

Guidelines for Distributed Graduate Program at the IfA

IfA facilities are distributed over three islands: Oahu (IfA headquarters and UH Mānoa main campus), Maui and Hawai‘i Island.

As of Fall 2021, graduate students will be allowed to choose residency on the island associated with any of IfA’s facilities. The goal of this proposed approach is to facilitate more research opportunities (e.g., hands-on/instrumentation) among faculty and students across IfA’s distributed program.

Given that students have to take a minimum required number of courses and credits in their first two years at the IfA, in addition to completing two research projects, one each year, the proposed guidelines for the distributed graduate program are as follows:

Pre-Candidacy:

Research Assistants or RAs:

RAs can re-locate to the neighbor islands if they have a research-mentor.

Teaching Assistants or TAs:

TAs can re-locate to the neighbor islands to work with a research-mentor only if they are not lab TAs.

Post-Candidacy:

There are no restrictions on students who have advanced to candidacy to re-locate to the neighbor islands.

Courses:

The main drawback for the distributed graduate program applies to students in their first two years, who choose to take up residency on a neighbor island, since they will have to take their classes remotely. Since different classes may require different levels of interaction, the following mitigating solutions will be explored:

- Dedicate a classroom at each IfA facility where students must attend classes (e.g., no regular attendance from home or office),
- Require local student/faculty attendance in classes to assist with hands-on activities (e.g., with Order of Magnitude)
- Require advisors to be more involved with their student’s classwork (e.g., meeting with instructors, keeping track of progress).

Once advanced to PhD candidacy, course attendance is no longer a concern.

Given fiscal constraints, it is unlikely that the budget will support travel between islands for class activities other than for major milestones including 699 presentations and qualifying process interviews. The IfA-Hilo faculty will work with the students to offset costs associated with a move from Mānoa to Hilo. Before incurring any such costs, students should contact the IfA-Hilo Associate Director to discuss expected expenses.

Plan Evaluation:

Implementation of the guidelines described above will be evaluated annually for at least the first 2 years. Changes will be made to the guidelines as deemed necessary.