

Howard University

Distance Education Policy

May 18, 2000

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I. Introduction

Scope of the Policy

This Distance Education Policy applies to distance education courses and program offered by or sponsored by Howard University and its academic units.

In general the University policies apply in the distance education context. In some cases those University policies need to be adapted and applied to the special features of distance education, but for most situations current University policies can be applied in a straight forward fashion.

This policy was prepared by the Howard University Distance Education Task Force, Prof. Steven D. Jamar (Law) and Dr. Narendra K. Rustagi (Business) , co-chairs, from March 7, 2000 through May 16, 2000 with substantial contributions and input from representatives of each academic unit.

General Principles and Concerns

This policy statement should be read in light of the general principles and concerns noted in this section. Furthermore, no policy should be read in isolation; the policies are intended to work together to advance distance education at the University.

Working Definition of Distance Education

For the purposes of this policy statement, distance education is defined as a formal educational process in which the students and teacher are not at the same location. The method of instruction would typically center around computer and network technology, but may well include audio, video, and hard-copy correspondence. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous.

Distance education can include courses for which college credit is offered as well as certificate courses for which students receive a certificate for completion of the course or set of courses, but the courses do not count toward a degree or toward college credit. For the most part, this Task Force Report addresses the former sort of course (college credit toward a degree) unless otherwise noted.

Rapidity of Change

This University policy relating to distance education should be revisited and revised (as needed) annually (or at least biannually) because of the rapidity of change in the field. Proposed policy changes should be circulated for comments from the University community. Upon finalization by the reviewing committee, the new policies should be distributed to everyone at the University in a timely manner.

Technical Support Requirements

The University is committed to providing sufficient physical, financial, and technical resources including proper hardware, software, personnel, and training to implement effective distance education programs. The University and the university units must take into account the resources necessary to accomplish what is to be undertaken. While some distance education initiatives will be undertaken simply as part of the ordinary course of business of the university and the various university units, the start-up as well as maintenance costs associated with conducting effective distance education cannot be ignored or merely shifted downstream. Training for faculty and staff, technological support, and technological infrastructure all need to be factored into any actions to be taken.

Educational Integrity

The educational integrity of distance education is important, particularly for degree-granting programs. By its very nature distance education is not the same as on-site education. The university and university units ought not shy away from distance education merely because it is new or different from what has been done before, but they must act in such a way as to insure the integrity of the distance education programs within the scope of accreditation mandates.

The underlying principle of equivalence should play a prominent role in developing and assessing distance education courses and programs.

Decentralization

For most aspects of distance education the University adopts a decentralized approach and leaves most of the decisions and support decentralized. Nonetheless, the University recognizes that there are certain infrastructure matters for which centralization and uniformity make sense, that certain functions can be handled best through a central office (e.g., obtaining intellectual property clearances), and that some centralization can have positive effects in sharing and disseminating information among university units.

II. Distance Education Courses and Programs

This section of the Policy Statement covers matters pertaining to any distance education course or program offered by Howard University. These policies do not pertain to a student taking a course from a provider of distance education outside of Howard University and seeking to transfer credit for it to their program of study.

Distance Education Course and Program Design and Evaluation

1. Responsibility for the development of new distance education courses and programs and for the review of existing courses and programs rests with each academic unit's committee which is responsible for overseeing the academic unit's curriculum.

2. When selecting courses to offer, procedures for evaluation of the organization, content, and delivery of distance education courses may be different from, but must be equivalent to, those used by Howard University for evaluation of course organization, content and delivery in on-campus courses. This must be determined by each academic unit offering distance education courses or programs.

3. Each academic unit which offers distance education courses must use the same or equivalent course evaluation procedures to assess the courses as are used for on-campus courses. At a minimum, students in distance education courses should be requested to complete a student assessment sheet for each of the courses taken. The assessment sheet must be developed and disseminated by each academic unit.

4. Distance education courses and programs must be subject to regular ongoing assessment by the academic unit and by the University. Periodically, the offering college or school must evaluate the effectiveness of the offerings and reconsider whether the course or program is appropriately taught by distance education instruction.

