

Distance Education Policies
Adopted by Faculty, December 2015

Leadership

Leadership for Distance Education:

The University will recruit or train a qualified instructional designer who will assume leadership for and serve as Coordinator of Distance Education activities at the University of the Virgin Islands. This person will be located in the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and will provide faculty consultation and guidance in pedagogy and instructional design as well as having management responsibilities for implementing Distance Education policies and processes.

Management

Distance Education Advisory Council

The Distance Education Advisory Council shall be formed and shall include representatives from each college/school, the Director for the Center for Student Success or designee, the Registrar, and a student representative. At least 50% of the council faculty representatives should be certified to teach online classes or possess equivalent training and experience in the judgment of the Coordinator. If this percentage isn't reached then academic units whose representatives are not qualified in online instruction will be asked to find an alternative representative who is so qualified.

The charge of the Distance Education Advisory Council will be to advise the coordinator of distance education activities, and to review, revise and create policies governing distance education, for adoption by the faculty through the Academic Standards sub-committee of the faculty, and implementation by the Distance Education Coordinator. The Council shall also consider applications for exceptional certification of instructors, reporting its findings to the Academic Standards sub-committee which may refer decisions back to the Council for further consideration.

The Distance Education Coordinator shall facilitate the group meetings, maintain records and archives, communicate actions and recommendations by the Council, and oversee policy implementation.

Course Certification

Online course certification

For a course to be online certified it must first be an approved course at UVI. Online

course certification is in addition to, and in no way substitutes for, the existing University curriculum approval process.

A certified online faculty member (COFM) may develop a course for online certification. A course may also be developed by another UVI faculty member, by an adjunct or by an externally contracted professional, with approval of the Coordinator of Distance Education. The course will be considered an online certified course after it has been evaluated and certified by the Coordinator of Distance Education as meeting best practices and accreditation standards for online courses. The instructor/developer of an online course may appeal the decisions of the Coordinator of Distance Education to the Distance Education Advisory council.

Certification of Instructors

Becoming a Certified Online Faculty Member (COFM)

Teaching an online course for UVI is in no instance to be considered a matter of course for all teaching faculty. In order to teach, resume teaching, or continue to teach a course online at UVI, the faculty member must first be certified as an Online Faculty Member or possesses equivalent qualifications as determined by the Distance Education Advisory Council. This also applies to uncertified faculty who have taught online courses previously/currently at UVI or other institutions.

Any faculty member in a college or school of the University of the Virgin Islands will be certified as an Online Faculty member and be considered a Certified Online Faculty Member (COFM) upon the completion of the following (in the order presented) and affirmation by the Coordinator of Distance Education that the process has been satisfactorily completed.

The process for *selection* for training and certification shall normally be as follows:

- a) At the beginning of the Fall semester the Distance Education Manager will notify and request written applications from any faculty wishing to receive training and certification as an online faculty member. Applications shall be simultaneously submitted to the Unit Manager and to the Coordinator of Distance Education who will forward applications to individual Distance Education Certified faculty who may each make independent written recommendations concerning the merits of the application.
- b) The Coordinator of Distance Education will make a recommendation on the application including a summary of individual COFM input which will be attached.
- c) The Provost or designee will review the application, the recommendation of the Unit Manager, the Coordinator of Distance Education, and Distance Education certified faculty, and will select faculty to receive certification training based on

recommendations and available funding. The Provost will be responsible for the final selection and will notify all applicants of their acceptance or not by the end of the Fall semester. Training will begin during the Spring semester.

The process for *training and certification* shall normally be as follows:

1. Successfully complete the Blackboard self-tutorial or similar preparation for an alternate delivery system approved and supported by UVI.
2. Successfully complete the Sloan Foundations or similar course
3. Shadow the teaching of an online course at UVI by a Certified Online Faculty Member through enrolling as a Teacher's Assistant in an online course that is being taught at UVI.
4. Successfully design an online course and have the course evaluated and certified by the Distance Education Coordinator as meeting best practices and accreditation standards for online courses.
5. Teach the certified online course that was developed in Step 4.
6. Successfully complete 3 Sloan electives or equivalent instruction (this step can begin after Step 2 but must be completed by the end of the semester following Step 5).

This certification process will be reviewed and revised as necessary by the Distance Education Advisory Council in order to follow evolution in technology and instructional design best practices.

Exceptional certification:

The process outlined above implements UVI's intent to establish a strong standard for online instruction and a uniform process for meeting that standard. It is nevertheless recognized that new faculty may have alternative qualifications and that existing faculty may have valid preferences for alternative training. It is also recognized that exigencies created by program development and delivery may require consideration of possibly temporary accelerated processes.

A UVI instructor, including a member the full time faculty, a part time faculty member or adjunct faculty, may apply for either temporary or long term certification as a UVI COFM based on qualifications other than completion of the normal UVI certification process. An application, submitted to the Coordinator of Distance Education, must include a detailed resume of the applicant's relevant training and experience with online instruction and sufficient references or documents to establish the validity of information in the resume. The Coordinator will review the application and make a recommendation for award of COFM status either temporarily, for delivery of a single course, or for a longer period and multiple course deliveries, possibly combined with further training and certifiable online instructional experiences.

The Distance Education Advisory Council will review and make a decision regarding an application for COFM status to an instructor who has not followed the UVI certification process. The Council will report its findings and actions to the UVI faculty standards sub-committee which may refer applications back to the Council for further consideration.