

Distance Education

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to articulate Hawai'i Community College's approach to distance education (DE), and to define procedures and practices for support services, course scheduling and quality assurance such that DE courses meet federal requirements and accreditation standards and promote student success through the use of best DE practices.

Background and Introduction:

Hawai'i Community College (Hawai'i CC) recognizes the goal of distance education to provide increased access to post-secondary education to the residents of the State of Hawai'i, including Hawai'i island students in rural and underserved areas. Distance education also supports Hawai'i CC's mission and goals, its institutional learning outcomes, and is incorporated into its existing programs and degree requirements.

This distance education policy aligns with the University of Hawai'i system policies on distance education, including [UH Executive Policy E5.204](#), Distance and Online Learning and [UH BOR Policy 5.210](#), Distance Education and Offsite Instruction.

Distance Education Instruction:

The student learning outcomes and standards for academic rigor for distance education courses are the same as they are for classroom-based courses. Definitions:

Distance Education

To maintain the College's eligibility for Title IV (federal financial aid) funds, online classes (and online components of hybrid classes) must meet the definition of distance education (as opposed to correspondence) courses. Central to being considered a distance education course, courses must require "regular and substantive interaction between these students and the instructor" (as stipulated by § 600.2 of the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations). This means interaction that is not wholly optional, interaction that is initiated by the instructor, interaction that is regular throughout the course, and interaction that is scheduled (not self-paced). Instructors should be engaging with students through discussions and fostering instructor-student and student-student interaction. Limiting interaction to answering student questions or providing feedback on assignments or tests is not considered by the federal government as "regular and substantive" interaction.

Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI)

Regular and substantive interaction (RSI) is one of the key elements distinguishing distance education from correspondence education. All Hawai'i Community College DE courses must

include a minimum of two Substantive Interaction criteria and both of the Regular Interaction criteria defined below.

Substantive Interaction:

Substantive interaction is defined by the federal government as “engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion,” and includes at least two of the following—

- Providing direct instruction
 - Direct instruction only applies to courses that are taught synchronously
 - At a minimum, instructors should provide synchronous engagement through lectures or presentations that cover course content.
 - Ideally, instructors synchronously utilize various media and technologies to facilitate learning and competencies, effective teaching methodologies, and incorporate culturally competent strategies that yield equitable student outcomes.
- Assessing or providing feedback on a student’s coursework
 - At a minimum, instructors should provide grades with minimal non-automated feedback on some assignments.
 - Ideally, instructors should provide prompt, personalized, and detailed feedback on all student coursework and assignments, including written comments, detailed rubrics, audio or video notes, and examples for improvement.
- Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency.
 - At a minimum, instructors should provide instructional content, such as video, audio, or recorded presentations or interactive lessons visibly created or mediated by the instructor. Further, instructors should respond to questions pertaining to the course content.
 - Ideally, instructors should frequently provide information, and announcements beyond reminders that discuss previous topics, trends in assignments, or that highlights key concepts. Instructors should frequently encourage participation and questions and respond in a timely manner with detailed information and ideas.
- Facilitating a group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency (via the LMS, including discussions that utilize collaborative creation tools, etc.).
 - At a minimum, instructors should provide prompts, questions or topics to engage students.
 - Ideally, instructors should actively participate in discussions to pose questions, propose alternative viewpoints, connect ideas, and encourage struggling students.

Regular Interaction:

An institution ensures regular interaction between a student and an instructor or instructors demonstrated by both of the following criteria, prior to the student's completion of a course—

- Providing the opportunity for substantive interaction with the student on a *predictable and regular basis* commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency.; and
 - At a minimum, policies and procedures should make clear how often and when the instructor will interact with students. Course materials (e.g. syllabi and introductory statements) make clear to students the opportunities for interaction. Interaction expectations are clearly communicated to the students (e.g. in the syllabus) including response times, and explicit participation guidance (e.g. office hours, discussion boards).
 - Ideally, instructor engagement with students should yield equitable student outcomes. Interactions are predictable and occur in accordance with the length and course content.
- Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success and ensuring that an instructor is responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.
 - At a minimum there should be interaction (frequency of postings, feedback, instruction) throughout the term in the course section, or with individual students based on monitoring student engagement and success. Policies and/or procedures create expectations for monitoring student academic engagement and success.
 - Ideally, an instructor should frequently engage with students throughout the term to provide formative feedback and information based on monitoring student engagement and success. Instructors should promptly and proactively respond to students in response to observed concerns or at the request of students, to provide necessary support.
- Sending announcements, reminders or nudges to students
- Sharing individualized course performance, progress, and/or early-alert reports with students

Substantive interaction is defined by the federal government as “engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion,” and also includes at least two of the following—

- Providing direct instruction (direct instruction only applies to synchronous courses)
- Providing feedback on assignments (preferably individualized)
- Providing information and/or responding to questions related to course content
- Facilitating group discussions (via the LMS, including discussions that utilize collaborative creation tools, etc.)
- Engaging in one or more of the following instructional activities:
 - Holding synchronous group or individual conferences
 - Assigning and facilitating peer feedback
 - Assigning and facilitating group projects
 - Assigning and facilitating student-led instruction (student presentations, student-led discussions, etc.)

