



# MEMO

**To:** HELC Licensed Institutions

**From:** Angela H. Lee, Executive Director

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

**Date:** April 29, 2020

This memo provides updated guidance to institutions of higher education operating in the District of Columbia in response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) as we continue ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty and staff. Please visit <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/> for up-to-date information on the District's response.

On March 16, 2020, the Higher Education Licensure Commission (HELC, Commission), on a case by case basis, began allowing institutions licensed by the Commission to temporarily adjust their instructional modality for a specified period of time, initially 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. The Commission will continue this practice beyond April 30, 2020 and in concurrence with Mayor Muriel Bowser's Stay-At-Home Order for the District of Columbia.

## **Temporary Changes to Instructional Modality**

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, on a temporary basis, 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 to the students and plans to ensure students are able to 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 format 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 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.

Considerations for temporary modality change approval:

- Institutions may not adjust their instructional modality without the HELC acknowledgement of the proposed changes.
- The temporary modality change coverage only applies to an enrollment term/semester/quarter that overlaps the date of the March 16, 2020 memo but not to exceed the Mayor's Stay-At-Home Order. If an institution desires to continue offering education using distance education modalities beyond this term/semester/quarter, it must seek the HELC approval under the normal program amendment process (see below).

### **Long Term Changes to Instructional Modality (Program Amendment)**

Institutions that would like to offer distance education after the Mayor's Stay-At-Home Order has been lifted must seek the HELC approval under the normal process which involves the submission of an [Application for Program Amendment](#).

Considerations for long term modality change approval:

- Institutions may not adjust their instructional modality without the HELC approval of their Application for Program Amendment.
- Institutions may not begin enrolling new students into distance education programs until their Application for Program Amendment has been approved by the HELC.

While the Mayor's Stay-At-Home Orders remain active, completed applications should be emailed to [osse.elcmail@dc.gov](mailto:osse.elcmail@dc.gov). A copy of the check should be included with the application. Application payments, made payable to DC Treasurer, may be mailed to 1050 1<sup>st</sup> Street, NE Washington, DC 20002. Please do not include the completed application with the check payment at this time.

General 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.

The HELC is continuing to monitor the 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](mailto:osse.elcmail@dc.gov).

HELCC encourages you to review and monitor reliable sources of information related to 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/>