

ACADEMIC SENATE: SAN DIEGO DIVISION

UC San Diego Policy on Distance Education Courses

All courses offered at UC San Diego should meet the same high standards in terms of the educational experience they offer to students, regardless of the mode of instruction. 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 remote or online courses).

DEFINITION

Distance Education refers to a mode of instruction in which some or all students are separated from the instructor. A Distance Education course must support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously (live but remote) or asynchronously (on demand and remote). Many technologies can be used to deliver Distance Education, including the internet, recorded videos, online audio/video conferencing, online discussion forums, and online Learning Management Systems. Distance Education courses can employ several mechanisms of instruction, including online lectures, online discussion sections, online office hours, and online discussion forums, each of which can be synchronous, asynchronous or a combination of both. 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).

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. Departments 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
3. Instructors must apply strict procedures to ensure that credibility and integrity are maintained at the highest level. Instructors must have a plan to monitor student progress and evaluate student learning outcomes through graded activities mediated through technology.

4. All campus policies and regulations for courses and instruction (registration deadlines, academic integrity, etc.) that apply to conventional courses also apply to distance education courses. As with in-person courses, distance education courses must accommodate students with disabilities.
5. Any synchronous interaction (for example in lectures, discussion sections, office hours, 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. Courses made available to students in off-campus sites may only be taught in facilities capable of sustaining a synchronous, two-way video and audio connection between UC San Diego and off-campus sites.
 - b. Students must have appropriate and effective ways of asking questions.
 - c. Student should be able to hear questions asked by other students and the instructor's answers.
 - d. When a class has some students remote 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.

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSES

1. Distance Education courses must bear the letter R (for Remote) 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).
 - b. Course approval forms should include a statement under the "Other Catalog Information" section regarding the course delivery format, e.g. "This course is a Distance Education course".
2. Departments must notify students of any additional fees associated with the verification of student identity.
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. Prior to Senate review, proposers are required to consult with the Teaching + Learning Commons to ensure a Distance Education course meets the quality assurance standards set forth by the Quality Matters Rubric (<https://www.qualitymatters.org/qa-resources/rubric-standards/higher-ed-rubric>).

III. GUIDELINES FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE PROPOSALS

Distance Education course proposals submitted to the Undergraduate or Graduate Councils must include the following:

1. Draft course approval form.
2. Responses to the supplementary questions listed below.
3. A letter from the Teaching + Learning Commons addressing: a. The current stage of course development; and b. If the course design meets the Quality Matters Rubric standards and accessibility requirements (or the path forward to meet these standards).
4. A letter from the provost, department chair or program director. The letter should address how the proposed R course fits into the curriculum and include plans for incorporating distance education into the unit's degree program(s).

5. For undergraduate courses developed for UC's Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI), a copy of the ILTI proposal. Courses must be approved through ILTI prior to submission to the Undergraduate Council.

Supplementary Questions (to be answered as part of the course proposal):

(In the following, IA refers to Instructional Assistant)

1. What is the justification for offering the course in a distance education format?
 - a. Why is a distance education format the right medium for this particular course?
 - b. If both an in-person and distance education version of a course will be offered, what is the justification for offering the course in both formats? How will students be advised in regards to the differences between the modalities and which version to take?
 - c. How will the modality improve student learning and access?
 - d. How does the proposed course fit into the curriculum?
2. How will the course content be delivered (e.g. Learning Management System, online textbook/videos, video hosting platforms, lecture formats, etc.)?
3. What technologies/tools will be used for student-instructor interaction, student-IA interaction, student-student interaction, and instructor-IA interactions? Indicate: a. the frequency of these interactions; b. whether the interactions are required or optional; and c. whether the interactions are asynchronous or synchronous.
4. How will students be evaluated (e.g. quizzes, written assignments, problems sets, final exam, final paper, final presentation)? Describe the frequency of the evaluations and the type of feedback students receive.
5. Describe how student identity will be verified, especially for high stake assessments like midterms and final exams. How will academic integrity be handled?
6. If the course employs IAs, describe how the IAs will interact with the students and provide the student/IA ratio. Describe how the IAs will be trained, and how the IAs will interact with instructors.
7. If the course requires assignments that necessitate the use of technological tools that students may not readily have access to (e.g. submission of response videos or group-based video projects), what are the plans to ensure that students have access to the equipment needed (e.g. renting or borrowing equipment from Educational Technology Services)?

Approved by the Educational Policy Committee on July 3, 2019; effective November 1, 2019; updated June 15, 2021. This policy supersedes the CEP Policy on Remote and Distance Instruction (enacted July 13, 2011).