5. In the event that Howard University seeks to contract with a provider from the outside to supply an entire distance education program, the provider must be a college or university that is accredited by the applicable regional accrediting agency (Middle States) and, if appropriate, by the nationally recognized accrediting agency pertinent to the field of study offered by academic units offering distance education courses or programs.

Student Performance Evaluation and Student-Faculty Interaction

6. Each distance education course must include procedures for monitoring and assessing student performance. These procedures must be at least equivalent to those used in comparable on-campus courses. Criteria for student success in distance education courses must be at least as rigorous and comprehensive as those used in on-campus courses.

7. Each distance education course must provide timely feedback to students regarding their progress and performance by methods equivalent to those used in on-campus courses.

8. Each distance education course must provide sufficient opportunities for interaction between students and the faculty member responsible for the course in ways which would be analogous to or substitutes for office hours and class-contact hours.

9. Whenever the enrollment in a distance education course substantially exceeds the number of students who can be effectively taught in the distance education context, or exceeds the number of students enrolled in a similar class on campus, Howard University will either assign additional faculty or assign appropriate faculty/graduate assistants to provide adequate student access to an instructor.

Distance Education-Related Contracts for Courses and for Course-Related Services

10. Howard University may from time to time choose to provide (or at times may need to provide) a distance education course or program to or for another university or college, or may receive a distance education course or program from another university or college. In either of these instances, the Task Force recommends that an agreement should be worked out between the two institutions which addresses, at a minimum, the following matters:

- a. *Accreditation.* If applicable, evidence of the appropriate accreditation(s) should be provided.
- b. *Administrative Structure of the Program.* Delineate which administrative officers are responsible for the course or program and which entity will grant credit.
- c. *Course or Program.* Describe the purpose, intended clientele, and student admission and retention requirements.

In the case of a course, the agreement should further provide a description of the course, the number of credits to be earned, beginning and ending dates, instructional methodology and assessment methods.

In the case of a program, in addition to providing the information specified above for each course in the program, the agreement should describe the complete program fully, including course distribution requirements, options, and the total number of credits required for completion. In addition, the agreement should indicate the anticipated schedule of course offerings and, if applicable, provide evidence that the program satisfies state or national licensing or credentialing requirements.

- d. *Student Costs, Services and Rights.* Describe complete costs to students, refund policies, complaint procedures, and all student services that will be available and which entity will provide them.
- e. *Faculty.* Describe the faculty who will be teaching the course or courses, including field of preparation rank, highest degree earned, full-time/part-time status. Agreements between entities must address faculty compensation, workload and intellectual property issues.
- f. *Instructional Resources.* Describe instructional equipment, instructional support equipment, instructional support personnel, and library facilities, and delineate which entity will supply these.
- g. *Facilities.* Describe classroom spaces and other physical resources and which entity will supply these.

- h. *Fiscal Responsibilities.* Outline the total costs to the entity receiving the course/program and when and how reimbursement will be made.

III. Faculty Issues

Faculty issues are divided into four sections: (1) who may teach distance education courses; (2) faculty rights and responsibilities; (3) workload/compensation issues; and 4) intellectual property issues. For the most part current university policies toward faculty will not need to be modified to accommodate distance education in the short run. Nonetheless, there are some special aspects of distance education and faculty engaging in it which ought to be addressed and there are likely to be some additional issues arising in the future such as the possibility of a Howard University faculty member having a remote office and providing courses to Howard University resident students on campus. These latter sorts of issues are not fully addressed in this policy statement.

Who May Teach Distance Education Courses

11. Distance education courses for credit toward a degree must be taught only by regularly-appointed Howard University faculty member, including full-time, clinical, visiting, and adjunct faculty members who are hired under the policies and procedures used by the Howard University's schools/colleges for the appointment of adjunct/clinical/visiting faculty responsible for on-campus instruction.

Faculty Rights and Responsibilities

12. Issues of teaching methodology are to be determined by the schools and colleges and by the individual faculty members preparing and teaching distance education courses.

