Requirements and Expectations for Distance Education Students

Definition of Distance Education
Distance education is an effective and flexible alternative for students who are prevented from attending on-campus classes due to personal or work commitments and/or distance from campus. The MPH Program requires synchronous distance education, in which students videoconference into the live course in real time.

Distance learning is not easier than on-campus learning; students should be prepared to spend as much or possibly more time on a distance learning course. While the difficulty level of courses taken on-line or on-campus is the same, the benefit of distance education is the possibility of receiving high quality education while attending classes from a remote location. The distance learning experience will be different than the classroom experience, but the learning experience should be equivalent for all students. While many students thrive in and may even prefer distance learning, others will find it unsuitable. Students likely to succeed are those who are strongly motivated and organized, and may even have the experience of other distance learning courses.

Distance learning classes carry the same course numbers and credits as their traditional counterparts and appear on the student's transcript just like any other course; there is no designator identifying class attendance through distance education. Credits earned through distance learning are transferable and are applicable to graduation requirements in the same manner as traditional classes.

Prerequisites and Readiness
The ability of a student to succeed in a distance education class depends on his or her ability to understand both the course structure and the associated technology. Informing students of what skills and technology are needed for distance education allows them the opportunity to self-evaluate their capability to succeed in the course.

At the time of admission to the program, students are required to ensure that their computers meet the minimum hardware and software requirements described below. Registration for the course constitutes the student’s understanding and acceptance of the requirements necessary to participate in the course.

All MPH students are required to have their own personal laptop that is no older than 3 years upon entering the MPH Program. This requirement applies to both on-campus students and distance students, effective for students entering Fall 2016 and later.

The following are the minimum requirements needed in hardware and software. Newer software releases are recommended.

Hardware:
- Internet-capable, laptop multimedia computer with a minimum processor of Intel i5 (or comparable)
- No older than 3 years upon entering the MPH Program
- 2 USB ports
- 1 HDMI port strongly preferred for on-campus students
  - Otherwise, must contact SMHS IT for a work-around
- 4 GB of RAM
- 20 GB of available storage space
• Working webcam
• USB headset & microphone
• Broadband connection of ≥ 5 Mbps download and 2 Mbps upload
  o Connection speed can be tested at: http://speedtest.net
• A backup hard drive (either flash drive or external hard drive) of at least 20 GB

Software:
• Windows 7 Basic (or higher) OR Macintosh OSX 10.9.x (or higher)
• Microsoft Office 2013 (or higher)
  o Office 2016 is free with your med.und.edu email account.
  o http://und.edu/academics/center-for-instructional-and-learning-technologies/tech-support/email.cfm Click on Get Office for instructions.
• Adobe Flash Player (newest version)
  o Available at: http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/
• Mozilla Firefox (newest version)
  o Available at: https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/
• Anti-virus software with updated definitions
  o For UND-supported anti-virus software, see: http://und.edu/academics/center-for-instructional-and-learning-technologies/tech-support/anti-virus.cfm
• Additional course-specific software

Students who are seeking recommendations for purchasing a new laptop may wish to visit UND’s Dell student premier page, http://www.dell.com/dellu/undmed, which features three computers that meet these specifications and can be upgraded if desired. Computers ordered from this page can benefit from warranty work being done by SMHS IT staff. Students who are purchasing a new computer are welcome and encouraged to contact SMHS IT at its@med.und.edu to ask questions or have the staff verify compliance with these requirements before purchasing.

It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that their equipment is in working order prior to each class.

Testing Connection
It is recommended that distance students are aware of the amount of Wi-Fi being used at their locations. Transmission will slow down if multiple people in the same location are using Wi-Fi at the same time.

Distance students are required to test the quality of their connection prior to the beginning of courses. This may be done by contacting Brandon Thorvilson with UND SMHS Information Technology Services via email at brandon.thorvilson@med.und.edu.

How to Enroll as a Distance Student
1. Obtain approval from the MPH Program to matriculate as a distance student.
2. Secure hardware requirements, and download the appropriate software, to ensure remote connection.
3. Practice the connection with ITS (Information Technology Services) staff, Brandon Thorvilson, brandon.thorvilson@med.und.edu
Changing from an in-class student to a distance student should be worked out between the student and the program administration and should occur during a between-semester break.

The MPH Program uses Jabber, a videoconferencing system which simultaneously transmits computer screen content, webcam video, and audio. Distance students are required to videoconference in “live”, and participate via video and audio in every class.

Additionally, the MPH Program has access to Mediasite, a fully-automated lecture capture solution used in traditional, hybrid and online courses to record lectures and supplementary course content. Mediasite records computer screen content, audio and webcam video simultaneously, and then automatically generates a feature-rich recording available for viewing within minutes of recording.

All MPH classes are automatically recorded. However, it is up to the discretion of the instructor whether or not to allow students to access a Mediasite class recording. In the event that a course absence is motivated, students are responsible for contacting and informing their instructors in advance of missing the class.