



Proposed UAF Policy 10.04.091

Original Adoption: May 9, 2023

Revised: N/A

Responsible Chancellor's Cabinet Member: Vice Provost & Accreditation Liaison Officer

Responsible Department/Office: Office of Accreditation and Assessment, and eCampus

Distance Education Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

At the University of Alaska Fairbanks, “regular and substantive interaction” with the instructor is essential to differentiate between self-paced (correspondence) courses and interactive (distance education) courses. This is necessary to comply with federal regulations for financial aid and NWCCU accreditation policies.

BACKGROUND & JUSTIFICATION

NWCCU policy states that institutions must have a policy ensuring regular and substantive interaction as defined by Department of Education regulation 34 CFR 600.02. Failure to have such a policy could result in a Department of Education Financial Aid audit or an accreditation finding as out of compliance. Demonstrated compliance with these regulations is required during the sixth-year accreditation report and the mission fulfillment report in year seven.

DEFINITIONS

NWCCU: Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Distance Education:

Distance education (DE) is education that uses one or more types of technology to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously.

Regular refers to:

- Interaction between a student and an instructor(s) prior to the student's completion of a course or competency that is scheduled and predictable
- Monitoring the student's academic engagement and success
- Monitoring the need for and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student
- Responding to student requests for assistance or questions in a timely manner

Substantive refers to:

The quality of teacher interaction that results in improved learning experiences and is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as “engaging students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion.”

REFERENCES RELIED UPON

[NWCCU policy on Distance Education](#)

[Department of Education regulation on Distance Education and Innovation](#)

RESPONSIBILITIES

Office of Accreditation and Assessment

eCampus

Academic Deans

NON-COMPLIANCE

N/A

EXCEPTIONS

No exception exists to this policy.

PROCEDURES

Regular and substantive interaction between instructor(s) and students requires:

The institution's online instruction is delivered through appropriate media.

The instructors meet the requirements of the institution's accrediting agency for instruction in the subject matter.

Instructors engage in at least two forms of substantive interaction meeting the regulatory requirements for the course or competency.

The institution has established scheduled and predictable opportunities for substantive interaction between students and instructors and created expectations for instructors to monitor each student's engagement and substantively engage with students on the basis of that monitoring.

Instructors are responsive to students' requests for instructional support.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Faculty Senate has defined “regular and substantive interaction” as faculty-initiated, meaningful, and beneficial interaction between the instructor and the students. Information about the instructor’s communication plan, to include how students can expect interaction from the instructor, when to expect feedback from assignments, and response times to student-initiated outreach must be on the syllabus.

The technologies that may be used to offer “**distance education**” include:

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 conference; or
- Other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed above.

All UAF distance courses must **include at least two of the following:**

- Direct instruction - lectures, demonstrations, establishing learning objectives, modeling a process or activity
- Meaningful, beneficial and timely feedback – prompt assessment of student performance and detailed explanations that help students understand where and how to improve future work
- Providing additional information related to course content to students
- Responding to course content and assignment-related questions
- Facilitating group discussion on course content or assignments

POLICY APPROVED BY:



Daniel M. White, Chancellor
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Signed: 05/09/2023