, supplies, and equipment that do not violate DOC policies or directives.
   c) To ensure that the offender has been major discipline free during the 90 days preceding the request.
   d) For the offender's need for library and computer access.
   e) To determine if the institution is accredited. If not, the facility education director or designee must inform the student how this non-accreditation will affect transferability or recognition in the future.

4. Upon approval, the facility education director or designee must sign the Correspondence Course Approval form (attached) and distribute copies to the offender and to property unit staff.

B. Tuition and fees

1. Offenders or an outside resource must pay all tuition, fees and other costs.

2. Offenders must check with the facility finance department to determine how the tuition and fees need to be processed.

3. Tuition and fees paid by an outside resource (including grants and scholarships) must be paid directly to the vendor. Any refunds of tuition and fees paid by an outside resource must be returned to the outside resource.

C Course materials

1. The facility's property unit staff must ensure the correspondence course is approved, and must screen course materials to ensure they comply with Policies 302.250, "Offender Property" and 301.030, "Contraband."

2. Property staff must remove unallowable items and contact the offender for disposition of the unallowable items.

3. Property staff must forward any electronic media to the facility information technology or computer services unit for inspection and distribution.

4. Property staff must forward all remaining materials to the facility education director or designee.

5. The education director or designee must inventory the materials, place a correspondence course identification stamp with all fields completed, and forward the materials to the offender.

6. Approved correspondence course books must not be included in the count of an offender's allowed books in the offender's property. Books must be sent directly from an approved vendor and may be new or used.

7. The cost of the required correspondence course books may exceed the $40-per-book allowable property limit. However, the DOC is not responsible for claims exceeding the $40-per-book property limit.

D Implementation

1. The facility education director or designee must:
   a) Keep approved correspondence course support materials (materials not allowed in the living units) in the education unit for offender use. These materials may only be used under the supervision of staff.
   b) Provide a proctor, when required and available, for the course assessments.
   c) Track course completions quarterly
   d) Monitor correspondence course approval start and expiration dates, and notify the offender upon course approval expiration.
   e) Retain hard copies of correspondence course approvals according to the education retention record.

f) Report participation and completion of correspondence courses in each quarterly report.
g) Enter the completion of a correspondence course into the offender's education records in the Offender Document System (ODocS).

2. Offenders must:
a) Not work on a correspondence course during facility work assignment time.
b) Be eligible according to the guidelines in DOC Division Directive 301.083, "Segregation Unit Management."
c) Notify the education director or designee upon completion of the correspondence course or program.
d) Discard or send out all offender property through the property unit per Policy 302.250, "Offender Property."

INTERNAL CONTROLS:
A. Approved correspondence course paperwork is retained in the education unit at the facility.
B. Completion of correspondence courses is retained in the offender's education records in ODocS.

ACA STANDARDS: 4-4464

REFERENCES:
Minn. Stat. § 241.01, subd.3a.
Division Directive 204.040, "Education."
Division Directive 301.030, "Contraband."
Division Directive 302.250, "Offender Property."
Division Directive 301.083, "Segregation Unit Management"
Division Directive 303.040, "Use of Electronic Equipment by Offenders."

REPLACES: Division Directive 204.042, "Correspondence Courses," 10/6/15.
All facility policies, memos, or other communications whether verbal, written, or transmitted by electronic means regarding this topic.

ATTACHMENTS: Correspondence Course Approval form (204.042A)
Room Permit (204.042B)

APPROVALS:
Deputy Commissioner, Facility Services
Deputy Commissioner, Community Services
Assistant Commissioner, Facility Services
Assistant Commissioner, Operations Support