13. The general rules regarding faculty conduct, office hours, and faculty responsibilities in general apply in the distance education setting.

14. Procedures for evaluating faculty responsible for distance education courses may be different from, but must be equivalent to, those used by Howard University for evaluating faculty teaching on-campus courses.

15. Whenever the enrollment in a distance education course substantially exceeds the number of students who can be effectively taught in the distance education context, or exceeds the number of students enrolled in a similar class on campus, Howard University will either assign additional faculty or assign appropriate faculty/graduate assistants to provide adequate student access to an instructor.

16. Faculty teaching distance education courses are responsible to develop adequate facility with the distance education technologies and techniques to be effective teachers.

Workload/Compensation

The 2000 Howard University Workload Policy addresses the general issue of faculty workload for the various schools and departments. The Workload Policy sets general guidelines for the university and for each school and department, but leaves the details to each school and department. Indeed, the Workload Policy mentions distance education as a special sort of teaching to be taken into account in determining workload. Consequently, the workload policy

does not need special attention. However, in this general area, in order to gather information to continue to refine workload and compensation issues in the area of distance education, the University requires the following:

17. Schools and departments are required to report annually to the Provost the written policy of the school with respect to release time and other workload adjustments for creating and teaching distance education courses. If the school or department does not have such a policy, the lack of one should also be reported.

Ownership and Use Issues/Intellectual Property Concerns

Many possible intellectual issues arise relating to distance education including:

1. Ownership of the educational materials;
2. Use of copyrighted materials prepared by others; and
3. Rights to use, transmit, display, etc., works of others.

Though not all issues can be resolved at this time, this policy statement attempts to articulate policies which are fair and which will function as useful guidelines but which are also designed to permit flexibility and to permit adaptation to ever-changing circumstances as technology and institutions change.

18. The faculty member who authored the work owns the work.

19. Policy: With respect to works which the faculty member owns, the University has the following rights:

- a. **To assign or otherwise permit other faculty to use the work for teaching the course, e.g., if the unit wants to offer multiple sections of a course and wants or needs more than a single person to teach it;**
- b. **To use the work for up to two years without an additional license arrangement with the faculty member:**
 - 1) **If that faculty member is no longer teaching the course;**
 - 2) **If an additional or other faculty member is assigned to teach the course during that two year period from the time the course is first created and taught; or**
 - 3) **If the owner of the work is no longer employed by the university.**

20. The faculty member has an unlimited right to use the work at another school or for other purposes if the faculty member ceases employment with the university, provided the specific contract for the creation of the work does not provide otherwise.

IV. Technical and Institutional Support Issues

Unlike most current modes of instruction at the University, the success of distance education programs is critically dependant upon the reliability of the technologies employed for distance education. The reliability is determined largely by the speed with which services are provided to correct technical problems that are inherently associated with communication over the Internet.

This section addresses certain institutional matters. Most of the statements are in the form of recommendations rather than in the form of more concrete policy statements.

University Support

21. The University will develop and maintain institutional support of distance education including the online eGuide (as noted in Recommendation 17 and Appendix B in the May 18, 2000 Task Force Report.).

22. The University will provide comprehensive faculty and student support services for teaching and learning to schools providing distance education programs.

23. The University will provide student academic support services in a manner equivalent to those provided to resident students.

24. The University will not require university units to implement distance education policies without insuring that there is sufficient financial and technical support for the affected unit to implement the policies effectively.

Library Access Policies

There are a number of special problems related to provision of library services in distance education. In this section a number of policies relating to library access have been developed. Nonetheless, this portion of this policy statement is not complete; it is anticipated that much more work on these issues would need to be done by the library in conjunction with schools and colleges as the schools and colleges engaged in distance education learn more about what their needs are and as the library services become more automated and electronically focused over time. Some of the problems which exist for which solutions can certainly be found include: (1) contracts with electronic services vendors which base their pricing on the number of full time equivalent students (how does one count distance education students for these contracts?); (2) use of online-services by resident Howard students; (3) access to services by non-Howard students and pricing of the access; (4) issues concerning security and the attitudes of the libraries and the university toward security; (5) developing consortia/relationships with other university libraries; (6) development of EBooks services; (7) use of scanning/streaming/other online technologies for providing materials; and (8) a host of issues relating to fees and means of providing information to students.

