

# COLLEGE OF MICRONESIA-FSM

## BOARD POLICY No. 3400

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### **BP 3400 Distance Education**

Date Adopted: 06 April 2021

Date Revised:

Date Reviewed:

### **References:**

U.S. Department of Education. Electronic Code of Federal Regulations. Title 34, Subtitle B, Chapter VI, Part 600.2 Definitions

College of Micronesia-FSM Distance Learning Proposal, October 27, 2020.

### **DEFINITIONS**

Distance education is instruction delivered synchronously or asynchronously using one or more technologies that support regular and substantive interaction between an instructor and students who are separated from the instructor and may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education can incorporate 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, in conjunction with any of the other technologies, and other media. (ACCJC)

Hybrid courses are courses that replace a portion (at least 50%) of the face-to-face “seat time” with online instruction. Face-to-face instruction is reduced, but not eliminated. In compliance with the US Department of Education credit hour definition and the College of Micronesia-FSM credit hour policy ([BP 3119](#)), the combined face-to-face and online instructional time remains equivalent to a traditional face-to-face course. The syllabus must indicate both in-class and online requirements including:

The number of hours that are face-to-face vs. online, meeting dates/times  
The activities that will be held face-to-face vs. online.

Student attendance/participation for the face-to-face hours is mandatory. Recommendation: At least one in-person in-class assessment should be assigned each semester.

Certified Faculty is faculty who has completed training for design, management, and delivery of a distance education curriculum and received a five-year renewable certificate from the Institute for Student Learning and Excellence in Teaching (ISLET).

## **POLICY**

### **Equivalence of Distance Education to Onsite Instruction:**

The same standards for academic rigor used for onsite venues of instruction (classrooms, labs, etc.) apply to courses taught by distance education deliveries.

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.

### **Regular and Substantive Interaction for Distance Education**

A faculty member assigned to teach a distance education course must initiate regular and substantive interaction. Regular interaction is defined as scheduled interaction with students at least two times per week for fall and spring semesters and three times per week for the summer session. Substantive interaction is defined as interactions connected to the subject of the course and contribute to the students' progress toward course, program and institutional student learning outcomes. A faculty member must utilize at least two different types of interaction per course per semester. Examples of substantive interactions include but are not limited to:

- Correspondence between the instructor and students via email, messaging or another electronic modality that helps to clarify content knowledge, improve skills and serves as a model of professional networking.
- Effective feedback to students – written comments, audio or video notes, individual conferences (these ought to be more than ‘good work’, ‘needs improvement’ or assigning a grade);
- Online discussions and chats – model professional discourse; pose guiding questions related to academic subject; propose counterpoints or alternative points of view that students may not be considering; establish connections among students' ideas; encourage curiosity; and provide encouragement for students who may be struggling;
- Regularly scheduled online review sessions, tutorials, office hours, or individual appointments (usually synchronous for review sessions);
- Course materials (ex. Recorded webinars, videos, and reading materials) which facilitate synchronous or asynchronous interactions **AND** require the student to contact the instructor or participate in an online discussion moderated by the instructor.
- Instructor announcements to the class regarding course content and upcoming assignments or events.
- Modification of the course content or course materials in response to emergent student needs, e.g. an instructor adds extra videos in a topic after they see students are interested in that area; or posts a compilation of exemplary student work.

Regular and substantive interaction will be monitored through review of course syllabi and other materials posted on the institutional learning management system (LMS); the instructional coordinators and dean of academic programs have administrative access to the LMS where interactions can be monitored and evaluated. Faculty will monitor student engagement through the institutional LMS and software used to identify students at risk.

## Cost to Student

The college's ongoing goal shall be to offer distance education in FSM at a cost to the student similar to charges for regular on-campus instruction. Students in distance education programs are recognized as members of the student body of the offering campus including having access to co-curricular and fee-based services. However, distance education students who have no opportunity to benefit from certain on-campus fees may have those fees waived or may be charged substitute fees that support the unique requirements of distance learners.

