

Heidelberg University

Distance Education Curricular Policies and Procedures

Introduction: Course Quality Best Practices and Standards

The following distance education¹ policies serve as the basis for delivering Heidelberg courses at a distance. All courses at Heidelberg University are expected to produce high quality learning outcomes, and a course delivered at a distance must produce learning outcomes equivalent to its seated counterpart offered under the same departmental prefix and course number. These policies are therefore also intended to assist instructors, academic departments, the General Faculty, and the Office of Academic Affairs with the development and implementation of an assessment framework for evaluating the quality of Heidelberg University distance education courses and any future programs.

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1.0 Teaching/Learning Standards

1.1 All distance education courses must comply with federal regulations pertaining to distance education, including requirements to have regular and substantive interaction between instructors and students.

¹ Definitions of “distance education,” and “online course” are provided in Appendix 1.

1.2 Instructors in distance education courses are expected to maintain the standards detailed in section 2.2.7.1.1 of the Faculty Manual unless otherwise specified (e.g. maintain availability to students, distribute a syllabus, maintain accurate records). An exception is made for 2.2.7.1.1B such that distance education courses need not have synchronous scheduled final exam periods.

1.3 Distance education courses must be comparable to traditional seated classes in the expected student workload and the academic rigor of content and assignments.

2.0 Media and Materials Standards

2.1 The course site shall be accessible to students by the start day of the course.

2.2 Prior approval for use of copyrighted materials as required by law, and by University intellectual property policies, is obtained before the course materials are released to students on the Internet (see Section 2.12.3 of the Faculty Manual).

2.3 The course website is maintained during the entire length of the course using the latest Heidelberg Learning Management System².

3.0 Accessibility Standards

3.1 Faculty are expected to participate in continuing education and professional development (as demonstrated in the Faculty Evaluation Process), and consult with the Owen Center for Teaching and Learning as necessary.

3.2 All written assignment pages are provided in a widely available file format such as plain text, PDF, HTML, Microsoft Word, etc.

3.3 Distance Education students have access to sufficient library resources, including electronic resources accessible through the internet.

3.4 Academic counseling and advising is available to Heidelberg University students taking Heidelberg courses at a distance.

4.0 Privacy and Protection Standards

4.1 Instructors follow the policies outlined in the [University's Information Technology Use and Security Policy](#), as well as its [FERPA Information and Policy regulations](#).

² The current Learning Management System (LMS) is Canvas.

5.0 Evaluation Standards

- 5.1 Instructors of distance education courses are subject to the same evaluative instruments and procedures that govern traditional seated courses.
- 5.2 Student feedback will be solicited using the institutionally approved method, equivalent to traditional seated courses.
- 5.3 Courses are evaluated by the instructor on a regular basis. Instructional outcomes are reviewed by AAC annually. Based on reviews of academic assessment data, AAC can make recommendations to the General Faculty.
- 5.4 Distance education courses are subject to the same evaluative procedures as traditional seated courses with respect to Faculty Evaluation Process.

6.0 Institutional Support Standards

- 6.1 The General Faculty of Heidelberg University must approve new-courses for credit.
- 6.2 Any currently approved in-person course that will be offered online must be approved by the Department Chair in consultation with the Provost or designee.

7.0 Student Support Standards

- 7.1 Students enrolled in Heidelberg University distance courses are entitled to the same quality of help from CNIT, Library Services, and Academic Support Services.
- 7.2 Technical requirements for student access are available through Computer Network and Information Technology (CNIT).

8.0 Faculty Support Standards

- 8.1 Instructors teaching distance education courses at Heidelberg must complete the Learning Online Teaching and Learning (LOTL) Canvas course unless the Provost grants an exemption.
- 8.2 The Owens Center for Teaching and Learning will provide supportive personnel and instructional resources necessary to assist faculty in creating quality distance education courses.
- 8.3 Instructor assistance shall be available for distance education instruction, comparable to traditional seated courses, including peer mentoring.

APPENDIX 1 – Definitions

1. “Distance” education is defined as >75% of the course content delivered “at a distance,” i.e., not in person, where the students are separated from the instructor by time or space.
2. “Online” education is defined as being Internet-based, distance delivery of course content using a Learning Management System.

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