25. Schools shall collaborate with University administrators and library managers to ensure that appropriate library services are available to all Howard University affiliated distance education students and faculty.

26. A special and separate allocation shall be earmarked for distance education library services inasmuch as equitable distance education library services involve personalized information assistance and document delivery above and beyond that provided through traditional on-campus library service. The components with fiscal and legal implications include:

- a. reciprocal or contractual borrowing arrangements with libraries and other interlibrary loan services;
- b. prompt document delivery via a courier system, Federal Express, UPS, and/or electronic transmission;
- c. access to course reserve materials in accordance with copyright law.

27. The University will pursue arrangements with other libraries to allow access by distance education students to those libraries, perhaps on a reciprocal basis or pay-per-use basis or other basis as may be appropriate.

28. Howard University is responsible for assuring that its distance education library programs meet or exceed national and regional accreditation standards and professional association standards and guidelines.

Appendix

Affected University Academic Policies and Procedures

In this appendix various Howard University policies are identified and the assessment of the Task Force as to whether the policy needs to be changed for distance education is stated.

Code of Student Academic Conduct (esp. Cheating and Plagiarism)

No changes are needed to the existing policy. However, additional specific instruction may be warranted regarding application of the Code of Academic Conduct distance education. The need for special care not to cut and paste without full attribution is an ongoing problem for resident students and is likely to be exaggerated in the online context with greater use of online materials.

Equal Opportunity

Current Howard University Policy

Howard University provides quality education for any student, with an emphasis on providing educational opportunities for those students who may not otherwise have an opportunity to acquire an education of the type provided at Howard University. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin, sex marital status, religion, or handicap in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other University-administered programs and employment.

Recommendation: No changes are needed to the existing policy.

Admission

No changes are needed to the existing policy. The University should develop an entirely on-line application process for all levels of study: undergraduate, graduate, professional, and continuing education.

Grading Requirements

No changes are needed to the existing policy.

Residency Requirements

Changes need to be made to the residency requirements. The changes need to be developed by the school/college in which the students are enrolled.

Time Limitation to Obtain Degree

No changes are needed to the existing policy.

Degree Requirements

No changes are needed to the existing policy.

Financial Aid

No changes are needed to the existing policy.

Incomplete Grades

No changes are needed to the existing policy.

Accreditation

Howard University is fully accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools/Commission on Higher Education, and by more than 20 additional professional bodies germane to the 50-plus degree programs offered in the University's 16 schools and colleges.

Changes

Any changes to the existing policies must be based on the accrediting standards for the particular school or college by the appropriate accrediting agency for that school or college.

Academic Advising

No changes to the existing policy are needed other those related to on-line residency. A process should be devised that will allow students the flexibility to receive academic and other advising (financial aid, grievance, etc.) on-line. Such a process should be developed by the academic units.

Attendance

Attendance must be required and must be determined by the academic units in which the students are enrolled. Attendance also must be adequately evaluated at the completion of a course by the instructor. Just what attendance means in the distance education context is not clear and could mean a variety of things and could vary by the nature of the course. Developing detailed policies regarding attendance is best left at the level of the academic unit rather than at the university level. A general university requirement of attendance would be sufficient for a university level policy.

Probation, Suspension, and Readmission

No changes to the existing policy other those related to on-line residency.

Intra-University Transfer

No changes to the existing policy other those related to on-line residency.

Reporting of Grades

No changes to the existing policy other those related to on-line residency.

Transfer of Academic Credit

No changes to the existing policy other those related to on-line residency.

Disabled Students and Students with Special Needs

No changes to the existing policy other those related to on-line residency.

Withdrawal from a Course

No changes are needed to the existing policy. The University should, however, develop a process that will enable students to make changes in their academic programs on-line as opposed to in person or via the voice communications.

Dropping Courses

No changes are needed to the existing policy.