



## **AP 4105 Distance Education**

Consistent with federal regulations pertaining to federal financial aid eligibility, the District must authenticate or verify that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education courses is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The District will provide to each student, at the time of registration, a statement of the process in place to protect student privacy and estimated additional student charges associated with verification of student identity, if any.

The Chief Instructional Officer shall implement a secure credentialing/login and password to authenticate or verify the student's identity. As they emerge, the District shall utilize new or more effective technologies and practices to verify student identification.

The Chief Instructional Officer shall establish institutional procedures for providing a statement of the process in place to protect student privacy and estimated additional student charges associated with verification of student identity, if any, to each student at the time of registration. The procedures shall be jointly developed with the Distance Education Committee, outlined in a Distance Education Plan, and made available on the Distance Education website.

The Chief Instructional Officer shall provide the Governing Board with a report on all distance education activity no later than August 31<sup>st</sup> of each year (Title 5 § 55210).

**Definition:** Distance education means instruction in which the instructor and student are separated by time or distance and interact synchronously or asynchronously through the assistance of technology.

**Course Approval:** Each proposed or existing course offered by distance education shall be reviewed and approved separately by the District's Curriculum Committee. Separate approval is mandatory if any portion of the instruction in a course or a course section is designed to be provided through distance education.

The review and approval of new and existing distance education courses shall follow the curriculum approval procedures outlined in AP 4020 Program and Curriculum Development. Distance education courses shall be approved under the same conditions and criteria as all other courses.

**Certification:** When approving distance education courses, the Curriculum Committee will certify the following:



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- **Course Quality Standards:** The same standards of course quality are applied to the distance education courses as are applied to in-person classes.
- **Course Quality Determinations:** Determinations and judgments about the quality of the distance education course are made with the full involvement of the Instructional Dean, Program Faculty/Coordinator, and the Curriculum Committee. The same standards of course quality shall be applied to distance education as are applied to traditional classroom courses (Title 5 § 55202).

**Addendum to Course Outline:** An addendum to the official course outline of record shall be made if any portion of the instruction of a new or existing course is provided through distance education. The addendum must be approved according to the District's curriculum approval procedures. The addendum **must** address the following:

- How course outcomes will be achieved in a distance education mode;
- How the portion of instruction delivered via distance education provides regular and substantive interaction between instructors and students; and
- How the portion of instruction delivered via distance education meets the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

**Instructor Contact:** Each section of the course that is delivered through distance education will include regular and substantive interaction between instructor and students, as well as among students, either synchronously or asynchronously.

**Regular and Substantive Interaction Definition and Considerations:** Regular and substantive interaction between instructor and student and among students in online classes significantly increases student success and humanizes the online learning experience. Two elements are central to regular and substantive interaction:

- **Instructor-to-student interaction** is a key feature of distance education courses, and one factor that distinguishes it from correspondence courses. In course sections in which the instructional time is conducted in part or in whole through distance education, ensuring regular and substantive interaction between faculty and student guarantees the student receives the benefit of the instructor's presence in the learning environment both as a provider of instructional information and as a facilitator of student learning. In a face-to-face instructional format, instructors are present at each course section meeting and interact via announcements, lectures, activities, and discussions that take a variety of forms. In course sections in which the instructional time is conducted in



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part or in whole through distance education, instructors provide similar experiences.

- **Student-to-student interaction** is also a key feature of distance education, and it is another factor that distinguishes it from correspondence courses. These forms of contact are also required by federal regulatory requirements, state education codes, and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), and are recommended by the Statewide Academic Senate for Community Colleges.

Regular and substantive interaction is a California Title 5 educational requirement that requires instructors to incorporate instructor-initiated, regular and substantive interaction into online and any online portion of hybrid course design and delivery. This means that it is the responsibility of the instructor to initiate contact with students, provide contact information to students, make announcements, question and involve them in discussions, provide meaningful feedback on assignments, and monitor their overall progress. It is also the responsibility of the instructor to design opportunities for students to interact with other students in the course via discussion boards, group collaboration, peer review, or other student-to-student engaged activities.

The following considerations are relevant when establishing regular and substantive interaction in a distance education course:

- a. **Frequency of interaction:** Distance education courses are considered the virtual equivalent of traditional classroom courses; thus, the frequency of instructor/student interaction in a course section in which the instructional time is conducted in part or in whole through distance education should be at least the same as would be established in its face-to-face counterpart. At the very least, the number of instructor contact hours (synchronous or asynchronous) per week that would be available for face-to-face students should also be available, in asynchronous and/or synchronous mode, with students in the distance education format (based on the Carnegie unit). Given the nature of asynchronous instructional methodologies, contact should be distributed in a manner that ensures regular instructor and student interaction is maintained over the course of a week and the duration of the term and should occur as often as is appropriate for the course section.
- b. **Establishing expectations and managing unexpected instructor absence:** An instructor- and/or department-established policy describing the frequency and timeliness of instructor-initiated contact and instructor feedback will be posted in the syllabus and/or other course documents made available to students when the



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course section officially opens each semester. This information will also refer students to the section in the college catalog on student rights and responsibilities. During a course section in which the instructional time is conducted in part or in whole through distance education, the instructor will notify students if the instructor will be out of contact beyond what is described in the course documents as mentioned above and the first-level manager. This notification should include when students can expect regular and substantive interaction to resume. If the offline time is expected to result in an absence of more than 72 hours, the instructor will notify the department coordinator and dean of the need for a substitute. Courses that are scheduled as in-person cannot be converted to online or hybrid instruction without the expressed consent from the District.

