UC San Diego Policy on Distance Education Courses

All courses, regardless of the mode of instruction, are subject to Academic Senate review and approval. All courses offered at UC San Diego should meet the same high standards in terms of the educational experience they offer to students. Hallmarks of these standards include:

- Active engagement of a qualified instructor who has significant expertise in the subject of the course;
- Frequent instructor guided activity to support student learning;
- A means for students to periodically assess their progress towards achievement of course learning goals.

Courses that meet these standards and employ (primarily or exclusively) technologically-mediated formats may be offered at UC San Diego via Distance Education courses (sometimes also referred to as online courses).

DEFINITIONS

Distance Education refers to a mode of instruction in which some or all students are physically separated from the instructor. A course will be considered a Distance Education course if (for some or all students) less than 50% of student-instructor interaction time was designed to occur face-to-face (meaning physically in the same room). A Distance Education course must support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor. Many technologies can be used to deliver Distance Education, including (but not limited to) recorded videos, online audio/video conferencing, online discussion forums, and online Learning Management Systems.

- ***Substantive interaction*** engages with students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion. It also includes providing direct instruction, assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework, providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency, facilitating group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency, or other approved instructional activities.

- ***Online courses*** do not require a physical classroom. All primary instruction contact hours (e.g., lecture, discussion) take place online. Format may be synchronous, asynchronous, or both.

    - ***Synchronous online courses*** provide a learning environment in which everyone participates at the same time.

    - ***Asynchronous online courses*** provide a learning environment in which everyone participates at different times. Examples may include (but are not limited to) email, online discussion forums, message boards, pre-recorded lectures, blogs, podcasts, etc.

Note that courses that are designed for greater than 50% of student-instructor interaction time to occur face-to-face (classroom-based) may also incorporate any of the above modalities as well, but are not considered a Distance Education course.

I. STANDARDS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES

Distance Education courses must meet the following standards:

1. Instructors and Instructional Assistants of Distance Education courses must have the required expertise and qualifications to offer courses that utilize teaching strategies and technologies for distance education. Departments and programs offering Distance Education courses are

responsible for ensuring the Instructor's and the Instructional Assistant's qualifications.

2. Instructors offering Distance Education courses must have processes in place to verify that each registered student is the same student who participates in and completes the course and receives academic credit. Examples of processes that can achieve this goal include:
    a. A secure log-in and password
    b. Proctored examinations
    c. New or other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identity

   Instructors must apply strict procedures to ensure that credibility and integrity are maintained at the highest level.
3. All campus policies and regulations for courses and instruction (registration deadlines, academic integrity, etc.) that apply to in-person courses also apply to distance education courses. As with in-person courses, distance education courses must accommodate students with disabilities.
4. Any synchronous interaction (for example in lectures, discussion sections, or any other setting) must meet the following minimum set of standards:
    a. Students must be able to both see and hear the instructor and view the instruction materials (for example, physical or electronic whiteboard, computer slides, experimental setups, etc.) with sufficient fidelity that no significant information is lost.
    b. Students must have appropriate and effective ways of asking questions.
    c. Students should be able to hear questions asked by other students and the instructor's answers.
    d. When a class has some students off-site and some students in-person, all students must have equal opportunity to participate in classroom discussions, and all students must have equal access to office hours.
5. As part of a commitment to clearly communicate to students, instructors are advised to provide a clear account of the requirements and expectations for student engagement in online and in-person (classroom-based) instruction in the course syllabus and related information.

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES

1. Distance Education courses must bear the letter R at the end of the course code.
    a. For a course that is already offered at UCSD in a conventional (non-distance) format, a new course proposal must be submitted for the Distance Education version (e.g. to offer BILD 1 using Distance Education, Biology would have to propose a new course, BILD 1R). Two courses that have the same subject code and course number with the exception of the R-designation (i.e. BILD 1 and BILD 1R) but will be taught with different online/in-person learning activities, must be equivalent except for their manner of instruction. All prerequisites, credit limitations, course descriptions, units, grading options (Letter, P/NP, S/U) must be the same. These courses will be deemed equivalent and will fulfill the same degree requirements for students.
    b. Course approval forms should include a statement under the "Other Catalog Information" section regarding the course delivery format, e.g. "This course will be delivered asynchronously".
2. Departments and programs must notify students of any additional fees associated with the verification of student identity and any non-UC online platforms or third-party applications that a student will need to access in order to participate in the course.
3. Departments and programs are required to submit a proposal to the Academic Senate (Undergraduate Council for undergraduate courses, or Graduate Council for graduate courses) for approval to offer a Distance Education course.

4. Third-party tools adopted by instructors in their courses must be FERPA compliant, protect student privacy, and be accessible. While not a requirement, R-course proposers should consult with Education Technology about any third party tools not already approved for use at UC San Diego (see https://blink.ucsd.edu/faculty/instruction/third-party/tools.html for a current list).
5. Maintaining academic integrity is critical in R-courses. While not a requirement, R-course proposers should consult with the Academic Integrity Office about methods to ensure integrity in the course.
6. Course design may be particularly important for asynchronous R-courses. While not a requirement, asynchronous R-course proposers should consult with the Teaching + Learning Commons about their course design.

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