

# **UAS Distance Education and Innovation Compliance Policy**

**Policy Title:** Distance Education Compliance Policy (Regular & Substantive Interaction: RSI)

**Policy Owner:** Provost/Academic Affairs

**Effective Date:** [TBD - to be published in the [UAS Faculty Handbook](#) (pending approval by the UAS Faculty Senate) and on the [Academic Affairs page](#) of the Provost's website.]

**Review Cycle:** Annually with the handbook review process.

## **1. Purpose**

This policy sets the requirements for University of Alaska Southeast's distance education course offerings to ensure compliance with the federal regulations published in the U.S. Department of Education's Code of Federal Regulation. [<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34 subtitle-B/chapter-VI>]

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies to the UAS courses offered via distance delivery and to [the UAS financial aid office](#).

## **3. Definitions**

**Distance Education:** Instruction where students are separated from instructors using technologies, such as a learning management system or video and audio conferencing system, to deliver course content and support regular and substantive interaction.

**Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI):** Engagement between instructors and students that is regular, interactive, and meaningful, which includes providing instruction, assessment, and feedback. Compliance requires at least two substantive activities. Examples of RSI include:

- Providing direct instruction (e.g., lectures, videos).
- Offering timely, detailed feedback on assignments.
- Answering questions about course content.
- Facilitating group discussions on academic topics.

## **4. Policy Requirements**

### **4.1 Compliance with Federal Definitions**

UAS distance education courses shall be designed and delivered to both meet the federal definition of distance education and to demonstrate regular and substantive interaction between instructors and students.

### **4.2 Regular and Substantive Interaction Standards**

For each distance-delivered course, UAS instructors must ensure:

- Scheduled, predictable opportunities for engagement with students;
- Interaction that includes at least two of the five approved substantive activities required by federal regulation (e.g., direct instruction, feedback on coursework, content-related communication, group facilitation, or accreditor-approved instructional activities).

- Each distance education course syllabus includes a statement detailing how substantive interactions will occur.

#### **4.3 Instructional Delivery and Faculty Qualifications**

Distance education must be delivered by instructors who meet UAS's qualifications for teaching the subject matter.

#### **4.4 Title IV Financial Aid Eligibility**

Programs that include distance education must maintain compliance with all Title IV eligibility requirements. This includes accurate reporting, monitoring of regular interaction, and maintenance of required documentation to support financial aid eligibility.

#### **4.5 Documentation and Recordkeeping**

Per the federal regulations, academic units must maintain documentation demonstrating how courses meet RSI criteria and federal definitions of distance education. Records must be available for internal review, accreditation, and federal audits.

### **5. Responsibilities**

- **Provost/Academic Affairs:** Oversight of policy implementation and periodic review.
- **Academic Deans and Campus Directors:** Will review all reports of faculty not engaging in RSI and determine if instructional reassignment is necessary.
- **Department Chairs, Degree Program Coordinators/Program Heads:** Ensure distance courses in their unit meet the standards described in this policy. If notified of an RSI concern, report the relevant information to the appropriate dean or director.
- **Faculty:** Design and deliver distance education courses in compliance with RSI and documentation requirements. Instructors must take the lead in engagement, rather than waiting for student questions, and document interactions within the learning management system.

### **6. Resources for Faculty**

To support the needs of UAS faculty to engage in regular and substantive interaction with students, the UAS Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) has developed an [RSI resource page](#) and conducts RSI learning events as part of their ongoing workshop series.

### **7. Review and Revision**

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with federal regulations, accreditation standards, and institutional requirements.

**Reviewed and approved by UAS Chancellor Aparna Palmer:**

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Aparna Palmer

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February 4, 2026