- c. **Quality of contact:** In course sections in which the instructional time is conducted in part or in whole through distance education, instructors will use a variety of means to initiate meaningful, individualized contact with students.
- d. **Accessibility:** Each section of a course in which the instructional time is conducted in part or in whole through distance education will comply with all applicable accessibility requirements. By proposing a distance education course, the instructor author and dean agree that the course will be able to meet the accessibility requirements in state and federal regulations (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, California Government Code § 11135, and Title 5 § 55200).
- e. Any discipline arising from the Administrative Procedure will follow the tests of Just Cause and Due Process.

**Examples of Regular and Substantive Interaction:** This document outlines a variety of “best practice” instructional pedagogies for developing and maintaining regular and substantive “Start of the Course,” “Instructor-Initiated” and “Student-to-Student” interaction.

**Pre-Course Contact, Orientation Materials, and Syllabus.** The following are examples of types of initial contact that may be included in a course:

- A welcome message may be sent to students before or on the first day of the course, providing them with instructions for logging in and getting started with the course
- The course may include a home page that contains the following:



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- Instructor presence (photo and/or design elements that convey personality/subject matter)
- Instructor contact information and timelines for responding
- A clear starting point
- Technical tips / help information
- An orientation video may inform students how to navigate the course and get started
- A communication plan may inform students how/when/what ways they can expect to interact with their classmates and instructor
- Syllabus/orientation materials may include contact information and contact response times
- Syllabus/orientation materials may indicate online office hours days/times and how to access them
- Syllabus/orientation materials may include ground rules for online communication and technology use/requirements
- Syllabus/orientation materials may inform students how to access online student support services
- Syllabus/orientation materials may include a weekly schedule of activities with due dates

**Instructor-to-Student Interaction.** The following are examples of types of instructor-initiated interaction that may be included in a course:

- Student Messages and Announcements:
  - Instructor responds to student emails and Canvas Inbox messages within a reasonable timeframe, consistent with what is stated in the syllabus and/or elsewhere in the course
  - Instructor informs students of instructor absence which will affect course schedules and/or communications
  - Instructor provides general and timely course-related information and reminders to the class



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- Discussions:
  - Instructor may participate in discussions by posting replies within discussions to student work, adding comments, or asking questions to further student thinking
  - Instructor may provide feedback to discussions privately via individualized feedback
  - Instructor may provide whole class feedback to discussions by highlighting particular posts either in discussions, messages to the whole class, and/or announcements
- Assignment Feedback:
  - Instructor creates assignments that include opportunities for individualized and specific feedback that go beyond automatically graded quizzes/exams
  - Instructor provides rubrics and/or clear instructions with expectations on assignments
  - Instructor provides feedback that is timely, meaningful, and individualized
  - Instructor enters and publishes grades on assignments in a timely manner using the LMS gradebook
- Office Hours, Conferences, and Chats:
  - Instructor provides students optional or required opportunities for synchronous office hours, conferences, etc. per the contract between CCFA and the District.
- Instructor Contact via Publisher Packs or Third-Party Tools:
  - Instructor may use third-party tools authenticated through the LMS to engage in regular and substantive interaction with students.
- Surveys:
  - Instructor may survey students anonymously for feedback on course design, online instruction, communication, and/or other elements of the course.

**Student-to-Student Interaction.** The following are types of student-student contact that may be included in a course:



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- Peer-to-Peer Replies on Discussions:
  - Students should interact in discussions with clear instructions/expectations for original posts and replies.
  - Students are provided with optional discussions for informal peer-peer interaction (Q&A discussion, for example).
  - Instructor provides rubrics and/or clear instructions with expectations for participant interaction in required discussions.
- Small Group Collaborations and Group Projects:
  - Students may be required to work collaboratively on group assignments/projects
  - Students may be provided with optional opportunities to work collaboratively in small groups
  - Instructor provides rubrics and/or clear instructions with expectations for participant interaction in required group assignments/projects
  - Instructor regularly monitors groups and provides whole group feedback
  - Instructor regularly monitors groups and provides private, individualized feedback on group assignments/projects
- Peer Reviews:
  - Students may be assigned peer review activities in which they are required to evaluate and give feedback, observations, and/or suggestions on peers' assignments or projects
  - Instructor provides rubrics and/or clear instructions with expectations for participant interaction in peer review activities
- Third-Party Tools for Student-to-Student Interaction:
  - Instructor may use third-party tools authenticated through the LMS to provide opportunities for student-student interaction

**Student Support Services:** The College will assure that distance learners have access to student support services that are comparable to those services provided to on-campus learners.



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**Accessibility:** The College will assure that all institutionally provided technology resources used in support of distance education will meet the accessibility requirements in state and federal regulations (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, California Government Code § 11135, and Title 5 § 55200).

**Duration of Approval:** All distance education courses approved under this procedure will continue to be in effect unless there are substantive changes of the course outline.

References: Education Code Sections 66700 and 70901 et seq.;  
Title 5 Sections 55200 et seq. and 55260 et seq.;  
34 Code of Federal Regulations Part 602.17 (U.S. Department of  
Education regulations on the Integrity of Federal Student Financial Aid  
Programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as  
amended);  
WASC/ACCJC Accreditation Standard II.A.1

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