Correspondence Education

Correspondence Education is defined by the Federal Government (34 C.F.R. §602.3.) as:

1. Courses provided by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructors. Interaction between instructors and students in a correspondence course is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student.
2. If a course is part correspondence and part residential training, the Secretary considers the course to be a correspondence course.
3. correspondence education is not distance education.

Hawai'i Community College does not offer Correspondence Education.

Delivery Modes

Hawai'i CC offers classes in a variety of delivery modes to meet the needs of students, programs, and the College.

- Face-to-face classes:
In traditional face-to-face classes, students and instructor(s) meet in person at college campuses and off-site locations.
 - Students in face-to-face classes are required to submit Health Clearances and will be assessed mandatory student fees in accordance with [Hawaii Administrative Rule 11-157](#) and [EP 6.208 Mandatory Student Fees](#).
- Fully asynchronous classes:
 - Banner Instructional Method Code: Distance Completely Online (DCO)
 - Asynchronous online is a Distance Education (DE) mode in which all instruction is delivered online to students separated from the instructor(s) through the use of personal computers or similar devices that access the Internet.
 - There are no regularly scheduled meeting times and no in-person activities.
 - All coursework is done online. The student is never required to visit campus or a UH site (e.g., for testing, instructional activity, or orientation).
 - DCO can apply to asynchronous and/or synchronous approaches.
 - Considered DE for Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reporting
 - Students in asynchronous classes are exempt from submitting appropriate Health Clearances and are excluded from certain mandatory student fees in accordance with [Hawaii Administrative Rule 11-157](#) and [EP 6.208 Mandatory Student Fees](#).
- Fully synchronous classes:
 - Banner Instructional Method Code: DCO
 - Synchronous online is a DE mode that uses video or web conferencing technology for instruction and is delivered to students separated from the instructor(s) through the use of personal computers or similar devices that access the Internet at scheduled meeting times.

- There are no in-person activities.
- All coursework is done online. The student is never required to visit campus or a UH site (e.g. for testing, instructional activity, or orientation).
- DCO can apply to asynchronous and/or synchronous approaches.
- Considered DE for IPEDS reporting
- Students in synchronous classes are exempt from submitting appropriate Health Clearances and are excluded from certain mandatory student fees in accordance with [Hawaii Administrative Rule 11-157](#) and [EP 6.208 Mandatory Student Fees](#).
- Distance Interactive Video (DIV) classes:
 - Banner Instructional Method Code: DIV
 - Interactive Video is a DE mode in which students attend class in assigned video conference rooms at UH campuses or sites, where students may be separated from the instructor(s). DIV courses may have additional instructional activities online (both scheduled/synchronous or unscheduled/asynchronous).
 - Students in DIV classes are required to submit Health Clearances and will be assessed mandatory student fees in accordance with [Hawaii Administrative Rule 11-157](#) and [EP 6.208 Mandatory Student Fees](#).
- Hybrid (HYB) classes:
 - Banner Instructional Method Code: HYB
 - Hybrid class is a DE mode in which there is a mix of in-person and online (asynchronous or synchronous) instruction.
 - The class is hybrid if the in-person requirement(s) is scheduled/synchronous OR is held at a location determined by the instructor. (If the in-person requirement is unscheduled/asynchronous *and* not at a location determined by the instructor, the class is DCO.)
 - The online instruction may be scheduled/synchronous or unscheduled/asynchronous.
 - The instructor determines when students will attend face-to-face (in the classroom, laboratory, and/or field experience).
 - In-person instructional activities could include:
 - classroom learning
 - service learning
 - internships, practicum
 - field or clinical experiences
 - student teaching
 - in-person exams or assessments
 - in-person “intensive learning experience (i.e., 1 or 2-week summer intensive, or a weekend per semester when the class is otherwise online)
 - If the class is all online except for one meeting time on campus, that still counts as Hybrid.
 - In compliance with the US Department of Education credit hour definition and [UHCC Policy 5.228, Credit Hour](#), the combined face-to-face and online instructional time remains equivalent to a traditional face-to-face course.

- Students in hybrid classes are required to submit Health Clearances and will be assessed mandatory student fees in accordance with [Hawaii Administrative Rule 11-157](#) and [EP 6.208 Mandatory Student Fees](#).
- Blended classes:
 - Banner Instructional Method Code: DCO
 - A blended class is a DE mode that uses a combination of synchronous and asynchronous online delivery modes to deliver instruction.
 - There are no in-person activities.
 - All coursework is done online. The student is never required to visit campus or a UH site (e.g. for testing, instructional activity, or orientation).
 - In compliance with the US Department of Education credit hour definition and [UHCC Policy 5.228, Credit Hour](#), the combined online synchronous and asynchronous instructional time remains equivalent to a traditional face-to-face course.
 - Considered DE for IPEDS reporting.
 - Students in blended classes are exempt from submitting appropriate Health Clearances and are excluded from certain mandatory student fees in accordance with [Hawaii Administrative Rule 11-157](#) and [EP 6.208 Mandatory Student Fees](#).