## 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 Academic Honesty Policy](#). This policy is discussed with students during orientation, at faculty training and included in the course syllabus and reviewed at the beginning of each semester. Administrative procedures for this policy are described in [AP 3116](#).

The college authenticates the identity of all distance education students by issuing each student with a COM-FSM ID number. Students register their personal usernames and passwords. Like all other students enrolled at COM-FSM, distance education students are required to use their username and password to access their distance education course materials and online resources. It is a breach of the [Violations of Responsibility Policy](#) to share usernames and passwords. The Violations of Responsibility Policy applies to all virtual and physical locations of COM-FSM. 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.

## Faculty Compensation for Distance Education Teaching/Class Size:

Faculty will be compensated for the same contact hours as in face-to-face courses. Course distribution will remain the same: contact hours and faculty load is 12-15 contact hours and 4 preparations for a regular semester, 6 contact hours and 1-2 preparations for summer.

Class size minimum for distance education is 10 and maximum size is 25 per section for regular lecture type courses. Internships, practicums and field placements will continue with 5 students per section.

## RESPONSIBILITY

### Administration

It is the responsibility of the college administration to ensure that:

- distance education programs are consistent with the college's institutional role and mission;
- there is a planning and evaluation process, and academic oversight;
- the technology infrastructure and services and associated faculty support are adequate to enable instructional quality; and
- there are appropriate processes for verification of student identity.

In addition, distance learners have comparable access to campus services, including but not limited to admissions, orientation, financial aid, registration, counseling, advisement, tutoring, and library services. If a distance education program is a joint effort among campuses, it is the responsibility of the supporting sites to provide for the legitimate needs of the students physically on their campus, even if the degree or certificate the student is pursuing will be conferred by a different campus. Responsibility for supporting students may be shared among campuses i.e. campuses where students may participate in synchronous interactive sessions and/or receive assistance and support.

### **Instructional Affairs/Faculty**

It is the responsibility of the Instructional Affairs and faculty to:

#### **FACULTY**

- Deliver programs & courses and implement appropriate instructional materials and methods.
- Adhere to using the electronic tools and platforms for distance education delivery as prescribed by the ISLET. Should there be a need to use additional tools or platform, such requests should be explicitly made in writing to the ISLET for consideration and approval.
- Commit to all necessary support for a period sufficient to enable current students to complete their degree/certificates.
- Commit to providing accurate and complete information about courses and programs, including entering all course and program data into all applicable college information systems.
- 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.

#### **DIRECTOR OF ISLET**

- Coordinate distance education.
- Assist each faculty member in development of online courses and provide final recommendation to CC for implementation of the course.
- Collaborates with campuses regarding program plans, support needs and requirements.
- Regularly assesses community needs and communicates the results of those assessments throughout the college.

#### **CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**

- Establish processes for assuring quality and integrity of all distance education curricula and meeting all applicable accreditation requirements.

#### **INSTRUCTIONAL AFFAIRS**

- Oversees course student learning assessment and student course evaluations.
- Provide an evaluation mechanism that is appropriate for distance education courses and provides data that is comparable to what is gathered for onsite classes. Student course evaluations are important in improving course quality.

### **Institutional Support for 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, as well as online venues for faculty group interaction and peer-mediated troubleshooting.

### **Institutional Support for Students**

The institution provides a variety of orientations and tutorials for students taking distance education courses and a [Helpdesk](#) for distance learning students to submit questions and requests.

### **Distance Education Program Planning Group:**

The distance education program planning group will be composed of the director for ISLET, instructional coordinators and the dean of academic programs. The distance education program planning group plans and coordinates distance and online programs to meet needs within FSM and accreditation standards. The group advises programs, recommends allocations of college resources, and coordinates the master listing

of distance and online programs. These members will meet with the VP for instructional affairs and the VP for institutional effectiveness and quality assurance to formulate a college-wide distance education action plan as part of the Integrated Educational Master Plan.