

## University of Hawai'i at Hilo

### Distance Education Policy

#### **Purpose statement:**

UH Hilo recognizes the goal of distance education to provide access to post-secondary education to learners throughout the State of Hawai'i including present students and Hawai'i residents in rural and underserved areas. Distance education also enhances the university's opportunity to reach and recruit from constituencies beyond Hawai'i. Distance education supports UH Hilo's mission and goals, its institutional learning outcomes, and is effectively incorporated into existing undergraduate and graduate programs and their degree requirements.

This distance education policy aligns with the general UH system policies on distance education, which are listed on the *Distance Learning Policy Committee* webpage (<https://hilo.hawaii.edu/academics/dl/advisory-committee.php>). These policies include UH Executive Policy E5.204, UH BOR Policy 5.10, and UH BOR Policy 9.214.

#### **Definitions:**

Distance education, which is synonymous with the term "distance learning", is defined as instruction via synchronous (live-interactive) and asynchronous (anytime-anywhere) mechanisms:

Distance education is defined [. . .] as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. Distance education often incorporates technologies such as the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, in conjunction with any of the other technologies. (WASC)

In the remainder of this document, UH Hilo will be referred to as "the institution."

#### **Equivalence of distance education compared to classroom-based instruction:**

The same standards for academic rigor used for onsite venues of instruction (classrooms, labs, etc.) apply to courses taught via asynchronous and synchronous mechanisms. Expectations for course learning outcomes and policies, modes of communication between instructor and student, assignment schedule, means of grading and evaluation, course policies, and support for student learning such as tutoring and technical help should be clearly articulated in the course syllabus. Students enrolled in distance

education courses are eligible for campus resources such as disability services, counseling, library, advising, financial aid, and other elements of student support. Some student support services may only be available on campus.

### **Institutional support for students:**

The institution provides an *Online Learning Readiness Check* for distance education students and a website, *Help for Distance Learning Students*. It is the institution's responsibility to periodically update both to incorporate new technological developments. The UH system maintains an *ITS Help Desk* with a toll-free number, email address, and website.

### **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 Student Conduct Code.

The university authenticates the identity of all distance education students by issuing each student with a UH ID number. Students register their personal usernames and passwords. Like all other students enrolled at UH Hilo, distance education students are required to use their username and password to access their distance education course materials and online resources. 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 UH Hilo course catalog, "by enrolling in the University, students accept the responsibility to become fully acquainted with the University's regulations and to comply with the University's authority" (Catalog).

### **Oversight and evaluation of distance education course design and content:**

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

Faculty who deliver distance education are appropriately qualified and effectively supported by their academic unit. They should consult with their academic unit before offering distance education courses. Faculty are encouraged to utilize the online information about course design on the UH Hilo webpage *Distance Learning Faculty Resources* and to follow the *Online Course Design Certification* guidelines. These institutional practices have been developed to maintain the quality and integrity of all

distance education courses and assure that courses meet standards for institutional accreditation.

### **Institutional support for distance education faculty:**

The institution provides distance education faculty with effective support in course design, library support, delivery systems, technical support and training (including workshops and individual consultation), and guidelines regarding copyright, ADA, multimedia, and other resources.

In addition to employing competent staff with specialized skills for technical and infrastructural support of distance education, the institution employs a distance education coordinator to act as contact person, intra-system liaison, and onsite resource for students and faculty.

### **Course learning assessment and student course evaluations:**

It is the institution's responsibility to support, develop and implement effective methods of assessing student learning outcomes in distance education courses that are equivalent to the methods used to assess learning outcomes and competency skills in face-to-face classes. Assessment of course content and learning outcomes is required for program review and accreditation.

Student course evaluations are important in improving course quality. Course evaluations are an integral element in faculty's contract renewal and tenure/promotion applications. It is the institution's responsibility to provide an evaluation mechanism that is appropriate for distance education courses and provides data that is comparable to onsite classes.

### **Distance education coordination:**

The UH Executive Policy E5.204 states that the UH system has an "overall decentralized, mainstreamed and collaborative approach to distance learning" (Teaching Resources). It is the institution's responsibility to employ a UH Hilo distance education coordinator to represent UH Hilo in the system-wide Distance Learning Program Planning Group (DLPPG) and the Campus Distance Coordinators (CDC).

### **Works Cited**

Catalog, UH Hilo. <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/catalog/academic-dishonesty>

Distance Learning at UH Hilo. <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/academics/dl/>

Distance Learning Policy Committee, UH Hilo.  
<https://hilo.hawaii.edu/academics/dl/advisory-committee.php>

Teaching Resources, UH Hilo. <https://hilo.hawaii.edu/uhh/teaching/DLTaskForce.php>

WASC. "Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education." June 2013.

<http://accjc.org/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Evaluating-DE-and-CE.pdf>