

SAGRADO

Universidad del Sagrado Corazón

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

AD-02-2024-PS

Institutional Policy for Distance Education

Effectiveness: 2024.03.15

I. Purpose

Universidad del Sagrado Corazón (hereinafter "Sagrado") establishes this policy recognizing the value and importance of distance education. The purpose of this policy is to promote the academic excellence and integrity of distance education courses, which must meet the same standards as traditional in-person taught courses.

II. Regulations

This policy is in accordance with the regulatory and compliance framework of the Puerto Rico Board of Postsecondary Institutions (JIP, for its acronym in Spanish), the U.S. Department of Education, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) and the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA).

III. Applicability/Scope

This policy applies to all faculty and students in Sagrado's undergraduate and graduate programs.

IV. Definitions

1. *Distance education*: Teaching-learning process that is effectively fulfilled, in a synchronous and/or asynchronous modality, when the student is physically distant from his/her professor during a significant part of the educational process (course or academic program) that involves 50% or more of the total hours assigned; one or more official communication media are used to facilitate the interaction between professor and student; and two-way communication is achieved between professor and student and among the students as a group. Therefore, videoconference, hybrid and hybrid-virtual, as well as totally online, are considered distance modalities.
2. *Synchronous learning*: Teaching-learning process in which the teacher and the student interact at the same time or in real time, either in the same physical space or at remote locations.

3. *Asynchronous learning*: Teaching-learning process in which the teacher and the student do not meet in real time, but at different times and interact in indirect ways.

V. Guiding Principles / General Policy

The vision of Sagrado's academic project is an innovative, student-centered education in tune with the context and needs of Puerto Rico and the world. Therefore, each academic program, whether at the undergraduate or graduate level, is based on the design and execution of learning experiences that are authentically meaningful and transformative. To achieve this, the University promotes constant curricular and pedagogical innovation, active learning as a fundamental teaching methodology, the integral development of the faculty, and the integration of technology and digital tools that facilitate the processes of knowledge and skills exchange and development.

Through Sagrado's academic project, the integral human development of each student and professor is pursued, being this the full growth of each person in their physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual and ecological dimensions. For this reason, it is recognized that the academic experience must also be supported by a university environment and a community life in which each person can find opportunities for such development; for this, Sagrado recognizes that in-person interaction (physical or synchronous) is indispensable, especially in the initial years of undergraduate education. However, it also recognizes the opportunity to broaden the scope of the academic project by offering distance education.

In accordance with the above, in Sagrado:

1. Distance education is recognized as a formal education alternative centered on the student.
2. The academic offerings will include combinations of in-person and distance methods, synchronous and asynchronous technologies and methods of interactivity that are considered appropriate to the discipline and the needs of the student body.
3. The following distance learning modalities are established:
 - a. Videoconference (VC): courses offered 100% virtually with weekly synchronous sessions.
 - b. Virtual-Hybrid (VH): 50% of the experience is facilitated by videoconference using an institutional platform and 50% is facilitated through institutional platforms asynchronously.
 - c. Hybrid (H): courses offered 50% face-to-face and 50% asynchronously.
 - d. Online (O): courses offered virtually and asynchronously.

4. It is determined that the modality selected for the courses may vary, according to pedagogical criteria and the need for academic programming.
5. It is established that all distance courses will comply with the objectives and content established in the syllabus, and with instructional strategies that promote interaction between students, faculty and content.
6. The importance of student academic participation in distance learning courses is recognized and promoted:
 - a. **Attendance to scheduled classes:** Students are required to attend regularly to scheduled online classes, which may include viewing real-time video lectures or participating in scheduled discussion sessions.
 - b. **Communication with faculty:** Students must maintain effective communication with the faculty, either through institutional email or Canvas, or by attending virtual office hours.
 - c. **Meeting deadlines for assignments, exams and academic projects:** Students must meet established deadlines for the submission of papers, exams and other academic projects.
 - d. **Participation in course evaluations or assessments:** Students must participate in progress evaluations, such as course satisfaction surveys or learning assessments of their own academic progress.
 - e. **Participation in additional academic activities:** Students can participate in additional academic activities, such as co-curricular activities, virtual conferences, webinars or online study groups.
 - f. **Online interaction:** Students are expected to interact with their classmates through online discussions, group projects and other collaborative activities.
 - g. **Knowledge on the use of the learning platforms:** Students must attend orientation sessions on the use of the platform during their welcome process to the institution.
7. Support will be provided to faculty and students to facilitate their academic achievement in distance courses, including workshops and resources on the use of electronic media and information management. In addition, Sagrado's learning resources and services are made available to students.
8. Technical and pedagogical support will be provided to faculty members involved in the creation and execution of distance education experiences.
9. Institutional policies, regulations and provisions related to course development, syllabi, student and faculty evaluations, copyrights, admission processes and requirements, and student services, among others, apply to distance education courses.
10. International or visiting students are responsible for verifying that enrollment in courses offered through distance learning are in compliance with their study permits, visas or requirements of their home university. These students must check the process with the unit in charge of international students.
11. The faculty will be responsible for completing the training corresponding to the management of distance education technologies, as well as active learning and equitable and inclusive teaching in these modalities. To this end, they will have

the support of the Pedagogical Innovation Unit for the design and management of distance courses.

12. Robust security measures will be implemented to protect the privacy and integrity of student and teacher data on our distance learning platform, ensuring a safe and secure online learning environment.
13. Students will be responsible for having appropriate equipment and Internet access and capacity to support their virtual participation in distance courses.
14. Only the platforms established by the institution for distance education will be used.


VI. Questions about this Policy

This policy is approved by the president of Sagrado with the advice of the General Counsel's Office. Questions regarding the scope and interpretation of this policy should be directed to the office of Academic Affairs.

Universidad del Sagrado Corazón reserves the right to interpret this policy in its administration, implementation and enforcement. In the event of ambiguity in any provision of this policy, Sagrado reserves the discretion to interpret it in accordance with the purpose for which it was established, the impact on its operations, and good faith, unless otherwise provided by law.

VII. Reporting Violations to this Policy

Violations to this Policy should be directed to the Compliance, Internal Audit and Institutional Integrity Office at: cumplimiento@sagrado.edu. Any violation to this Policy will be dealt with in accordance with institutional policies and procedures.


Gilberto J. Marxuach Torrós
President