Distance education instruction

The student learning outcomes and standards for academic rigor for distance education are the same for distance education courses as they are for classroom-based courses.

Syllabus Guidelines

Course syllabi for online classes should clearly articulate

- Course policies should include:
- Modes of communication between instructor and student (e.g., office hours, email, discussion boards)
- Communication turn-around times
- Grading and evaluation policies
- Support and resources for student learning

Course policies, modes of communication between instructor and student, means of grading and evaluation, and support for student learning should be clearly articulated in the course syllabus or other course information documentation. Students enrolled in distance education courses have access to campus services and resources such as academic advising, counseling, disability services, financial aid, tutoring, library, and other elements of student and academic support.

Student integrity and authentication

Students in distance education courses are held to the same academic standards as students enrolled in onsite instructional formats and are subject to the [UH Systemwide Student Conduct Code](#).

The University of Hawai'i (UH) authenticates the identity of students by issuing students a unique ID number. Students register their personal usernames and passwords. And like all other UH students, all Hawai'i CC students are required to use their username and password to access their distance education course materials and online resources in the UH's learning management system. It is a violation of the Student Conduct Code to share usernames and passwords. The Student Conduct Code applies to all virtual and physical locations of UH. Student Conduct Code violations that occur in distance education courses are subject to the same procedural actions as violations occurring in onsite classroom settings. This includes policies regarding cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and other acts of academic dishonesty. As stated in the Student Conduct Code, "Choosing to join the UH community obligates each student to abide by this code of conduct. As members of the UH community, students accept the responsibility to become fully acquainted with UH's rules and to comply with UH's authority. UH expects students to maintain standards of personal integrity that are in harmony with the educational goals of UH; to respect the rights, privileges, and property of others; and to observe national, state, and local laws and University policies and procedures."

Course learning assessment and student course evaluations

The assessment of Hawai'i CC distance education courses' student learning outcomes are equivalent to the methods used to assess face-to-face, hybrid and blended classes. Assessment of course content and learning outcomes is required for program review and accreditation.

Student course evaluations play an important role in improving course quality and are an integral component in faculty contract renewal and tenure/promotion applications. Student course evaluations are deployed each term for all Hawai'i CC courses, regardless of modality.

Oversight and evaluation of distance education course design and content

The academic department from which a course originates oversees distance education courses and their academic content. The department evaluates the effectiveness of its onsite and distance education courses and programs to ensure that they adhere to their specific criteria and the College's academic standards. This ensures that student learning and welfare are supported according to institutional policies.

Determination of Courses to be Offered through DE

- Departmental faculty members decide which courses will be taught through DE given the course objectives and learning needs of students.
- Decisions should be made collaboratively, based on discipline expertise.

Selection of Instructors to Teach DE Courses

- Department Chairs will ensure instructors selected to teach are adequately trained, prepared and willing to effectively teach a DE course, including demonstrating DE methodology and best practices as well as how to skillfully use relevant DE tools. For example, new online instructors will have successfully completed the Online Teaching Level 1 (and additionally Level 2 for fully online asynchronous courses) of the ITSO Badging Program (or other approved College-sponsored training program), or equally

comprehensive training at another institution, as evidenced by an online course evaluation.

- Department Chairs will document Department Guidelines and rationale for selection of Instructors to teach DE courses and submit it to the Distance Education committee.

DE Course Scheduling and Quality Assurance

- The course must meet federal requirements and accreditation standards, such as RSI, and promote student success.
- The first time an instructor teaches through a distance delivery mode, the instructor and the course should be evaluated by a Department Chair or designee. Departments can use established evaluation tools or implement other methods such as mentoring within the department for the purpose of providing constructive feedback.
- Instructors will complete an Online Course Compliance Form for each DE course, each semester, documenting their adherence to expectations in the areas of rigor, instructor-student contact, accessibility and student authentication. Online instructors who do not meet these standards will work with the Instructional Technology Support Office to improve their course(s). If improvements are not made, the course(s) will not be offered again until improvements are adequately completed.
- Instructors will provide feedback on graded activities (preferably individualized) in a timely manner.

The Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs is responsible for the administration of these procedures in support for DE.

Institutional support for distance education faculty

Hawai'i CC employs skilled support staff who provide distance education faculty with effective course design support, library support, technical support and training (including workshops, learning modules, and individual consultation), and guidelines regarding copyright, ADA, multimedia tools, and other resources. Faculty also have access to additional support and resources provided by the UH System.

Institutional support for students

Students enrolled in distance education courses have access to campus services and resources such as academic advising, counseling, disability services, financial aid, tutoring, library, and other elements of student and academic support. Hawai'i CC also provides distance education students access to the UH System's Distance Education Readiness activity, videos to orient students to the learning management system, and a Resources for DE Students website. It is the College's responsibility to periodically update these resources to incorporate new technological developments. In addition, the UH system maintains a free ITS Help Desk with 24-7-365 access via a toll-free phone number and email address, and live chat during the weekdays.

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Signed

Susan S. Kazama, Chancellor

Date: