**Northland College**

**Policy on Distance Education Methodologies, Courses & Programs**

Approved November 29th, 2022, by Academic Council

**Definitions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

*Distance Education*

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed below to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor or instructors and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously.

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

(1) the internet;

(2) one-way and two-way transmission through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite or wireless communications devices;

(3) audio conference; or

(4) other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in items 1-3 above.

For purposes of this definition, an instructor is an individual responsible for delivering course content and who meets the qualifications.

*Distance Education Course*

A course in which at least 75% of the instruction and interaction occurs using one or more of the technologies listed in the definition of distance education, with the faculty and students physically separated from each other.

*Distance Education Program*

An academic program offered in whole or in part[[2]](#footnote-2) through distance education, regardless of whether a face-to-face, on-ground or residential option is also available.

**Assumptions**

Northland College is primarily a residential college committed to providing in-person instruction to students. In most instances, distance education methodologies are used to supplement in-person instruction for students in-residence at the College.

In some instances, however, distance education classes or programs may be offered by the College to meet the needs of non-traditional students who are not able to be in residence on a full-time basis, or to meet curricular needs when a qualified instructor is not available locally.

**Use of Distance Education Methodologies**

If instructors wish to use distance education technologies for a class on a regular and recurring basis to support substantive interactions between students and the instructor while physically separated from one another, instructors must secure prior approval from Academic Council either through a course modification proposal or as an explicit request in the context of a new course proposal.

Proposals for the use of distance education methodologies will be assessed by Academic Council on the basis of their pedagogical merits and to ensure that they are consistent with the assumptions stated above.

Courses for which the use of distance education technologies for substantive interactions with students has been approved will be classified as “hybrid” courses in relevant course schedules, so long as 26% or more of the course is delivered in-person.

If 75% or more of the instruction and interactions for a course are delivered using distance education technologies while the instructor is physically separated from the students, the course will be classified as a “distance education” course in relevant course schedules (see below).

For exceptional circumstances, the Dean of the Faculty may grant approval for an instructor to use distance education methodologies in a course for a specified and temporary period of time.

**Distance Education Courses**

Any course in which 75% or more of the instruction and interactions are delivered using one or more distance education technologies while the instructor and students are physically separated from each other is a distance education course.

Distance education courses must be pre-approved for delivery at Northland College by Academic Council and must be consistent with the assumptions stated above.

The review and approval process for these courses may take 12-18 months because of the Higher Learning Commission’s timeline and processes for substantive change requests.

**Distance Education Programs**

A distance education program is any program in which one or more of the required courses for the program is a distance education course.

Distance education programs at Northland College must be pre-approved by Academic Council and must be consistent with the assumptions stated above.

The review and approval process for these courses may take 12-18 months because of the Higher Learning Commissions timeline and processes for substantive change requests. In addition, the College’s accreditation status may limit the number of distance education programs that can be offered by the College.

1. Definitions are drawn from the Higher Learning Commission’s “Glossary of HLC Terminology” and were transcribed from the HLC website on August 12, 2022. HLC notes that the definition of “Distance Education” is “based on the federal definition.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Higher Learning Commission interprets “in whole or in part” to mean “even as little as one distance education course in an otherwise in-person program” (see “New Federal Requirements for Approval of Distance Education Programs” on the HLC website. Accessed August 12, 2022.) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)