



MEMO

To: HELC Licensed Institutions

From: Angela H. Lee, Executive Director

Re: Special guidance in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Date: March 16, 2020

The purpose of this memo is to provide institutions of higher education operating in the District of Columbia with an opportunity to submit a thoughtful plan to support the health and safety of students, faculty and staff in response to coronavirus (COVID-19). As a reminder, please visit coronavirus.dc.gov/ for up-to-date information on the District's response.

In recognition of the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Higher Education Licensure Commission (HELC, Commission), on a case by case basis, will allow institutions licensed by the Commission to temporarily adjust their instructional modality for a specified period of time, but not to exceed April 30, 2020. This provision is limited to supporting only currently enrolled students and is designed to minimize the disruption to the students' academic progress during the current term/semester/quarter. Institutions desiring to make temporary changes to their currently approved instructional modality should submit the following information to the HELC, under the signature of the Chief Executive Officer:

1. Describe the initial expected timeframe (start and end) of the proposed changes to instructional modality.
2. Describe the scope of the proposed instructional modality changes.
 - a) If the institution plans to offer distance education or other online technologies, temporarily, identify the courses that will be impacted, describe the format and frequency in which the education will be offered.
 - b) If the institution plans to temporarily partner with another institution to deliver instruction to students, describe and include the name(s) of prospective partners.
 - c) If the institution plans to make changes to the academic calendar for the current term, describe the steps being taken and any anticipated impact on future academic terms.
 - d) If the institution plans to temporarily close, describe the impact on students, including students who may face challenges finding housing, and plans to ensure students can complete the program requirements.

3. Describe the institution's plan for assuring quality. This should include but is not limited to faculty training, technical support, developing courses in distance learning formats that do not already exist, ensuring student access, and security.
4. Describe the institution's plan for overall business continuity during the timeframe identified above.
5. Describe the institution's communication plan to students, faculty, and staff during the timeframe identified above.
6. Provide confirmation that the institution has approval from the relevant professional occupational body to temporarily offer programs/courses which require licensure or certification in an alternative instructional format.

Important Considerations:

- Institutions that operate in the District under the provisions of a Congressional charter and/or are members of State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) do not need to submit a response to the six areas identified above in this memo.
- Institutions may not adjust their instructional modality without the HELC acknowledgment of the proposed changes.
- The coverage only applies to an enrollment term/semester/quarter that overlaps the date of this memo but not to exceed April 30, 2020. If an institution desires to continue offering education using distance education modalities, it must seek the HELC approval under the normal program amendment process.
- If an extension is needed, please contact your Compliance Specialist at least five days before the anticipated end date for additional guidance.

The HELC is continuing to monitor the coronavirus (COVID-19) developments and reserves all rights to amend this guidance as deemed necessary and appropriate in furtherance of the HELC's oversight authority. If you have specific questions or concerns, please contact us at osse.elcmail@dc.gov.

HELC encourages you to review and monitor reliable sources of information related to coronavirus (COVID-19). Here are some links you may find helpful:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Interim Guidance for Administrator of US Institutions of Higher Education <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-ihe-response.html>
- United States Department of Education - <https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus>
- United States Department of Education Federal Student Aid, [*Guidance for interruptions of study related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)*](#)

- Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center- [https://rems.ed.gov/Resources Hazards Threats Biological Hazards.aspx](https://rems.ed.gov/Resources_Hazards_Threats_Biological_Hazards.aspx)
- United States Department of Veterans Affairs- <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/>
- US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Student Exchange Visitor Program- <https://www.ice.gov/sevis>
- Government of the District of Columbia- <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/>